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*The Argument from Accidental Truth against Deflationism*

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## **1. Introduction**

Epistemologists have long discussed accidentally true beliefs since Gettier (1963). There, it has been claimed that mere justified true beliefs are not knowledge, when the beliefs are accidentally true. Epistemologists have responded to the cases in numerous ways. Most of them tried to give an alternative analysis of knowledge, but some rejected Gettier's conclusion and insisted that they are indeed cases of knowledge, and still others (following Williamson 2000) just abandoned the whole attempts to give any analysis of knowledge. However, no epistemologist has ever responded to Gettier cases by claiming that there is no such thing as accidentally true belief, let alone denying accidental truth in general. We will argue in this paper that the existence of accidental truth poses a serious challenge to an influential view about truth, namely deflationism.

In the next section, we first look at an initial challenge to deflationism, which we call Incompleteness, according to which deflationist schemata fail to accommodate all the legitimate truths of utterances. In sections 3 and 4, we will see the responses to Incompleteness from a disquotational deflationist (Field) and a propositional deflationist (Horwich), respectively. They both propose similar modifications of their schemata to accommodate certain types of utterance truth. However, in section 5 we shall see that even such modified schemata ultimately fail to answer Incompleteness, since they cannot accommodate accidental truths: Certain accidental truths falsify instances of the schemata. In section 6, we shall consider 6 possible responses to the argument in section 5, and show that neither of them is satisfactory for deflationists. In the final section we conclude the paper by summarizing the implications of our argument for various theories.

## **2. Deflationism and Incompleteness**

We routinely talk about truth or falsity of utterances. If deflationism is true, therefore, the truth of utterances should also be at least consistent with the deflationist view of truth. However, arguably, once we take into considerations the truth of utterances, or sentences uttered in particular contexts, we must inevitably accept the non-literal contents of utterances due to the general context-sensitivity of linguistic expressions. However, the representative position that endorses and promotes such context-sensitivity, contextualism, is often thought to be incompatible with deflationism.

Contextualists typically claim that a given sentence (even without any ambiguous expression, or any explicit indexical or demonstrative term) can express indefinitely many different semantic contents, depending on the context of its utterance. According to contextualists, this is “intrinsically part of what expressions of [natural language] mean” (Travis 1997, p.87). Charles Travis has argued for contextualism in his works (e.g., Travis 1989, 1997, 2000, 2006), with numerous interesting specific examples.

However, the existence of such *phenomena*, the context sensitivity of utterance content, or at least the existence of context-relative (non-literal) contents of utterances, by itself has been widely acknowledged, and theorists only disagree over whether such non-literal contents are what is said or what is implicated, whether they are semantic contents or pragmatic contents, whether there is a context-invariant literal content or not, etc. For example, indexicalists (e.g., Stanley) and some contextualists (e.g., Travis) may take such contents as semantic contents, while disagreeing over whether the content is semantically derived or pragmatically enriched. Some other contextualists, or truth-conditional pragmatists (e.g., Recanati) and relevance theorists (e.g., Carston) may think that such contents are pragmatic contents but contents of what is said at the same time. Semantic minimalists (e.g., Borg) may think that they are pragmatic contents but

claim that they are not contents of what is said, but only what is implicated or communicated.<sup>1</sup> However, such disagreements are interests of philosophy of language, and as long as we are interested in the notion of truth, what is important for us here is that the theorists all admit at least the *existence* of such contents. Insofar as they are *truth evaluable*, that *truth* is what we are concerned with. Thus, for our purpose here, we remain neutral as to all these issues of philosophy of language, and just assume that such context-relative non-literal contents of utterances exist.

In discussing such context sensitivity of the content of utterances in so-called the *context-shifting argument*, contextualists often appeal to the truth values of such utterances. The same sentence-type uttered in one context is true, but false if uttered in another context, even though the relevant facts about the world remain the same and its literal content (if there is) should have the same truth value in both contexts. Thus, contextualists often assume that truth can illuminate, or even explain, meaning. However, such an assumption seems incompatible with deflationism about truth, which is usually characterized by the thesis such as (i) truth is exhausted by some deflationist schema,<sup>2</sup> which we will see later in more detail, (ii) truth is not any substantive property, (iii) truth does not have any explanatory role, and (iv) the truth predicate is just an expressive device for infinite conjunctions and disjunctions, blind ascriptions, expressing agreement, etc. Travis in fact explicitly argues (*inter alia*, in his 1996) that, given his contextualism, deflationism about truth is false.

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<sup>1</sup> Semantic minimalists may oppose to the description of the contents in question as contents *of* utterances. For them, they may be only communicated contents of *acts* of utterances (or speech act contents). This will not affect our main argument in section 5, but we will come back to this response in Acceptance of section 6.

<sup>2</sup> According to Horwich, for example, other than the equivalence schema, “nothing more about truth need be assumed” (1998a, p. 5), or there is “nothing more to truth than that” (2010, v).

Of course, there are variations in deflationism too. There are disagreements even among deflationists over which is the distinguishing or most important thesis of deflationism (say, among (i) to (iv) above), and the precise relation between these theses. In this paper, however, we will mainly focus on (i), that there is nothing more to truth than our understanding or inclination to accept certain deflationist schema.

In criticizing deflationism, what Travis has in mind is the view of Paul Horwich, whose deflationism is based on the following schema, often called the *equivalence schema* (in this paper, we shall use “equivalence schema” as a generic term to cover not only PS, but also various other deflationist schemata):

PS      The proposition that p is true if and only if p.

For Horwich, “[o]ur understanding of ‘is true’—our knowledge of its meaning—consists in the fact that the explanatorily basic regularity in our use of it is the inclination to accept instantiations of [PS]” (Horwich 1998a, p. 35). There are however many other variations in the deflationary theory of truth, such as the redundancy theory (“is true” adds nothing to the original sentence and hence redundant), the prosentential theory (“that is true” is a prosentence, working like a pronoun, anaphorically referring to the sentence uttered earlier), Tarski’s theory of truth, etc.<sup>3</sup> But deflationists generally require (i) above, assuming one of deflationist schemata, whose choice also determines which brand of deflationism it is.

Travis opposes to deflationism by mainly denying thesis (iii), claiming that there is some role that truth plays in fixing what is said by a sentence uttered in a particular

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<sup>3</sup> See for a review and criticism of other versions, Chapter 2 of Horwich (2010).

context. And, in fact, Horwich also seems to admit the incompatibility of contextualism and his *minimalism*, his version of deflationism based on PS. He mentions Travis's contextualism in his book and argues that it is not compatible with the idea of language of thought, which is assumed in his semantics, and says, as a “more plausible picture”, that “each predicate has a context-independent, ‘default’, literal, reference-fixing meaning -- but that its public, verbal form may sometimes be meant non-literally” (Horwich 2005, p. 59). This remark is on his semantic view,<sup>4</sup> but he thinks that his deflationism about truth and his semantic view (based on the use-theory of meaning) “together form a natural, mutually supporting pair of ideas” (Horwich 1998a, p. 11), and he calls the pair “semantic deflationism”. Horwich does not articulate exactly how these two are related, but if this relationship is logical or conceptual, especially if his alethic deflationism (minimalism) *entails* his semantic view, it is indeed incompatible with contextualism.

Thus, both the representative contextualist and the representative deflationist (who happened to be both Wittgensteinians) agree in thinking that contextualism is incompatible with deflationism about truth. However, the incompatibility in question is actually not so obvious. For example, in claiming the incompatibility, Travis was rather more concerned with the deflationist thesis (iii) above.<sup>5</sup> But even if truth has some role

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<sup>4</sup> This view suggests semantic minimalism. Note that, somewhat confusingly, Horwich calls his deflationism about truth “minimalism.” His semantic minimalism is mainly the combination of the use theory of truth and the denial of the role of truth in semantics, which shares the central thesis (about the literal content) with but is independent of semantic minimalism of Borg or Cappelen & Lepore.

<sup>5</sup> Travis claims that, the “sensitivity of truth's demands to speakings” is incompatible with deflationism, which can be appreciated by seeing “how those demands make the way the world is matter differently to the truth of different such speakings” (Travis 1996, p. 454). But it is still not clear whether that role of truth exceeds the equivalence schema understood as accommodating the context sensitivity. Also, as for deflationist thesis (ii), Travis admits in conclusion of his paper, “[i]n so far as a deflationist's aim is to reject substantive definitions of truth, that aim may stand, for all I have said” (1996,

in guiding the use of words by telling us how a statement is to be assessed in a given context (cf. Travis 1996, p. 460), or a role in semantics (thus truth conditional semantics), such a role of truth may not necessarily be an essential part of the view of context sensitivity, or contextualism in particular.<sup>6</sup> Also, Horwich was not clear about exactly how his alethic minimalism (deflationism) and semantic minimalism are connected. Unless he shows that they entail each other, his deflationism may not really be incompatible with the view about contextual sensitivity. Indeed, some philosopher explicitly argues for the compatibility of deflationism and contextualism (Whiting 2011).

In fact, for our purpose here, we do not need so much as contextualism, but only the phenomena of context sensitivity, and once we focus on the deflationist thesis (i) (the one based on the deflationist schema) and the truth of utterances (rather than sentence-types or propositions), it seems that the limit of deflationism can easily be demonstrated, at least if deflationism is understood in terms of the following simple disquotation schema:<sup>7</sup>

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p. 465. See also p. 452).

<sup>6</sup> As for the relationship between contextualism and truth conditional semantics, contextualism is a thesis about the contextual variance of the *content* of utterance, rather than its *truth-value*, and therefore is not, at least essentially, committed to truth conditional semantics. Thus, although Travis himself talks about “variation in truth conditions” (e.g., Travis 1996, p. 451) in his context-shifting argument, and the difference of truth-values is certainly good *evidence* for the contextual variance of content, nothing essential would be lost when we systematically rephrase “truth-conditional content” by, say, “*truth-evaluable* content”. Indeed, just as Travis is committed to the use theory of meaning, adoption of truth-conditional semantics is just an option for contextualists or the advocates of the context sensitivity in general. The same might be said for the relation between deflationism and its thesis (iii), the role of truth. For example, Field says, in the context of making sense of the truth of a sentence one does not understand in connection with his disquotational truth, “for instance, in a perjury trial we might want to know whether there is any acceptable translation of an utterance that makes it come out true.” (Field 1994, p. 274) This seems to go against thesis (iii), acknowledging the role of truth that precedes the understanding of the original utterance, though Field is not troubled by such a role of truth at all.

<sup>7</sup> Tarski (cf. Tarski 1944, p. 342) took the primary truth-bearers to be sentences. However, the use of disquotation schema here does not necessarily imply that the

DS      “p” is true if and only if p.

As Travis’s says,

The right [standards] for [Pia’s] describing [a ball as round] need not be the right ones for some describing I might do now. So to say that what Pia said in describing the ball as round is true is not yet to describe the ball as round, or say it to be round. It is not to assert what one would in so describing it (Travis 1996, p. 466).

That is, due to the difference of the standards of the respective contexts, the following two descriptions or utterances can fail to be equivalent, falsifying the instance of DS, even if they are about one and the same ball.

Tr1      “The ball is round” by Pia is true.

Tr2      The ball is round.

This is rather an abstract example of the context-shifting argument, but we shall see a more specific case later (we shall also consider a possible problem of the sameness/difference of the contexts of Tr1 and Tr2).

Also, if we focus on utterances, we find that well-formed but apparently

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truth-bearers are sentence-types. For example, Båve (2010) argues that, “sentence *s* is true” is an *attributive ellipsis* for “what *s* says is true.”



semantically incomplete sentences like “Al is ready”, “Bart has finished” (Bach 1994), or even sub-sentential phrases like “On the top shelf” and “Higher” (Carston 2002), can be legitimately true, if only uttered in an appropriate context. However, instances of DS with “p” replaced by such phrase or sentence (e.g., “Higher” is true if and only if higher) does not make sense.<sup>8</sup> Thus, if these are legitimate truths, deflationists should admit that there are truths that cannot be captured by a deflationist schema or at least by DS.

Again, the existence of the phenomena of such context sensitivity and contextual supplementation (completion) by itself does not depend on the truth of contextualism, and therefore we do not have to assume contextualism here. The failure of capturing legitimate instances of truth by a particular deflationist schema, just as those we saw above, has been recognized by deflationists themselves. It has been said that the deflationist schema (especially DS) cannot make sense of the truth of untranslatable or inexpressible sentences and utterances,<sup>9</sup> and deflationism based on PS is silent about the truth of utterances (and other truth-bearers). Let us call this general problem (assuming that this is a problem for deflationism) of failing to capture all the legitimate truths (especially those of utterances) *Incompleteness*.

As we shall see, deflationists do take Incompleteness seriously, and have presented their own solutions to it, which will also cover the cases above. Considerations of such deflationist responses will set the stage for our main argument based on accidental truth in section 5, where a much more direct case against the deflationist

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<sup>8</sup> All such phrases and sentences require what Bach (1994) called *completion*. For the first apparently incomplete but well-formed sentences, Cappelen and Lepore (2005) argue that the corresponding T-sentences are valid, *and therefore* they express proposition. However, as Bach (2006) insists, this just begs the question, and especially so if saying the same thing to the equivalence schema instantiated by the sub-sentential utterance would be highly implausible.

<sup>9</sup> Though we shall not discuss in this paper, even Horwich’s minimalism faces this problem, as discussed in Moore (2020).

schema will be presented.

### 3. Field's Solution to Incompleteness

We will first see a response from a disquotationalist, whose deflationism is based on DS.

In the next section, we shall consider a response from a minimalist, who bases one's deflationism on PS.

Deflationists also discuss the truth of utterances. Indeed, according to Field, DS is to be taken as an equivalence of *two utterances*. More precisely, he takes DS to state the *cognitive equivalence* (relative to the existence of utterance *u*) between *u* and “*u* is true” (Field 1994). Given this understanding of DS, however, utterances like “‘On the top shelf’ is true’ still do not make sense. But the more immediate challenge of Incompleteness for Field is that, understood this way, the instances of the schema could cover only one's own utterances. Before looking at why, let us note that, Field himself was aware of the limitation of DS, or his conception of it, because his version of DS assumes the *understanding* of the sentence to which the truth predicate is applied, and therefore, for him, being disquotationally true is “true-as-I-understand-it” (Field 1994, p. 250, p. 274, pp. 279-280).<sup>10</sup> Field thinks that this follows from his conception of DS, as a cognitive equivalence of two utterances (*ibid.* p. 250, p. 265). As we shall see, however, the problem is more general. Whether one understands the utterance or not, his DS rules out, or must rule out, the truth of utterances by other people.

To make this point clear, let us first give names to the relevant utterances in DS, or Field's conception of it. There are three relevant utterances there. First, call “*u* is

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<sup>10</sup> Field first uses a third-person characterization, saying “for a person to call an utterance true in this pure disquotational sense is to say that it is true-as-he-understands-it” (*ibid.* p. 250).

true” and  $u$ , which are supposed to be cognitively equivalent,  $u1$  and  $u2$ , respectively. Then call  $u$  mentioned in  $u1$  (“ $u$  is true”)  $u3$ . Given his assumption of cognitive equivalence, the utterers of  $u1$  and  $u2$  are thought to be the same person, and as we shall see, this is necessary for instances of DS to be true. However, if  $u2$  and  $u3$  are just utterances of the same sentence-(or expression-)type, say  $S$ , even if both  $u1$  (“ $S$  is true”) and  $u2$  ( $S$ ) are uttered (and therefore utterances), DS still does not accommodate the truth of utterances at all, for  $S$  in  $u1$  is not uttered by anyone, and therefore  $u1$  is not about a truth of any utterance. On the other hand, if  $u2$  and  $u3$  are taken to be an identical token-sentence uttered by someone, as long as we assume that the utterer of  $u1$  is the same person as the utterer of  $u2$ ,  $u3$  is always one’s own utterance for the utterer of  $u1$ .

Thus, the truth of utterances captured by Field’s version of DS is only the truth of “my own” utterances, and cannot be a truth of other people’s utterance. In fact, if we do not require this (ruling out utterances of other people), DS can easily be shown to fail. If  $u3$  is an utterance by someone else, even if the utterer of  $u1$  understands it ( $u3$ ), and  $u2$  and  $u3$  are utterances of the same sentence-type  $S$ , this person’s “ $u$  is true” ( $u1$ ) can fail to be cognitively equivalent to the same person’s  $u2$ , when  $u$  is, for example, “I am hungry now” (cf. Horwich 1998a, p. 98). Field does accept instances involving indexicals, such as “She is here now” (Field 1994, p. 280). But that is precisely because he is assuming that (if  $u1$  is not just a sentence-type but an utterance) the utterer of  $u1$  (and  $u2$ ) is the same as the utterer of  $u3$  and uttered or understood in the same context. Field is also aware of the problem arising from indexicals and he later tries to fix it (in section 10 of his 1994), but the problem is not limited to it. The real issue is the context-sensitivity of the content of utterances in general.

At first, it appears that all we need in order to save DS from such context-sensitivity is to require the two contexts of the utterances,  $u1$  and  $u2$ , to be the same or at least of the same type. Call this requirement *Consistency*. Given Field's conception of DS, this seems a reasonable requirement. For example, if the context of assessing an instance of DS is  $c$ , it is natural to require that the contexts of  $u1$  and  $u2$  should also be both  $c$ .

Unfortunately, however, requiring Consistency is not enough for DS. Remember Travis's example in section 1. There, to falsify DS, the contexts of Tr1 ( $u1$ ) and Tr2 ( $u2$ ) need not be different, as long as the context of Pia's utterance/description ( $u3$ ) is different from them. Or consider the utterance "every bottle is empty" uttered by someone in a party. Even if the utterance is true (where what is said by it can be elaborated as, e.g., *every bottle of alcohol in this house is empty*), the corresponding instance of DS,

(B) "Every bottle is empty" is true if and only if every bottle is empty,

can be false. For, whereas the left-hand side of B is true, uttered anywhere anytime, if B itself is uttered or assessed in a context in which one is concerned with whether there is any non-empty bottle somewhere in the world, B is false (assuming that there is some non-empty bottle in the world).<sup>11</sup> For the same reason, ambiguous sentences like "visiting relatives can be boring" can falsify the corresponding instances of DS if  $u1$  (or  $u2$ ) and  $u3$  are made in different types of contexts. Note that this remains true even if (1) Consistency is satisfied, (2) the utterer of  $u1$  and  $u2$  is the same person, and (3) the

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<sup>11</sup> Note that, for Field the instances of DS are material biconditionals (Field 1994, p. 268).

utterer of  $u1$  understands  $u3$ , since, without assuming the assessment relativity (*à la* MacFarlane), an utterance is true assessed in whatever context if it is true at the context of the utterance (thus “every bottle is empty”, uttered at the party, is true even in the context of questioning the existence of non-empty bottles in the world). Thus, instances of DS can be false even if Consistency is satisfied, as long as the contexts of  $u1$  (or  $u2$ ) and  $u3$  are different.

In discussing the relevant problem of DS (using the example of “I am hungry”), Horwich (1998a) concludes that DS needs to be qualified, such that “the way that ‘ $p$ ’ is construed when it is *mentioned* on the left-hand side is the same as the way it is construed when it is *used* on the right-hand side” (p. 99). This is about the consistency between the contexts of  $u3$  and  $u2$  (*not*  $u1$  and  $u2$ ). However, immediately after this, in describing the modified form of the schema, he requires that “an instance of the disquotation schema holds if it is asserted in a context that is not relevantly different from the context of the utterance whose truth is in question.” (*ibid.*) This is to require the consistency between the context of  $u3$  and that of “asserting” the whole instance of DS itself, which, in effect, amounts to requiring contexts of *all* of  $u1$ ,  $u2$ , and  $u3$  to be consistent. Let us call this requirement *Alignment*. Theorists seem to agree that, in order to save DS from the context-sensitivity of utterances, not only Consistency, but also Alignment, is necessary. The question is whether this requirement is independently justifiable or not.

According to the present reading of DS (as cognitive equivalence of two utterances), Consistency seems a reasonable requirement. There is no reason to compare the utterances made in two very different contexts, where the equivalence would trivially fail. However, if  $u3$  is not a mere sentence-type but an utterance,  $u1$  is an *utterance about*

an utterance ( $u3$ ), and if so, there seems no good reason to require the context of  $u1$  to be the same as that of  $u3$ . For this is to rule out all of other people's utterances, as well as our own utterances in counterfactual circumstances (Field 2001, p. 151). This problem of Incompleteness is much severer than the original one, where the problem was limited to utterances that I don't understand. Ruling out truths of utterances we perfectly understand, or utterances of other people in general, Alignment seems too *ad hoc*, begging the question if the sole reason for requiring it is to save DS.

Field proposed a solution to Incompleteness, which also solves this new problem. Since he first defined his disquotational truth as applying only to sentences one understands, Field attempted (in section 8 of his paper) to make sense of the truth of sentences (or utterances) in other languages. The solution he initially favored was either define them in terms of correlated (*via a good translation*) sentences in the agent's own language (without using the notion of synonymy), or directly use the foreign sentences for instances of DS, insofar as the agent understands them. But in the next section he also proposed a modification of DS in order to accommodate our intuitions about the counterfactual relationship between uses and meanings (*ibid.* p. 275),<sup>12</sup> which in effect solves Incompleteness, since it can even cover the sentences (utterances) in other languages, and therefore utterances made by other people. Since it uses the semantic notion of (interlinguistic) synonymy, there Field called the truth captured by it "quasi-disquotational" truth. However, in a postscript to the paper added in 2001, he presented, using instead the notions of "computational equivalence" and "computational type,"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> His formulation uses a modal operator, within which a biconditional is embedded, but it also quantifies over meaning, allowing the expression "*the meaning of*" a sentence (made possible by the synonymy assumption), together with an actuality operator "@," which cancels out the effects of the modal operator.

<sup>13</sup> Field claims that mere "conceptual role" is not enough as a theory of content, since it is both "internalist" and "individualistic" (1994, p. 254). Field explains "computational

the following, further modified (and simplified), version of DS (Field 2001, p. 152), which we call here F:

(F) If  $S_{x,u}$  is translatable as 'p' then  $\Box (S_{x,u} \text{ is true iff } p)$ ,

where " $S_{x,u}$ " is sentence S (a computational type) uttered by x in a possible world u. This therefore covers the utterances of other people, as well as the cases we saw in section 3. For example, "round" in Travis's Tr1 is to be appropriately translated with, say, "round in such and such sense" in a sentence replacing "p". Or, if S is Anna's utterance "On the top shelf" uttered to the person who is looking for the marmalade at the breakfast in the actual world @ can instantiate F as follows:

If  $S_{A,@}$  is translatable as "The marmalade is on the top shelf" then  
 $\Box (S_{A,@} \text{ is true iff the marmalade is on the top shelf}).$

Similarly, any other context-relative contents of utterances can also instantiate F, answering Incompleteness, or so it seems.

#### 4. Horwich's Solution to Incompleteness

Before looking at Horwich's solution to Incompleteness as a second response, let us consider two other possible responses to Incompleteness based on PS, which we call Accommodation and Retreat, respectively, the failure of which will justify the motivation

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equivalence" as "defined only *within an individual X in a given possible world u*: it doesn't make sense to ask if one of my tokens is computationally equivalent to a token of yours, or to a token of a counterpart of me in another possible world." (2001, p. 151). So this notion is still pretty internalist and individualistic.

for Horwich's actual proposal.

To consider Accommodation, a view that PS itself accommodates the truth of utterances together with their context-sensitivity, first note that Horwich acknowledges the context-sensitivity of sentences. He says, against Quine's proposal to restrict the sentences mentioned in DS to "eternal sentences" (sentences with no context sensitivity), that, strictly speaking, there are no eternal sentences (1998a, p. 99), saying, "Ambiguity and context-sensitivity are by no means restricted to indexicals and demonstratives. Most names, predicates, and quantifiers can also be construed in various alternative ways" (*ibid.* p. 100). Thus, Horwich also admits the phenomena of general context sensitivity here. However, the problem here is that, given such context sensitivity, it is not clear what is referred to by "the proposition that p" in PS, for, if what is said by "p" varies with the context, what is referred to by the expression "the proposition that p" should also vary accordingly. As a result, we cannot simply assume that the proposition that p is what is said by "p" any more. Note, however, that, unlike DS, there seems no place for utterance  $u3$  in PS, and if we want to avoid even the reference to "the proposition that p", we may use the following form of propositional schema, which is clearer about the absence of  $u3$ .

(E) It is true that p if and only if p.

Unlike PS, E does not mention any truth-bearer, utterance or proposition (though Horwich treats PS and E as simply interchangeable in his 1998a. cf. *ibid.* p. 16, n.1). Daniel Whiting holds that this schema can accommodate the context-sensitivity of the content of utterances. He says of an instance of E that even the words on the left-hand



side of it are also *used*, and therefore they are “to be viewed *as uttered on a particular occasion* and hence as already understood in the appropriate way” (Whiting 2011, p. 612, emphases in original). This reading of the schema is in effect the requirement of Consistency. However, lacking *u3*, it tells nothing about the truth of an utterance made in another context. It follows that the truth of other people’s utterances is captured by neither PS nor E, leaving all such legitimate instances of utterance truth outside of consideration.

Retreat just claims that (alethic) minimalists are not concerned with the truth of utterances, arguing that truths of such utterances actually add no genuinely new instances of truth. They are irrelevant, since they all should express true propositions if they are true, for which PS is enough. In this connection, Horwich says, concerning how his deflationism can account for the truths of *untranslatable utterances* (the problem Field tried to respond);

[His deflationism] aims to specify the underlying use-property in virtue of which the truth predicate means what it does. To that end, it identifies certain deployments of that predicate as explanatorily fundamental and hence meaning-constituting -- namely, those that appear in instances of [PS]. But other tokens of the word may perfectly well have the very same meaning, as long as their deployment is partially explained by the fundamental ones. (Horwich 2010, p. 40)

Thus, according to Horwich, his PS is meant to capture only “fundamental” or “meaning constituting” uses of the truth predicate, and that is enough for him to understand what

truth is. Then he may respond analogously here to Incompleteness, saying that the applications of "is true" to utterances are merely derivative, non-fundamental uses of the predicate. We shall consider this response more in detail later. For now, however, unlike the case of untranslatable utterances, the present problem of Incompleteness is the truth of utterances in general, whether we understand them or not. Note, in this connection, that Horwich holds that his theory is concerned with our actual, ordinary concept of truth (Horwich 1998a, p. 102; 2010, p. 35 n.1, and see also 1998a, p. 133, p. 144; 2010, p. 46). Since it is utterances (or what is said by them) that are thought to be context-sensitive and arguably they are the primary truth-bearers for ordinary people, if PS cannot make sense of such everyday truths, it cannot, *pace* Horwich, be thought to capture our *actual* concept of truth. In that case, the thesis, or the assumption, that "propositions are the sole bearers of truth" as an *axiom* (*ibid.* p. 43) is to be rejected too.

Thus, neither Accommodation nor Retreat can properly answer Incompleteness. But Horwich did not just ignore this challenge either, and tried to give an account of the truth of utterances in general (Horwich 1998a, p. 98, Question 34). He attempts to account for utterance truth by modifying DS, providing the following version of DS for utterance truth, which we shall call H here (Horwich 1998a, p. 101. See also p. 87, n.8 of his 2010):<sup>14</sup>

(H)  $(\text{Int}(u) \in *p*) \rightarrow (u \text{ is true iff } p).$

This is supposed to accommodate the context sensitivity too. The symbol  $*p*$  here is

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<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, see (for a context-*insensitive* version) Horwich (2010), p. 141. Also, for a schema for *sentences* as the truth-bearers, see *ibid.* p. 164.

quote-name, a device introduced to pick out an expression-type individuated on the basis of not only of syntactic form, but also of meaning (with “\*bank\*” for example meaning only one of the two possible senses), and “Int(*u*)” is meant to cover utterances that require interpretation, including those in foreign languages and those with indexicals uttered in the past. The antecedent of H, ‘Int(*u*) ∈ \**p*\*’, therefore means that \**p*\* is the correct interpretation of *u*.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, for example, “round” in Travis’s case can be appropriately interpreted to instantiate H, and an instantiation of H by “On the top shelf” uttered in the relevant context, where the interpretation of *u* belongs to \*The marmalade is on the top shelf\*, is true, just as the case of F.<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Argument from Accidental Truth: Against F and H

We have seen two similar proposals, F and H, meant to answer Incompleteness, which also accommodate the truth of (context-sensitive) utterances in general, by leading proponents of disquotationalism and minimalism, respectively. Given the existence of context-relative (non-literal) contents of utterances, however, Field’s F and Horwich’s H are still insufficient for capturing all the instances of utterance truth.

To see this, let us first introduce a typical case of context-relative contents by Travis in one of his context-shifting arguments.

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<sup>15</sup> Horwich seems to assume that the individuation of “quote-name” and therefore the interpretation of the utterance can somehow be done antecedently or independently of the use in a particular context. The contextualist cannot share this assumption, but in order to avoid begging the question, Horwich may assume here that the quote-name is individuated by the context of utterance.

<sup>16</sup> The sentence “The marmalade is on the top shelf” may itself need further supplementation (remember that Horwich denied the existence of eternal sentence). But given the context of the use of this instance of H, the proposition expressed by it should be sufficient for the purpose of giving the truth-condition of *u*.

Suppose that the refrigerator is devoid of milk except for a puddle of milk at the bottom of it. Now consider two possible speakings, by Odile, of the words, ‘There’s milk in the refrigerator.’ For the first, Hugo is seated at the breakfast table, reading the paper, and from time to time looking dejectedly (but meaningfully) at his cup of black coffee, which he is idly stirring with a spoon. Odile volunteers, ‘There’s milk in the refrigerator.’ For the second, Hugo has been given the task of cleaning the refrigerator. He has just changed out of his house-cleaning garb, and is settling with satisfaction into his armchair, book and beverage in hand. Odile opens the refrigerator, looks in, closes it and sternly utters the above words (Travis 1989 pp. 18-19).

According to Travis, Odile’s words in the first context said what was false, while in the second context they said what was true. Then, unless Alignment is assumed, an instance of DS,

T1        “There is milk in the fridge” is true if and only if there is milk in the fridge.

is straightforwardly false if, for example, “There is milk in the fridge” (hereafter *u0*) is an utterance in the cleaning context (hereafter C1), while T1 is uttered or used in the coffee context (hereafter C2), so that the both sides of it are assessed in the context of C2. For, *u0* uttered in C1 can be true even when there is no milk in the sense of C2, there being no bottle or carton of milk in the fridge. Similarly, T1 is false when *u0* is uttered in C2 but T1 is uttered or assessed in C1 (here we mean by C1 and C2 context-*types*,

rather than tokens, and they are both contexts of  $u_3$ ). This is obviously the same kind of case we saw concerning (B) in section 3 (note that here Consistency is satisfied). The same problem occurs even if we specify the context of the utterance in the following way:

T2      “There is milk in the fridge” uttered in C1 is true if and only if there is milk in the fridge.

For T2 itself may be uttered or used in C2.

Let us then examine F and H, whether they can even accommodate such an utterance. Here we shall use H for brevity, but it is easy to see that the same point will apply to F. Instances of H individuate quote names differently, depending on whether the context-token of  $u_0$  belongs to C1 or C2, as follows.

T3(C1)  $\text{Int}(u_0) \in \text{“There is a puddle of milk in the fridge”} \rightarrow (u_0 \text{ is true iff there is a puddle of milk in the fridge}).$

T3(C2)  $\text{Int}(u_0) \in \text{“There is a bottle of milk in the fridge”} \rightarrow (u_0 \text{ is true iff there is a bottle of milk in the fridge}).$ <sup>17</sup>

The contents explicated in the antecedents of T3(C1) and T3(C2) are instances of familiar phenomena.<sup>18</sup> But note that, here utterance  $u_0$  is still “There is milk in the fridge”. It is an utterance type (as assumed in the context-shifting argument), and therefore both

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<sup>17</sup> Or “There is milk in a form suitable for coffee in the fridge” (Borg 2012, p. 19), or whatever interpretation appropriate in that context. The same should be said to T3(C1).

<sup>18</sup> Bach (1994) called it *expansion*, which is also required for utterances like “Every bottle is empty” in section 3. See also footnote 8 above.

T3(C1) and T3(C2) are still types, so that they are to be considered (uttered, assessed, etc.) in a particular context, or they themselves are to be instantiated by a token utterance uttered in a particular context. The use of type here is just for convenience, and alternatively, as we shall do later, we may give a name to a token utterance. But this complication does not affect the argument in what follows.

As we saw above, in the cases of context-relative contents, we must think that there is more than one quote name for single sentence-type (in this case, “There is milk in the fridge”). For the sake of simplicity, we assume here (as Horwich assumed we can) that we can clearly individuate context-types, and that in this case there are only two relevant context-types, C1 (the cleaning context) and C2 (the coffee context), on which the content depends. We may then consider various context-tokens that instantiates these types, in which there is or there is not a puddle of milk or a bottle (or carton) of milk in the fridge. There can be various combinations of the context-types and the relevant states of the fridge, and we may examine for each of such tokens the truth-values of the corresponding instances of H, or T3 (C1 or C2). See the following table.

Context -tokens	Context-type of $u\theta$	State of the fridge: There is		Truth values of the both sides
		a puddle of milk	a bottle of milk	
c1(1)	C1 (Cleaning)	✓	✓	T
c2(1)	C2 (Coffee)	✓	✓	T
c1(2)	C1 (Cleaning)	✓	✗	T
c2(2)	C2 (Coffee)	✓	✗	F
c1(3)	C1 (Cleaning)	✗	✓	?
c2(3)	C2 (Coffee)	✗	✓	T
c1(4)	C1 (Cleaning)	✗	✗	F
c2(4)	C2 (Coffee)	✗	✗	F

<Table 1: Summary of the possible context-tokens>>

If  $u\theta$  is uttered in  $c1(1)$  or  $c2(1)$ , both sides of the bi-conditional part (the consequent) of  $T3(C1)/(C2)$ , call it E3, are trivially true.

E3(C1)  $u\theta$  is true if and only if there is a puddle of milk in the fridge.

E3(C2)  $u\theta$  is true if and only if there is a bottle of milk in the fridge.

Similarly, both sides are false if  $u\theta$  is uttered in  $c1(4)$  and  $c2(4)$ . As for  $c1(2)$  and  $c2(2)$ , which were original examples of Travis quoted above, contextualists claim that that both sides of E3 are true if  $u\theta$  is uttered in  $c1(2)$  and false if uttered in  $c2(2)$ .<sup>19</sup> Also, uttered in  $c2(3)$ , where there is no puddle of milk but there is a bottle of milk, we would say both sides of E3(C2) are true, without hesitation.

But, then, what about  $c1(3)$ ? Should we also think that both sides of E3(C1) are *false*? If all the instances of H were thought to be true, we must think so. However, it is doubtful that people really accept this verdict. In particular, even if  $u\theta$  is an utterance in C1 and there is no puddle of milk, is the utterance by Odile (either uttered mistakenly or uttered intentionally to mislead Hugo) “There is milk in the fridge” still *false* when a bottle of milk is there? It seems too odd to say here that there is no milk in the fridge despite the existence of a bottle of milk in the fridge.<sup>20</sup>

If  $u\theta$  is true, however, that means that  $u\theta$  can be true even if there is no puddle

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<sup>19</sup> An anonymous referee of this journal claimed that he/she does not share this intuition. We shall come back to this issue below.

<sup>20</sup> We have actually conducted the survey on this, and found that, impressively 86% (95% confidence interval: 75%-93%) of participants answered that the utterance (what Odile said) was true. See for details, our *manuscript*.

of milk in the fridge (there being no milk in the sense of C1) and uttered exactly in such a context (C1). Such a truth then falsifies the left-to-right direction of E3(C1) ( $u\theta$  is true *only if* there is a puddle of milk in the fridge), and therefore T3(C1) too, since the antecedent of T3(C1) is true, where  $\text{Int}(u\theta)$  belongs to the quote name \*there is a puddle of milk in the fridge\*. Thus, this amounts to a false instance of H. Obviously, the same can be said to F *mutatis mutandis*.

Note that, people's judgment that  $u\theta$  is true (and therefore E3(C1) is false), is compatible with acknowledging its context-relative content that *there is a puddle of milk in the fridge*. People are still fully aware of the context of the utterance (C1) and the intention of Odile there, but they nevertheless judge that "There is milk in the fridge" uttered in that context true. Here note that, in response to Field's requirement, we can even admit that both sides of E3(C1), the bi-conditional part of T3(C1), are uttered by the same person, in the same context. Indeed, we can hypothetically assume that the both sides of E3(C1) are uttered by Odile herself in c1(3), but since "there is a puddle of milk in the fridge" is false there, T3(C1) is also false. Thus, the conclusion is the same even if Alignment is fully satisfied. Note also that we are not assuming here any dubious assessment relativity of the style of MacFarlane (2014). The truth of  $u\theta$  and the falsity of T3(C1) are fixed at the time of utterance in c1(3). Note, finally, that, even if we assume that there are multiple contents,<sup>21</sup> or multiple different instances of F and H (due to multiple correct translations and interpretations) for one and the same utterance, that does not affect our conclusion as long as there is the context-relative non-literal content. If there is such a content, there is also an instantiation of F and H by  $u\theta$  with that content,

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<sup>21</sup> See for example Corazza (2012), who calls this view pluri-propositionalism. According to him, pluri-propositionalists include Kent Bach and John Perry.



which is falsified by the accidental truth.

Let us call the token of  $u0$  uttered in  $c1(3)$   $u0(a)$ . No doubt the truth of  $u0(a)$  is unexpected and unintended, and therefore merely *accidental*. But accidental truths are nothing extraordinary, which have been discussed and taken for granted in epistemology, namely in Gettier cases.<sup>22</sup> In fact, we can reconstruct the cleaning context of the milk case into a Gettier case, in which Odile thought she saw a puddle of milk at the bottom of it (thus believing that there is milk there), while it was actually just a reflection of the room light and the fridge was clean (whereas in Travis's milk case, Odile's belief was not explicitly specified). If, in this context, the fridge contained a bottle of milk deep inside, then Odile's (justified) belief is merely accidentally true, and it does seem here that she does not know that there is milk in the fridge.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, as we argued (with empirical data) elsewhere, this analogy holds for many (if not all) Gettier cases if we appropriately fill in the background, and therefore the contextual variance of the contents of the Gettier belief and the corresponding (sincere) utterance should also be admitted. If so, however, those who deny that  $u0(a)$  is true must also be committed to the claim that the belief of the agent in a typical Gettier case<sup>24</sup> is (at least sometimes) *false*, rather than (accidentally) true,<sup>25</sup> which, though consistent,

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<sup>22</sup> Though we are not concerned with giving a precise analysis of the nature of accidentality here, see for the relevant sense discussed, Yamada (2011) and Schafer (2014). But see Account in the next section.

<sup>23</sup> Our empirical survey also confirmed this. For details, again see our *manuscript*.

<sup>24</sup> Note that, there is in fact a question about the unity of what has been called "Gettier cases". For example, Blouw, Buckwalter, and Turri (2018) propose 5 categories of Gettier cases.

<sup>25</sup> It is possible to claim here that the utterance is false, whereas the corresponding *belief* of Odile is (accidentally) true. But that denies the intuitive principle that a sincere utterance "p" based on a true belief that p, is also true. Moreover, such a claim is incompatible with Horwich's claim of the equivalence between H and EB (his schema for belief). See p. 102 of his 1998a.

goes against not only our folk judgment of truth, but also the tradition of epistemology.<sup>26</sup>

We may agree with deflationists that, insofar as the communication in context C1 (the cleaning context) is concerned, all that matters there is the existence of a puddle of milk, and the possibility of there being a bottle of milk is simply irrelevant. But such a possibility does matter when we evaluate the truth-value of the utterance. For example, you say “Every bottle is empty” at a party and everyone around agrees, except one who challenges you by saying “No, there should be some non-empty bottle somewhere in the world!” You may indeed agree, without retracting what is said by your utterance (the contextually expanded content). Thus, when we assess the truth-value of what is said by an utterance, we often need to consider *more than* what the utterer (and the hearer, if there is no misunderstanding) had in mind in communication. Similarly, when Odile realized that there was a bottle of milk in the fridge in c1(3), she herself would admit that *uO* was true (despite it being unexpected or unintended, or merely accidental), even if she had already found that there was no puddle of milk in the fridge by that time.<sup>27, 28</sup>

To see how general our argument is, let us see one more case, this time using “Al is ready” (an example of completion in section 2).

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<sup>26</sup> Though, admittedly it is arguable that the belief of the agent in some type of Gettier cases is false, rather than accidentally true. See Blouw et al. (2018) for such empirical data and our *manuscript* for more on this view.

<sup>27</sup> Arguably, here the content judged true was recognized later through the very consideration of the truth value, whose guiding role is not compatible with the deflationist thesis (iii) in section 2.

<sup>28</sup> We mentioned the disagreement with the falsity judgment of c2(2) (the coffee context where there is no bottle of milk) in footnote 19. In fact, the intuition of judging it to be true is also (to some extent) empirically supported by our own empirical survey. We are just following Travis’s claim here, but even if we think it to be true, as long as we accept that E3(C2), which is quite intuitive for the utterance in the coffee context, it is just another instance of accidental truth, and does not affect our argument here (also falsifying T3(C2)).

Al is taking a very important exam, but he is not studying for it at all. He just pretends he is studying hard for it, and has always told a lie to his brother, John, that he is ready for the exam. One day, before dinner, John found that his parents were talking about Al. He thought that they were talking about his exam. So, John says to them, "Don't worry. Al is ready". In fact, they were talking about whether Al was ready for dinner, and he was. So, John's utterance was true, if accidentally.

It is easy to see that such an utterance also falsifies F and H in the same way. Thus, our argument is not based on an idiosyncratic example, but a general feature of accidental truth.

## 6. Responses to Argument from Accidental Truth

There can be mainly following six responses to the last argument, with three As and three Rs as we name them:

**Accommodation:** to admit the failure of F and H, but claim that PS or E can accommodate utterance truths and even accidental truths.

**Acceptance:** to accept the argument as correct and conclude that, *therefore*, we should accept semantic minimalism.

**Account:** to give an independent account of accidental truth in terms of propositional truth to save F and H.

**Retreat:** to not only abandon F and H, but also the attempt to explain utterance truths in general, and retreat to the original schemata DS and PS.

**Rejection:** to reject any accidental truth from the instances of F and H.

**Revision:** to adopt a progressive attitude toward the concept of truth, and propose a revisionary concept of truth that does not allow accidental truth.

**Accommodation** was already considered and rejected in section 4, as a claim that PS (or E) can accommodate the context-sensitivity of the content of utterances, and is not a very plausible way of dealing with the problem of accidental truth either.

Since Horwich denied the eternal sentence, and hence the “proposition that p” itself can contextually vary, it is reasonable to expect that it can also be accidentally true (where utterance “p” is). If so, PS, or better, E, can be seen as the equivalence of two utterances, just as DS, which then seems to accommodate accidental truths without its instances being falsified (cf. Whiting 2011).

However, this is simply because E (or PS) lacks  $u\exists$ . Even if E was taken as the equivalence of two utterances, it says nothing about the truth of utterances, since the truth for deflationism must be captured by the truth-predicate (“is true”) in the schema (as applied to  $u\exists$ ). Consequently, even if  $u1$  and  $u2$  are accidentally true, E (or S) itself says nothing about the accidental truth of an utterance ( $u\exists$ ). Thus, truth of utterances, let alone accidental truths, are clearly facts lying outside of PS or E, and therefore it fails to capture such truths. Incompleteness remains the problem for deflationism. (See also Account and Retreat.)

To consider **Acceptance**, first note that, as contextualists generally appeal to our intuitive, pre-theoretic, judgments,<sup>29</sup> we have appealed to intuitions, whether about content or

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Recanati (2010) takes “what is said” in the contextualist sense as the

truth. Thus, if people do judge an utterance like  $uO(a)$  to be true, we should accept it as given, even if such data rather seem to count against context sensitivity. Even so, however, such a truth does not by itself vindicate semantic minimalism. For, in the vast majority of *other* normal contexts, context-sensitivity is already and independently well-supported by our intuitions and empirical data,<sup>30</sup> even though utterance contents in general are put aside by minimalists as pragmatic contents from the beginning. Thus, although, for our purpose here, we do not have to argue against semantic minimalism, minimalists cannot consistently explain all such data, and exceptions in some special cases (such as the truth of  $uO(a)$ ) alone cannot vindicate semantic minimalism,<sup>31</sup> while denying all such intuitions would therefore commit deflationists to a radical *error theory*. Deflationists then should provide a good psychological account of why people commit *mistakes* about the truth-values in most of the cases of context-relative contents, which is not readily available.

However, a relevant worry arises here, according to which we need to abandon the truth conditional conception of the content of utterances. For, if  $uO$  has the content that *there is a puddle of milk in the fridge* in  $c1(3)$  but is still true, that content cannot be captured by its truth condition (thus, it is not a *truth-conditional content*). Even if it is true, we do not beg the question against deflationism, for deflationists usually do not adopt truth conditional semantics, by denying such a substantial role of truth in explaining meaning (the deflationist thesis (iii) in section 2).<sup>32</sup> Still, if our argument

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*intuitive truth-conditional content* of the utterance (p. 12).

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Hansen & Chemla 2013 and our own data in our *manuscript*.

<sup>31</sup> In particular, the truth judgment of  $uO(a)$  alone does not show that there is always some truth-evaluable minimal content for any utterance, let alone that people are always aware of it (cf. availability principle by Recanati, e.g., in his 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Note however that even deflationists can admit a truth conditional *conception* of meaning, if only the truth condition is taken as just a *product* of an independent theory of meaning, such as the use theory (cf. Horwich 1998b, pp. 72-3). This is a matter of

requires a peculiar view of meaning, that might reduce the attraction of the argument.

In fact, our argument by itself is still compatible with the straightforward truth conditional semantics if we think that (as discussed in the last section) an utterance can have multiple (truth conditional) contents (literal and non-literal, in this case), according to which the salient content can vary depending on the context-token, and in c1(3) the literal content of *u0* becomes salient or relevant presumably due to its (accidental) truth. Deflationists cannot adopt this view, however, since here the salient content is determined or picked up by truth, or our truth-value consideration, rather than the salient content determines the truth value of the utterance. Again, such a role of truth (where truth conceptually precedes meaning) goes against the deflationist thesis (iii). The same should be said to the view that there is only a single content for an utterance but it is determined not only by context-type but also by truth consideration in such an *ad hoc* manner in the case of accidental truth.<sup>33</sup> Note however that, even here, the very fact that we judge it to be *accidentally* true testifies that we are still aware of the content of *u0* in c1(3) that *there is a puddle of milk in the fridge*, whose existence was enough for the falsity of T3(C1), as we saw in the last section.

Finally, semantic minimalists may claim that *there is a puddle of milk in the fridge* is not a content, not even a *pragmatic* content, of an utterance, but merely a speech act content, or content communicated or implicated by the *act* of utterance. They may then claim that the antecedent of the instance of either F or H is not satisfied, so that, say, T3(C1) remains true, because its antecedent is false. However, this will just bring us

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*explanatory order*, and for deflationists, the notion of meaning is conceptually prior to that of truth (e.g., Horwich 1998a, p. 9). Thus, as long as truth does not play a constitutive role in semantics, they can also talk about the truth condition of the content of utterances. See also Williams (1999) and Gross (2015).

<sup>33</sup> See also footnote 27 above.

back to the initial problem of deflationism, as long as the phenomena of our truth judgements remain the same. For, since in the cases of context shifting argument, the relevant utterance is judged true while its literal content is false, or *vice versa*, this type of minimalist-deflationist just leaves out all such truths of utterances. We started from this problem, Incompleteness, which was in fact Horwich's initial motivation for presenting his H. We shall see more on this kind of problem in Retreat, Rejection, and Revision.

**Account** is a rather straightforward attempt of treating accidental truths by giving an independent account of them in terms of propositional truth. Perhaps a typical example of such accounts is given by the following biconditional:

AT      Utterance *u* is accidentally true if and only if *u accidentally expresses a true proposition*.

This explains accidental truth of an utterance (or belief) in terms its accidentally having a true proposition as its content. However, unless the right-hand side of AT is given a further analysis, AT simply introduces a *new truth predicate*, “expresses a true proposition”,<sup>34</sup> which is simply equivalent to “is true”, and therefore as long as it is just considered primitive, no account is provided and no advance is made here. We need some further account of it in terms of, say, its connection with PS, assuming that there is no accidental truth for proposition. However, as we shall see in our discussion of Retreat

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<sup>34</sup> See p. 290 of Båve (2010), where he considers “expresses a true proposition” as an explanation of the sentential truth in terms of propositional truth.

below, this type of account will inevitably fail. Indeed, as we shall see in our discussion of Reject, any such independent account is in fact known to be very hard.

**Retreat** is to simply admit that F and H cannot accommodate some truths of utterances. Field might then say that, as long as we require Alignment and ignore other people's utterances, DS is enough. Horwich might say that, as long as we are concerned with propositional truths and ignore all utterance truths, there is no problem for PS. And that is all that their theories of truth are concerned with. As we saw in section 4, Horwich was saying that the uses of "is true" in PS (as applied to propositions) are "explanatorily fundamental and meaning-constituting". So, he might say, "Just forget about Incompleteness. PS is enough for understanding the predicate." However, both Field and Horwich were not satisfied with Retreat after all, and that is reasonable enough. Let us see why.

For example, semantic minimalists may retreat to the meaning of sentence-types, and leave the account of the meaning of utterances to pragmatics. However, unlike minimalists, deflationists cannot do the analogous retreat, since there is no natural distinction in truth analogous to the semantics/pragmatics distinction. Retreat then invites an unwanted consequence, namely an (artificial) split of the concept of truth, into one that is amenable to deflationist treatment and another that is not. To avoid this consequence, Field and Horwich wanted to show that truths of utterance (of other people, for Field) were not genuinely *new* instances of truth, over and above DS or PS,<sup>35</sup> that is, such truths were reducible to truths in my own language or propositional truths,

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<sup>35</sup> Horwich assumes that "[o]rdinary language suggests that truth is a property of propositions, and that utterances, beliefs, assertions, etc., inherit their truth-like character from their relationship to propositions" (Horwich 1998a, p. 102. Cf. p. 16, p. 133, p. 135).



through providing some bridging principle(s). However, what the argument from accidental truth has shown include the failure of the very bridging principles, between truths of other people's utterances and those of my own, and between utterance truths and propositional truths. As for the disquotational truth, F itself was such a bridging principle. As for H, Horwich explicitly presented two bridging principles, with which one could derive H from PS and *vice versa*. Given that H fails while PS is intact, the culprit should be the following principle (Horwich 1998a, p. 101. See also pp. 133-5), which we call UP here.

UP  $u$  expresses the proposition *that*  $p \rightarrow (u \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \text{the proposition that } p \text{ is true})$ .

This looks at first a highly plausible principle. However, from the failure of H the failure of UP directly follows. In particular, the following instance of UP is false, for the same reason as H (and F).

$u0(a)$  expresses the proposition *that there is a puddle of milk in the fridge*  
 $\rightarrow (u0(a) \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \text{the proposition that there is a puddle of milk is true})$ .

However, the failure of bridging principles implies that PS and H (and analogously DS and F) are independent from each other, and consequently the truth of other people's utterance (F) or utterance in general (H) is not the same as the truth captured by the original deflationist schema (DS or PS). If Retreat accepts it, that leads to a split of the notion of truth, which only makes Incompleteness more pressing.

Moreover, this consequence is a version of *pluralism* about truth. Pluralism

about truth, or at least the one advocated by C. Wright, M. Lynch, and others, claims that there are multiple different ways of being true, and it has mainly been a response to the problem for traditional inflationism (such as the correspondence theory, coherence theory, etc.), such that it is difficult to provide a unified account of truth about different types of discourse such as ordinary empirical truths, mathematical truths, moral truths, etc. This is what Lynch calls a *scope problem* (Lynch 2009). Even though it is generally thought that deflationism fares well with this problem, or it may even be taken as a *motivation* for deflationism, the Incompleteness challenge based on our argument can be seen as posing another scope problem, the difficulty of providing a unified account of propositional truth, sentential truth, utterance truth, etc. which *is* a problem for deflationism.<sup>36</sup> Even though Field distinguishes weak truth and strong truth in discussing the truth condition of vague sentences, and simply accepts that we have two different concepts of truth (Field 2001, pp. 228-9), deflationists surely cannot accept the pluralism of (some particular) deflationary truth *and (general and inclusive) inflationary truth*, since that is to say that deflationists are only concerned with the deflationary aspect of truth while admitting that truth *in general* is inflationary. For Horwich, who holds that the folk concept of truth is deflationary, such pluralism is all the more unacceptable. He cannot admit that the actual concept of truth ordinary people have is not captured by PS alone. Thus, Retreat is an option for deflationists.

In this connection, we saw that the problem of Account was the lack of further analysis of “expresses a true proposition” in AT. But if its “true proposition” were explained by PS, the account of the remaining part of AT would be the very bridging

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<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, starting from a very different consideration, Moore (2020, sec. 5.2) reaches a very similar conclusion.

principle (namely, UP) between utterance truth and propositional truth, which we saw fails *precisely due to accidental truth*. Thus, giving an account of accidental truth in the style of AT was from the beginning wrong-headed.

**Rejection** should be distinguished from Retreat in that it still tries to maintain F and H. For propositional deflationists like Horwich, the genuine truth-bearers, even those in F and H, are propositions, and arguably there is nothing accidental about the truth of propositions.<sup>37</sup> They might therefore rather hold that accidental truths are in fact not genuine truths that the theory of truth should be concerned with. For them, truth *per se* has nothing to do with accidentality, and hence properly ignorable. This is to preclude false instances of F and H (being false due to accidental truth) from the scope of the equivalence schema.

One might worry that this way of treating the problem of accidental truth is rather *ad hoc*. But deflationists might respond that restrictions to the instances of the schema are commonplace. For example, both inflationists and deflationists often rule out the pathological sentences that produce semantic paradoxes from the scope of the relevant schema.<sup>38</sup> They also often rule out some sentences/utterances/propositions as neither true nor false, since they are thought to fail to satisfy (the *right-to-left* direction of) the relevant biconditional schema (cf. Dummett 2001, p. 233, discussed in Whiting 2011, p. 617, and Richard 2008, Lynch 2011, p. 154). So, what's the problem if deflationists *also* rule out some utterances from the scope of their schemata?

However, this response is viable only if there is a principled way of ruling out

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<sup>37</sup> If, for example, we identify proposition with a set of possible worlds, whether it is true or not is a matter of the set-membership relation between the actual world and the set, and arguably there can be nothing accidental about it.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Horwich explicitly does this (Horwich 1998, p. 40).

instances of F and H that involve accidental truths, to preclude false instances in advance. Otherwise, it would be question-begging to define the utterances to be precluded as those utterances that falsify the instances of H (or F). However, giving any legitimate principle for doing this requires a specific way of sorting out accidental truths from non-accidental truths. And unlike the case of semantic paradoxes, where one only needs to rule out some particular (pathological) sentences (precluding sentences with semantic terms, unrestricted quantifiers, self-reference, etc.),<sup>39</sup> giving a precise condition for non-accidentality has been found, in epistemology, notoriously difficult. It is for this very reason that, after half a century of attempts, many epistemologists have abandoned (following Williamson 2000) the whole enterprise of giving an analysis of knowledge (or at least the conjunctive analysis of it, in the form of knowledge is a justified true belief plus some additional condition). But if it is what epistemologists were unable to do despite the decades of effort, there is no reason to think that theorists of truth could do better. (Of course, if deflationists could succeed in doing so, that would be a great contribution to epistemology too!) Specifying the precise condition of accidentality in restricting the scope (the domain of truth-bearers) of F and H seems hopeless. Besides, the vast majority of our everyday utterances are ecliptic (requiring expansion, completion, or other pragmatic enrichment) and, for almost all of such utterances, we can easily think of some analogous context in which they are accidentally true, as we saw in the case of “Al is ready” in section 5. Thus, we can find a false instance of F and H for each of such utterances. Again, this also shows how hopeless Account (not only the style of AT but any such attempt in general) was from the beginning.

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<sup>39</sup> This does not, of course, mean that identifying the pathological instances is easy. See for the difficulty of giving a principled restriction here for deflationists, Beall & Armour-Garb (2003) and section 10.4 of Simmons (2018).

In any case, we should rather doubt the very attempt of Rejection here. Accidental truths are nevertheless truths, and even if accidental truths are merely *derivative* truths (presumably being *fringe phenomena*), derivative truths *are* nevertheless truths.

**Revision** takes the relevant equivalence schema (including F and H) to be a norm, rather than being empirically validated or invalidated depending on its instances, and its instances are simply axioms, being true by definition. This effectively eliminates the possibility of accidental truths. Since the claim of the accidental truth of  $uO(a)$  is based on the folk intuitions, this response just ignores the intuitions about ordinary language or folk intuitions in general as irrelevant for the theory of truth. It then follows quite a radical revisionary conception of truth, for accidental truths are quite ordinary, mundane phenomena. Unlike Horwich, that is not a problem for proponents of this response, since their concept of truth is something people *ought* to accept, rather than they actually have.

Some deflationists, especially disquotationalists like Quine and Field (see for instance Quine 1970, Field 1994, 2001), do not refrain from being committed to a revisionary concept of truth (mainly due to semantic paradoxes).<sup>40</sup> Even so, however, if such deflationists hold a notion of truth that does not allow any accidental truths, they (as suggested in section 5) would be committed to claiming that some beliefs in Gettier cases are not instances of *genuine* truth, but are in fact *false*, in their (revisionary) sense.<sup>41</sup> Such a view is highly implausible and hard to maintain, and not usable in

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<sup>40</sup> See p. 266 of Field (1994). Field even says that whether his disquotational notion of truth is shared by ordinary people is “of only sociological interest” (ibid. p. 277). See also p. 143 of Field (2001), which is part of the postscript to his (1994).

<sup>41</sup> Note that, deflationists cannot appeal to the truth-value gap in this particular context, since, as suggested in Rejection, non-truth-aptness would falsify the corresponding instances of the schema. Note also that, unlike the case of lack of

epistemology or even in the theory of representation in philosophy of mind. If the present problem is the sole reason to adopt such a radical revisionary concept of truth, therefore, this response is too *ad hoc*.

The fact that F and H, let alone DS and PS, fail to capture accidental truths implies that the equivalence schema, whichever variant, fails to capture not only the extension of the truth predicate, but also its proper *intension*, in the sense that *those who learned the notion of truth only through the equivalence schema would not understand accidental truth* (remember that deflationists hold that, other than the equivalence schema, nothing more is required for understanding truth). For such people, the truth of utterance like  $u0(a)$  would be mysterious. Thus, deflationism leaves the accidental truths unintelligible, by keeping people from appreciating the nature of unexpectedness in such truths.<sup>42</sup>

Even if a proposal of revisionary concept of truth is possible and is a legitimate option, therefore, this particular radical version of revisionary truth does not seem what deflationists can accept.

## 7. Conclusion and Implications of our Argument

The argument from accidental truth showed that the folk concept of truth cannot be captured by deflationist schemata because of accidental truths ordinary people accept, and we saw that all responses to the argument face a problem, and none of them seems a readily available option for deflationists. Any attempt to fix the problem, in particular,

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reference or presupposition failure, the relevant utterance clearly has a truth-evaluable content. Thus, if they are not true, they should be *false*.

<sup>42</sup> There, this unexpectedness is not a matter of mere subjective feeling, but is arising from the objective gap between the actual truth condition and the one in the equivalence schema.

to cover such truths by providing a bridging principle, just ignore all such truths as irrelevant, or provide instead a revisionary concept of truth, etc., fails. Thus, this argument therefore poses a serious problem for deflationism.

There may be further modifications of the responses or new independent responses, but we may at least safely conclude here that deflationists must take accidental truths seriously, and cannot simply ignore them as just fringe, or non-fundamental, phenomena. Accidental truth plays a significant role even in the theory of truth.

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