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**Constituting Assertion: A Pragmatist Critique of Horwich’s ‘Truth’**

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“Everyone ought to agree that asserting is putting forward a sentence as true.”

(Brandom 1994: 231)

“There is no understanding of what it is to assert without the notion of truth.”

(Bar-On & Simmons 2007, p. 78)

In the 25 years since its first publication, Paul Horwich’s *Truth* has significantly re-shaped debate over the nature and significance of the concept. It did so by offering a remarkably comprehensive form of deflationism (‘Minimalism’), complete with numerous anticipated objections and many compelling replies.[[1]](#footnote-2) In its opening pages, Horwich declares a strong preference for a philosophical methodology focused on linguistic *usage,* that is, on the function(s) the concept of truth serves in actual discourse. In doing so Horwich eschews abstract metaphysics, arguing that metaphysical or ontological conceptions of truth rest on basic misconceptions.

From this description, one might reasonably expect Horwich’s book to have drawn inspiration from, or even embodied philosophical *pragmatism* of some kind.[[2]](#footnote-3) Yet the book has two significant deficiencies from a pragmatist perspective. The first is that despite its rhetoric, the book contains very little description of, or reflection upon, linguistic practice with ‘true’ and its cognates, in all its messy variety.[[3]](#footnote-4) Instead, Horwich’s book focuses on a single explicit logical usage of the truth predicate, that is, its use as a *denominalizing* device (as in “The proposition that ‘Scotland is part of the UK’ is true.”). As Misak 2007 argues, this will strike a pragmatist as an extremely ‘impoverished view of practice’ (p. 70), since it deliberately ignores the seemingly central, plausibly *constitutive* role played by the concept of truth in the concepts/practices of belief, assertion and inquiry.[[4]](#footnote-5) The second deficiency of the book is that Horwich repeats several times Russell’s unfortunate canard that pragmatists think ‘p is true iff it is useful to believe that p’ (e.g. p. 34, p. 47). As a result, Horwich overlooks the best insights pragmatists have had to offer on issues of truth, assertion and inquiry, and their substantive interconnections, in favor of a familiar but misguided caricature of the views of William James and F.C.S. Schiller.

From a pragmatist standpoint then, Horwich’s book embodies a rather striking injustice. It begins by embracing, at least in part, pragmatism’s radical reorientation of philosophical method (the one that began with C.S. Peirce’s *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* and continued through Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*), then proceeds to ignore, or to caricature and dismiss insights this method has yielded in the century since. In this paper I therefore continue some work begun by Chris Hookway, Cheryl Misak and others, which attempts to develop a more historically accurate and illuminating critical contrast between pragmatism and Minimalism (and other forms of deflationism) about truth. My hope is that doing so will produce a livelier, more charitable and nuanced debate. The pragmatist critique of Minimalism that results is broadly Peircean,[[5]](#footnote-6) though it also draws upon contemporary scholarship (particularly that of Hookway and Brandom). The gist of the critique is that while Minimalism depends essentially upon the mistaken assumption that the concept of truth is merely a linguistic device that *facilitates* assertion, pragmatism about truth (or PT, hereafter) recognizes that the concept also plays a substantive role in *constituting* (and thus explaining the very nature of) assertion. As a result, Horwich’s Minimalism, does not and cannot accomplish its stated goal of explaining all of the facts involving truth. Indeed, the kind of thorough-going deflationism sought by Horwich and others is incompatible with an adequate account of assertion.

**Inflationism, Deflationism & Something In Between**

Contemporary debate about the concept of truth, as with so many other debates in contemporary Analytic philosophy, is structured in terms of an alleged dichotomy.[[6]](#footnote-7) In this case the dichotomy is between inflationist and deflationist approaches. An inflationist is someone who believes that the concept of truth picks out a natural property (e.g. correspondence to the facts), and is therefore naturalistically reducible.[[7]](#footnote-8) A deflationist is someone who believes that the concept of truth either (a) does not pick out a property at all or (b) picks out a non-substantive property.

Horwich is a deflationist (of the (b) variety). This is because he believes inflationism rests upon two misconceptions: (i) that truth has some hidden structure or essence awaiting our discovery, (ii) that hinging upon this discovery is our ability to explain central philosophical principles such as ‘truth is the aim of science’ or ‘true beliefs facilitate successful behavior’. The cause of these misconceptions, Horwich says, is a specious ‘linguistic analogy’ between predicates like ‘is magnetic’ and ‘is diabetic’ and the predicate ‘is true’. He suggests that ‘is true’ is not like these predicates. It does not attribute to entities ‘any ordinary property’ and is for this reason irreducible - ‘Unlike most other properties, being true is unsusceptible to conceptual or scientific analysis.’ (p. 5) Horwich instead proposes Minimalism, which says that ‘in order for the truth predicate to fulfill its function we must acknowledge that…

The proposition that quarks really exist is true if and only if quarks really exist, the proposition that lying is bad is true if and only if lying is bad, . . . and so on,

*but nothing more about truth need be assumed.* (*Loc. Cit.*).

Horwich believes that ‘every fact about truth can be naturally derived from those biconditionals’, and his *Minimalism* is thus the view that we can explain all of ‘the facts involving truth’ with nothing more than the Equivalence Schema:

 ES It is true *that p* if and only if *p* (*Ibid.* p. 6)

Aspects of Horwich’s case for this proposal sound remarkably pragmatist in spirit, particularly the notion of the specious linguistic analogy. However, Horwich thinks the analogy specious *only* in the case of truth, whereas I take it many pragmatists, particularly contemporary or neo-pragmatists think it specious in most or allcases.[[8]](#footnote-9) Horwich, by contrast, endorses a reductive semantics for other properties.[[9]](#footnote-10) This is surprising and puzzling, considering Horwich’s claim to be influenced by the later Wittgenstein.[[10]](#footnote-11) It may however help to explain why Horwich, like many of his contemporaries, does not seem to recognize the possibility of a certain intermediate position.

The pragmatist, I suggest, believes that we might accept (i) and (ii) as misconceptions yet still think there are *some* substantive connections between truth and practices like assertion and inquiry (albeit non-metaphysical, non-reductive ones). Horwich fails to appreciate even the possibility of such a position, I suspect, because his knowledge of PT begins and ends with the worst parts of William James’s work, which is to say, with Russell’s familiar myth. In the next section, I will endeavor to set aside this myth, and replace it with a more historically-informed, up-to-date picture of PT.

**Russell’s Myth and the space of alternative theories**

Horwich believes a pragmatist about truth is someone who holds that (1) the truth predicate is susceptible to reductive analysis, and (2) the correct analysis is ‘‘p’ is true iff it is useful to believe p’ (p. 34). In other words, Horwich assumes that PT is a form of inflationism, and that a pragmatist’s goal is to reduce truth to an essential property like utility or warranted assertibility.

No pragmatist, so far as I know, currently holds this view, and it remains at best controversial whether any pragmatist ever *has* held such a view, despite James and Schiller’s ill-considered remarks on the subject.[[11]](#footnote-12) It seems to me, and to many other pragmatism scholars, that Russell, Moore and several others constructed out of these remarks one of our discipline’s most enduring straw men (or at the very least *weak* men), though I shall not argue for this historical thesis here - I leave that to historians more qualified than I.[[12]](#footnote-13)

The actual pragmatist conception of truth begins with C.S. Peirce (this much is uncontroversial), and though it clearly had a substantial influence upon James and Dewey, neither showed any great appreciation for or interest in its nuances.[[13]](#footnote-14) Peirce’s rather scattered and incomplete remarks about truth *have* however subsequently been developed and defended by Frank Ramsey, David Wiggins, Chris Hookway, Cheryl Misak, Catherine Legg and various others. This paper will therefore draw on these scholars’ work, and not on James & Dewey, nor on the work of those more recent ‘neo-pragmatist’ figures influenced by their views (Putnam, Rorty, *et al*).

To understand the intermediate logical space (between deflationism and inflationism) that I believe PT inhabits, I propose to deploy an invaluable taxonomy - proposed and defended by Dorit Bar-On and Keith Simmons. On their view, there are several different claims a deflationist may endorse. The relationships between these claims are at best contentious:

*Metaphysical Deflationism:* there is no property of truth - it does not belong in our ontology.

*Linguistic Deflationism:* any story concerning the role of the word/predicate ‘true’/‘is true’ according to which the word/predicate lacks any cognitive content (e.g. redundancy theory, minimalism, prosententialism, etc.)

*Conceptual Deflationism:* the conviction that there is nothing more to be said or learned about the concept of truth beyond what is contained in one’s preferred form of *Linguistic Deflationism*.[[14]](#footnote-15)

Horwich’s Minimalism, on this taxonomy, actually incorporates several elements. It is *metaphysically* inflationist (he is willing to countenance the existence of a truth-property, so long as it is not substantive/reducible), *linguistically* deflationist (it explains truth-talk solely in terms of its denominalizing function) and *conceptually* deflationist*.* Horwich endorses *Conceptual Deflationism* by insisting that truth has a certain ‘purity’, and by denying that it has substantive connections to other concepts like belief, assertion, inquiry, etc. It is this claim - and not his *Linguistic Deflationism* - that will strike the actual pragmatist as a mistake, because as Bar-On and Simmons rightly argue, (i) *Conceptual Deflationism* does not follow from *Linguistic Deflationism*, and (ii) we have good reason to think *Conceptual Deflationism* is false. As I have already hinted above, the rationale for (ii) is roughly that Minimalism reflects an impoverished view of truth-talk, or our linguistic practices more generally.

Thus Pragmatism about Truth (PT) is a conception of truth that, while perfectly consistent with *Metaphysical Inflationism* (Peirce talks frequently about the property of truth), and with various forms of *Linguistic Deflationism*, is inconsistent with *Conceptual Deflationism.* This is because PT is centrally an attempt to understand the substantive connections between the concept of truth and *practices* like assertion and inquiry, particularly truth’s connection to settled belief that results from self-controlled and sustained rational inquiry.

**Brandom’s PT, with some caveats**

In this section I set out a brief sketch of PT. This sketch begins with the work of Bob Brandom, who has been greatly influenced by the work of the classical pragmatists. As a result, Brandom supplies a vastly more charitable and faithful rendering of PT than Horwich.

It is important to be clear from the outset however, that despite his sympathy with pragmatism more broadly, Brandom himself rejects PT. Instead, Brandom argues in favor of Grover *et al*’s prosententialism, a form of *Linguistic Deflationism*.[[15]](#footnote-16) Just as Horwich considers Minimalism to be exhaustive, Brandom considers prosententialism to tell us everything there is to know about the concept of truth. This places Horwich and Brandom in the same camp, in that they are both committed to *Conceptual Deflationism*. Thus, although I wish to begin with Brandom’s useful sketch of PT, I will later consider and respond to Brandom’s own arguments against it.

According to Brandom, the pragmatist about truth holds that:

(1) The clarification of truth should be the product of a performative, anti-descriptive strategy, ‘emphasizing the act of calling something true rather than the descriptive content one thereby associates with what is called true’.

(2) The act in question is one of taking up a normative stance or attitude (committing oneself to a claim).

(3) This commitment is a matter of adopting it as a guide to action (where this can be cashed out in inferential terms).

(4) The approach thereby includes ‘some sort of not merely subjective measure of [the] appropriateness [of making the relevant commitment], namely, the success of the actions it leads to.’

(5) ‘once one has understood acts of taking-true according to this four-part model, one has understood all there is to understand about truth.’[[16]](#footnote-17)

This characterization is preferable to Horwich’s because it takes into consideration the distinctive nature of pragmatic clarifications (they are not definitions or reductive analyses, and treating them as such renders them highly implausible - see Hookway 2002, Misak 2004, Howat 2013**,** etc.). It thereby avoids the error of misrepresenting the pragmatist as a garden-variety inflationist, and takes seriously Peirce’s *pragmatic maxim*, his methodological rule for the clarification of concepts. The maxim says that achieving the highest grade of clarity about a concept like truth involves - not the search for a definition or essential property but - focusing upon its practical significance, or the practical consequences of its application. One of the most obvious practical functions of truth is its enabling a certain kind of normative commitment, typically through the speech-act of assertion. Hence the above makes a significantly more charitable and faithful starting point for our understanding PT and its contrast with Minimalism.

There are two main aspects to this sketch that require further elaboration, before we can begin to clarify that contrast. The first is a label Brandom chooses for the position - he says that PT is a form of ‘phenomenalism’ about truth. I will briefly take issue with this label. It is important in what follows to understand in just what sense PT purports to *exhaust* the practical phenomena relevant to truth, so the comparison with Horwich’s *Conceptually Deflationist* ambition is clear. The second aspect is what sorts of positive claims might result from Brandom’s sketch. Here I offer only a quick summary of a view I’ve discussed at greater length elsewhere, since the key point of the paper is to isolate where and why Horwich and the pragmatist disagree, rather than to offer a comprehensive defense of PT.[[17]](#footnote-18)

Brandom explains why he considers PT a ‘phenomenalist’ theory as follows:

Truth is treated, not as a property independent of our attitudes, to which they must eventually answer, but rather as a creature of taking-true and treating-as-true. The central theoretical focus is on what one is doing when one takes something to be true, that is, our use of ‘true’, the acts and practices of taking things to be true that collectively constitute the use we make of this expression. It is then denied that there is more to the phenomenon of truth than the proprieties of such takings. I call theories of this general sort ‘phenomenalist’, in recognition of the analogy with the paradigmatic subjective phenomenalism concerning physical objects, whose slogan was *esse est percipi*.[[18]](#footnote-19)

Note that Brandom opts for a particularly strong way of expressing this phenomenalism, in the form of claim (5). This, I suggest, is not the only way to construe PT in phenomenalist terms. There is a clear logical difference between thinking that truth is exhausted by the relevant logical, practical or normative phenomena, and thinking that any particular pragmatic clarification captures all of those phenomena. I think Peirce’s work - and in particular the connections he draws between the pragmatic maxim and his semeiotic - supply good reasons to think Peirce would never have endorsed the latter claim.[[19]](#footnote-20) Thus, in what follows I propose to substitute Brandom’s (5) for this more modest and plausible claim:

(5)\* the content of the concept of truth is exhausted by the phenomena (e.g. logical, linguistic, normative) pertaining to its use in actual or possible contexts.

What sorts of positive claims result from applying the approach codified in (1)-(5)\*? The claims could focus, as James sometimes does, on *usefulness*, or as Dewey sometimes does, upon *warranted* *assertibility.* However, Peirce’s approach focuses instead upon the metaphor of the long-term *convergence* of opinion among a *community* of rational inquirers. Perhaps the most famous example of this is his remark that ‘The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth’ (W3: 273).

It should be clear by now that such positive claims are not to be construed as definitionsor reductive analyses of truth. They will not specify necessary and sufficient conditions for a proposition’s being true. Thus, succumbing to the philosophical reflex of generating counter-examples, as Russell famously does with the useful fiction of *Santa Claus,* would be to ignore the methodological foundation of the view. Examples of truths that are *not* ‘fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate’ will be similarly beside the point.[[20]](#footnote-21) Rather, Hookway writes, ‘pragmatic clarifications of concepts and propositions are best seen as accounts of the (experiential) commitments we incur when we assert or judge the proposition in question.’[[21]](#footnote-22) Hookway captures Peirce’s pragmatic clarification of truth using a carefully formulated conditional (the label ‘D5’ is his):

D5: If it is true that *p*, then anyone who inquired into the question whether *p* long enough and well enough (using good methods of inquiry) would eventually reach a stable belief that *p* which would not be disturbed by further evidence or investigation.[[22]](#footnote-23)

Notice that D5 entails that all those who investigate some true proposition *p* would eventually *converge* upon a stable belief in *p*, provided they are rational[[23]](#footnote-24), and they inquire long enough and well enough (or in accordance with Peirce’s *method of science*).[[24]](#footnote-25) Thus, read in accordance with (1)-(5)\*, the thought is roughly that the act of calling a proposition *p* true (and perhaps equally of taking *p* to be true) essentially involves committing oneself to a certain outcome of sufficiently long and diligent future inquiry. In asserting the truth of a proposition, we commit ourselves to, and expect to experience, the opinion of rational inquirers converging upon *p*. This is not at all the same thing as saying that there is some single, metaphysically substantive property that all true propositions have in common, which explains all of the facts about truth. It is also a very long way from saying that ‘‘p’ is true iff it is useful to believe p’. It is, instead, an account of at least one vital function that the concept of truth serves - a function, notice, that is normative, and not merely linguistic or logical, as Minimalism might lead us to expect.

With this rough sketch of a Peircean approach to clarifying truth in place, we can see that someone who advocates PT can, if they wish, agree with Horwich’s Minimalist on several key points, since they are perfectly consistent with the above view:

1. truth picks out a property, however,
2. (a) does not entail that truth is naturalistically reducible, indeed
3. truth is *not* naturalistically reducible,[[25]](#footnote-26)
4. philosophical clarification of the concept of truth ought to involve explaining its linguistic function
5. a large part - perhaps the primary part - of truth’s linguistic function is that of a *denominalizer,* a logical device that facilitates (e.g.) blind endorsement, and this function is fully captured by ES

Notice however that (e) falls short of Minimalism, because it does not require us to say that ES can do *all* of the explanatory work we need a conception of truth to do - it does not commit the pragmatist to *Conceptual Deflationism*. As already suggested, the pragmatist finds that to be an impoverished view of truth’s linguistic function, since it says nothing about the kinds of normative and experiential commitments that interest the Peircean. Thus, the pragmatist as I envision them, also holds a claim like this one:

1. the function of the concept of truth is not *exhausted* by its denominalizing function - the concept also hasa normative/performative function*,* and thus *implicit* and *explanatory* functions or uses.

Why should its normative/performative function lead us to say that truth has functions other than as a denominalizer? In brief, the thought here is that we *implicitly* make use of or rely upon the concept of truth every time we make an assertion (i.e. present a proposition as *true*), believe something (i.e. take it as true) or pursue an inquiry (i.e. attempt to ascertain *the truth* about some matter).[[26]](#footnote-27) We must therefore make *explanatory* use of the concept of truth when we attempt to explain the nature of assertion, inquiry and perhaps also belief and other related phenomena. The data concerning these uses are also therefore part of the explanandum for any satisfactory account of truth. We return to this line of thought below. For now, note its implications for Minimalism. The pragmatist thinks that ES does not provide us with the resources we need to explain all of the functions/uses the concept of truth - they think it leaves the implicit and explanatory uses/functions unexplained. Thus, the pragmatist concludes that:

1. Minimalism is false

**The Argument for (f)**

The argument for (f) is fairly straightforward. To perform the speech-act of assertion is to do a specific, distinctive sort of thing with one’s words, roughly, *to present a proposition as true*. This speech-act is obviously distinct from asking or wondering whether p, promising that p, and so on, and the concept of truth (and the notion that it embodies a distinctive normative commitment) seems to be vital to explaining exactly why. Despite his work’s significantly pre-dating the advent of speech-act theory, this general idea is something Peirce describes in detail in various places, perhaps most arrestingly in one of his unpublished papers on ‘Judgement and Assertion’ (CP 5.546, 1908), where he seems to endorse what we would now call a ‘commitment view of assertion’.

If a man desires to assert anything very solemnly, he takes such steps as will enable him to go before a magistrate or notary and take a binding oath to it… At any rate, it would be followed by very real effects, in case the substance of what is asserted should be proved untrue. This ingredient, the assuming of responsibility, which is so prominent in solemn assertion, must be present in every genuine assertion. For clearly, every assertion involves an effort to make the intended interpreter believe what is asserted, to which end a reason for believing it must be furnished. But if a lie would not endanger the esteem in which the utterer was held, nor otherwise be apt to entail such real effects as he would avoid, the interpreter would have no reason to believe the assertion. Nobody takes any positive stock in those conventional utterances, such as “I am perfectly delighted to see you,” upon whose falsehood no punishment at all is visited. At this point, the reader should call to mind… that even in solitary meditation every judgment is an effort to press home, upon the self of the immediate future and of the general future, some truth… Consequently it must be equally true that here too there is contained an element of assuming responsibility, of “taking the consequences”.[[27]](#footnote-28)

Such a view is very much in keeping with Brandom’s characterization of PT (especially (2)). According to a commitment view ‘by asserting a proposition we undertake certain commitments, typically to be able to provide reason to believe what we are asserting, or, in Peirce’s terms, to “take responsibility’ for its truth’.[[28]](#footnote-29) The nature of at least one such commitment is spelled out by D5 and the accompanying metaphor of convergence. This is the aspect of PT that is more than merely deflationary, but something less than (traditionally) inflationary, thereby disrupting the familiar dichotomy. In asserting that *p*, one relies *implicitly* upon the concept of truth, and in explaining what it means to assert a proposition *p*, one therefore must rely *explanatorily* upon the concept of truth. These are substantive claims, but they are not, nor do they pretend to be, reductive analyses of the concept. Minimalism, given its reliance upon ES and nothing else, is inconsistent with these claims, a point I expand upon in the next section when we turn to the argument for (g).

Now any Minimalist, and Horwich in particular, will quickly insist that the pragmatist has made an elementary error here. They will ask - why should a theory of truth address something like speech-acts (assertion) or the normative commitments involved in them? It will appear to a Minimalist as though the pragmatist is essentially changing the subject in talking about such *pragmatic* matters when the actual goal here is to provide a (deflationary) account of the *semantics* of the truth-predicate. In fact it is, for Horwich, one of the key selling points of Minimalism that it alone recognizes that ‘truth has a certain purity - that our understanding of it is independent of other ideas’.[[29]](#footnote-30) Yet the motivation for including pragmatic factors, and truth’s implicit and explanatory uses, in our account, is one I think Horwich will have a difficult time resisting. It is a thought that is not only simple and uncontroversial, it is structurally identical to the primary motivation for Minimalism.

Minimalism relies solely upon ES because Horwich regards *content-equivalence* as *the* central and sole phenomenon of truth-talk. *Content-equivalence* is simply the thought that the literal or semantic content of ‘p is true’ is materially equivalent to the content of ‘p’. Since Minimalism, with its reliance upon ES seemingly captures this phenomenon in its entirety, Horwich assumes it must therefore be sufficient as an account of the linguistic function of concept of truth. However, as Hookway notes, the basic motivation for the pragmatist approach - and in particular, Brandom’s (1) - is a structurally identical phenomenon that I call *force-equivalence*, which is italicized in the following passage:

What motivates such a performative analysis, for the pragmatists no less than for later theorists, is the special relation that obtains between the force or practical significance of an act of taking-true… and the force or significance of a straightforward assertion. *In asserting ‘It is true that p’, one asserts that p, and vice versa.* *The force or significance of the two claims is the same.[[30]](#footnote-31)*

It is this claim that explains why, by examining assertion, one is also learning something about truth, and vice versa.[[31]](#footnote-32) A strikingly similar thought can be found in (at least some of) Frege’s work, as noted here by Bar-On and Simmons:

If Frege is right, truth is implicated in the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered. For what is distinctly characteristic of acts of assertion is that they present a thought as true. So when we explain assertion, we ourselves use the truth locution and employ the concept of truth. Thus, even if we grant, as does Frege, that first-order uses of “true” submit to the equivalence thesis, we may need to employ the concept of truth for explanatory purposes.[[32]](#footnote-33)

Thus, I do not think the Minimalist can claim that my argument for (f) involves an elementary mistake or changing the subject - not unless they can show why the phenomenon of force-equivalence is *not* one of the ‘facts involving truth’ that Minimalism purports to explain.[[33]](#footnote-34)

A Minimalist might attempt to show this by appealing to a strict distinction between semantics and pragmatics. In the opening pages of his 1998 book *Meaning*, for example, Horwich makes it clear that he regards strict or literal semantic meaning as primary or fundamental, and other related notions (‘speaker meaning’, ‘pragmatic meaning’, etc.) as derivative.

An expression’s ‘meaning’ may be the concept it standardly manifests, or else the thing in the world to which it refers, or the propositional element that (given the context) it expresses, or what the speaker (perhaps mistakenly) takes it to be about, or what the speaker intends his audience to infer from its use. In order to avert premature objections, I want to be clear from the outset that I am primarily concerned with the first of these notions, which is the one I take to be fundamental: namely, the literal, semantic meaning of an expression type; that which is expressed independently of the speaker's intentions, beliefs, or context, and is known by anyone who understands the language.[[34]](#footnote-35)

Here however, a pragmatist will balk, given the dubious origins of the contemporary semantics/pragmatics distinction (namely C.H. Morris’s misunderstanding of Peirce’s semeiotic).[[35]](#footnote-36) I nevertheless return to this line of criticism in more detail in the Objections and Replies section.

**The Argument for (g)**

The argument for (g) is more elaborate, and benefits greatly from the same paper on deflationism by Bar-On & Simmons cited above (while not themselves pragmatists, their views nevertheless have much to offer those sympathetic to PT). Recall that one component of PT is the claim (e), which to reiterate, says:

1. a large part - perhaps the primary part - of truth’s linguistic function is that of a *denominalizer,* a logical device that facilitates (e.g.) blind endorsement, and this function is fully captured by ES

Like Hookway, Misak and other pragmatism scholars, I see no obstacle to a pragmatist accepting some form of *Linguistic Deflationism*. The issue here is whether or not *Linguistic* entails *Conceptual Deflationism,* and like Bar-On and Simmons I see no reason to think that it does (the *Conceptual* claim is quite obviously stronger). Moreover, for pragmatist reasons, I see lots of reasons to reject *Conceptual Deflationism*. These reasons involve the aforementioned, seemingly legitimate *implicit* and *explanatory* uses of the concept of truth. Hence, the argument against *Conceptual Deflationism,* as it is manifested in Horwich’s Minimalism, runs roughly as follows:

P1: there are legitimate *implicit* and *explanatory* uses of the concept of truth, in addition to the *explicit, denominalizing* uses of ‘true’ captured by ES.

P2: appeals to ES are insufficient to explainthese uses of the concept of truth

P3: Minimalism is the view that ES *is* sufficient to explain all uses of the concept of truth

C: Therefore, Minimalism is false.

In support of P1, consider the claim made above that ‘to assert a proposition is to take responsibility for its truth’. The concept of truth appears in that claim, but not as a denominalizer; it does not ‘disquote’ or function as a prosentence. The same goes for claims like ‘truth is the end of inquiry’ or ‘to believe a proposition is to take it to be true’. The only way for a *Conceptual Deflationist* to deal with these uses is, as Brandom recognizes, to declare them to be somehow illicit (Brandom 1988 calls them ‘fundamentally confused remark[s]’, p. 91). This is precisely why, for the traditional pragmatist, *Conceptual Deflationism* is a bridge too far, and represents an impoverished view of practice. There is nothing obviously illicit, confused or confusing about a thought like ‘to assert a proposition is to put it forward as true’. Indeed that seems about as harmless and obvious as a philosophical analysis is likely to get. Without it (or something like it) the *Conceptual Deflationist* will face an impossible explanatory burden - to explain the nature of assertion, belief, judgement and inquiry without employing the concept of truth. For example, if we don’t have truth to help us distinguish between assertion and other speech-acts (asking, wondering, promising, etc.), it is difficult to see what other resources could possibly do the job.[[36]](#footnote-37) It’s therefore unclear what good reason Horwich has for thinking that claims like these are not among the ‘facts involving truth’ that stand in need of explanation, except perhaps that one needs something more than ES to do the job.

Thus, one way of capturing the gist of this pragmatist critique is this - even if Minimalism were a correct theory of truth’s *semantic* function, it does not explain truth’s *pragmatic* function - its role as a device of assertion, as a norm regulating and constituting inquiry/belief/judgement, etc. These are roles that the pragmatist emphasizes as vital to understanding the concept, and as standing in need of some kind of pragmatic elucidation. Horwich regards these roles - wrongly I think - either as peripheral or extra-semantic considerations, somehow derivable from ES, or as phenomena explicable without reference to the concept of truth. Nothing in his book seems to me to establish this conclusion.

**Objections & Replies**

A general worry one might raise against this pragmatist critique is that it is too weak. Specifically, although I have argued that we must appeal to truth in order to give an adequate account of assertion, I have not argued (at least directly) for the reverse claim - that a theory of truth must include appeal to the notion of assertion, or to related notions such as speech-acts, normative commitments, etc.[[37]](#footnote-38) It is surely this latter claim that counts against Minimalism, however - it is a theory of truth, after all, it does not purport to offer us a theory of assertion. Hence, the worry goes, the argument does not achieve its goal of falsifying Minimalism.

However, part of my argument is that Minimalism carries with it a commitment to *Conceptual Deflationism,* which entails that *there are no legitimate uses of the truth-predicate that cannot be explained using ES*. In other words, the Minimalist must deny (f). However, I then argued in favor of (f). I did so by showing that the use of the truth-predicate in an adequate account of assertion (e.g. ‘to assert p is to take responsibility for the truth of p’) is unobjectionable and yet - for a Minimalist - inexplicable, since it does not submit to ES. If (f) is true, then *Conceptual Deflationism* is false, and if *Conceptual Deflationism* is false, then (g) follows - Minimalism is false.

A second objection is that the argument for (g) is question-begging, since it begins with a premise (P1) that Minimalism precisely denies. There is clear evidence of this kind of thought in chapter 2 or Horwich’s book, under Q4, which reads ‘The minimal theory must be incomplete, for it says nothing about the relationships between truth and affiliated phenomena such as verification, practical success, reference, logical validity, and assertion.’

However, in his remarkably brief answer to Q4, Horwich simply states (he does not, so far as I can see, *argue*) that connections between truth and these other concepts are always incidental or contingent - that one can explain one without reference to the other. This, however, seems very likely to be false in these cases (assertion, belief, inquiry), or so I take the argument for (f) to have shown. The link between assertion and truth - expressed by *force-equivalence* - does not look at all incidental or contingent. The pragmatist believes that an assertion essentially involves the idea of presenting a proposition as true, and thereby taking a certain sort of responsibility should inquiry prove otherwise in the long-run.

I anticipated a possible reply on Horwich’s behalf earlier in the paper relating to this point. The thought then was that Horwich might make compelling arguments elsewhere - perhaps in *Meaning,* rather than *Truth* - for the claim that the pragmatic function of the truth-predicate is no part of its meaning, and instead merely derives from it. The most straightforward and obvious way of developing this objection fails however, as is again shown by Bar-On and Simmons.

Suppose that Horwich’s claim were simply that *force-equivalence* follows from *content-equivalence, i.e.* the reason why an assertion of p has the same force as ‘p is true’ is that the semantic content of the two is the same. More generically, the claim would be that *any two expressions with the same content have the same illocutionary force*. That claim, however, is fairly obviously false. First, it overlooks the vital role played by context in determining an utterance’s illocutionary force.[[38]](#footnote-39) Second, there are obvious counter-examples. The semantic content of ‘Pangolins eat stones’ is the same as the semantic content of ‘Pangolins eat stones?’ and ‘Pangolins, eat stones!’, yet no two of these expressions share the same illocutionary force.[[39]](#footnote-40) Content does not, on its own, determine illocutionary force. Thus, I think this reply on Horwich’s behalf, at least in its current form, is a failure.[[40]](#footnote-41)

This however brings us to the objection that P2 in my argument for (g) is false. For what Horwich claims in his response to Q4 is not actually that ES *alone* is sufficient to explain all of the facts involving truth. Rather, what he claims is that ES coupled with various facts that are *not* about truth, are sufficient (‘it is quite proper to explain the properties of truth by conjoining the minimal theory with assumptions from elsewhere.’[[41]](#footnote-42)) Thus, Horwich could perhaps argue that the pragmatist’s claim D5 follows from the combination of the ES and the following:

D4: If *p*, then anyone who inquired into the question whether *p* long enough and well enough (using good methods of inquiry) would eventually reach a stable belief that *p* which would not be disturbed by further evidence or investigation.

For this to work, D4 has to be a claim about something other than truth. One might claim that D4 is a claim about *reality,* and in doing so perhaps even draw precedent and inspiration fromPeirce himself.[[42]](#footnote-43) For in *How To Make Our Ideas Clear* Peirce’s remarks about consensus undoubtedly arise within the context of an attempt to clarify the concept of reality:

The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. *That is the way I would explain reality.*[[43]](#footnote-44)

Call this alternative explanatory strategy the Reality Approach. Whilst attractive for its fidelity to Peirce’s remarks, I suspect it will prove to be unsuccessful as a means to rescue Horwich’s Minimalism. This is because the consequent of D4 invokes the concepts of *inquiry* and *belief* (unsurprisingly, given the pragmatist’s ambition to expose substantive relationships between these concepts). As I’ve made clear above, pragmatists argue that what applies to assertion (e.g. to assert that *p* is to assert that *p is true*), applies equally to belief (i.e. to believe that *p* is to believe that *p is true*), and to inquiry (i.e. to inquire as to whether *p* is to inquire as to whether *p is true*). If that’s the case, then the Reality Approach does not rescue Minimalism. For by relying upon D4, it relies implicitly on the concept of truth by invoking inquiry and belief, thereby begging the question against the pragmatist.

A Minimalist could of course attempt to avoid this by *proving* that the pragmatist critique does not work in the cases of belief and inquiry. However, nothing about the *Reality Approach* itself, and nothing in Horwich’s *Truth* suggests to me an obvious or promising strategy for doing so. This of course does not mean one cannot be found.[[44]](#footnote-45) In the mean time, the pragmatist maintains thatwe have to rely upon the concept of truth to explain the nature of belief, and more specifically, how a belief differs from other propositional attitudes (such as suspicions, fears, hopes, etc.), in very much the same way we must rely upon truth to explain the nature of assertion, and how an assertion differs from other speech-acts. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis,* to explaining the nature of inquiry.

A final objection we might consider stems from Brandom’s opposition to PT. He clearly thinks it possible to develop a comprehensive explanatory framework that accounts for acts of taking-true and the making of normative commitments, without any need for substantive claims about the concept of truth. Brandom therefore seems to be a *Conceptual Deflationist* like Horwich. Thus, the Minimalist might hope that Brandom supplies a decisive objection to PT, which both vindicates and is consistent with their view.

Though I make several attempts to develop such an objection below, I believe the attempts face three major obstacles. First, Brandom’s interpretation of PT relies crucially upon his objectionably strong reading of pragmatists’ ‘phenomenalism’. Second, Horwich and Brandom disagree fundamentally on the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, rendering their versions of *Conceptual Deflationism* incompatible. Third, even setting these problems aside, one of the most oft-repeated objections to Brandom’s framework is that it relies - albeit tacitly - upon a substantive conception of truth, and that without it, he cannot truly make sense of representational discourse (or the speech-act of assertion). None of this shows that *Conceptual Deflationism* is incoherent. It does however strongly suggest that it cannot achieve its explanatory ambitions, whether in the form of Horwich’s *Minimalism* or Brandom’s *Prosententialism*.

What then is Brandom’s objection to PT? He believes the primary difficulty facing the pragmatist’s distinctive style of performative analysis is essentially the Frege-Geach problem, or at least the ‘embedding’ aspect of that famous problem.[[45]](#footnote-46) Clearly, the concept of truth can quite sensibly be used in non-performative, embedded contexts, such as within conditionals. For example, consider the inference-form (i) if it is true that p, then q, (ii) it is true that p, (iii) therefore it is true that q. In step (i), p is clearly not being asserted, and thus it appears no normative commitment of the sort identified by the pragmatist is being made. Brandom writes:

‘It is true that p’ has nonperformative uses that the pragmatists’ approach does not account for. And it is not open to the pragmatist simply to distinguish two senses of truth claims, one freestanding and the other embedded, and proceed from ambiguity. For then one would be equivocating in inferring from the freestanding ‘It is true that p’ and the conditional ‘If it is true that p then it is true that q’, in which it occurs embedded, that it is true that q, by detachment. So the pragmatic theory must be rejected and the phenomena it points to otherwise explained.[[46]](#footnote-47)

Thus, not only has Brandom offered a seemingly damaging objection to PT, he appears to have anticipated *and* blocked the most obvious reply.

We have already established however, that Brandom’s objection proceeds from a faulty assumption. This is the first problem with turning to Brandom in search of a reply to PT on behalf of Horwich. In framing PT Brandom assumes that that the pragmatist’s performative analysis is supposed to exhaust the content of our concept of truth. Brandom attributes this ambitious claim to the pragmatist because he regards her as a *phenomenalist*. Yet as I pointed out earlier, I believe Brandom is attributing to the pragmatist a much stronger claim than she actually makes. On a modest reading - the one I labelled (5)\* - phenomenalism says only that the content of our concept of truth is exhausted by the relevant phenomena, be they logical, semantic/pragmatic, normative, etc. Brandom’s version of phenomenalism however says that not only is the content of the *concept* exhausted by the phenomena, but also that the pragmatist’s performative *analysis* exhaustively captures all the relevant phenomena and therefore the entire content of the concept. For interpretive reasons that need not detain us here (and footnoted earlier), I think Brandom is mistaken to think that Peirce would have endorsed such a strong claim - it is inconsistent with Peirce’s approach to meaning, representation and pragmatic clarification.[[47]](#footnote-48)

Brandom might reasonably wonder how resolving this answers his objection, for is it not the very response he anticipates and rejects in the above passage? If the pragmatist’s response were that truth is semantically *ambiguous*, i.e. has one meaning in embedded contexts, and a different one in assertive ones, then yes, the objection remains unanswered. But that is not what the pragmatist is claiming. PT is consistent with *Linguistic Deflationism*, that is, the pragmatist does not and need not deny that one of the functions - perhaps the primary function - of the truth-predicate is that of a denominalizer (as Horwich claims) or a prosentence-forming operator (as Brandom claims). Throughout the inference from (i) to (iii), truth may be serving that primary logical or semantic function. It is not obvious how insisting that in free-standing contexts such as steps (ii) and (iii) of such an inference-form, truth might *also* be performing a distinct, pragmatic function (signaling the making of a normative commitment), should lead to semantic ambiguity, and thus leave the pragmatist vulnerable to the embedding problem. Brandom must supply a reason for thinking that the existence of a distinct pragmatic function for the truth-predicate must yield a corresponding distinct semantic content.

Brandom, I suspect believes such a reason is inherent in the idea of pragmatism, which he holds entails inferentialism. One of the key implications of inferentialism is that semantic differences arise from pragmatic ones, and not the other way around. Presumably he also holds that every pragmatic difference results in a semantic one. If so, then on these grounds he might argue that the pragmatic difference between free-standing and embedded uses of the concept of truth ought to yield a corresponding semantic difference in the relevant contents, producing the very ambiguity, and thus equivocation, that he believes leaves PT vulnerable to the embedding problem. The questions here then are whether or not these aspects of Brandom’s inferentialism are correct, and whether or not the pragmatist is (as Brandom claims) committed to endorsing it. These are not questions that can receive satisfactory answers here.[[48]](#footnote-49) They do serve to indicate however that this way of framing Brandom’s objection to PT will be of no use whatsoever to Horwich’s Minimalist, since the two fundamentally disagree on the relationship between semantic content and pragmatic function. This is the second problem with looking to Brandom’s *Conceptual Deflationism* in hopes of salvaging Horwich’s.

Third, and finally, it is worth noting the most oft-repeated objection to Brandom’s inferentialism - that whatever its rhetoric, it tacitly and essentially relies upon a substantive conception of truth, particularly when it comes to explaining the norms of representational discourse. Here is how Timothy Williamson describes the problem, citing some useful relevant passages from Brandom’s *Reason in Philosophy*:

Some passages give the impression of sneaking a norm of truth back in by using

the word “correct” in place of “true”. For example, Brandom writes:

what is represented must provide a standard for normative assessment of

[representings’] correctness, as representings

and

In [engaging in discursive practices], we bind ourselves by norms articulated by

the contents of the concepts we apply. If I claim that the coin is copper, I have

said something that, whether I know it or not, is correct only if the coin would

melt at 1084oC and would not melt at 1083oC.

He does not say how he reconciles such passages with truth’s explanatory unimportance.[[49]](#footnote-50)

Bar-On and Simmons’ argument about the speech-act of assertion lends further support to this critique. In their paper, they respond specifically to Brandom’s inferentialist claim that all the truth-predicate does is ‘make explicit’ what we are doing when we make an assertion, which is his main reason for thinking the concept lacks explanatory significance. The trouble is that this approach makes it impossible to account for the distinctive relationship between the speech-act of assertion and the norm of truth (that is, *force-equivalence*):

We can no more say that "true" makes it explicit what we are doing when we are asserting than we can say that "true" makes it explicit what we are doing when we are conjecturing or supposing or entertaining a thought. On a content-redundancy view such as prosententialism, there can be no general link between truth and force, and in particular no link between truth and assertoric force. The point generalizes to other deflationary accounts – for example, disquotationalism and minimalism. Given the claimed [content-]equivalence of "Aardvarks amble" and "'Aardvarks amble' is true" (or "Aardvarks amble" and "The proposition that aardvarks amble is true"), their intersubstitutability in a given pragmatic context will not affect the force in any way, whatever that force may be. Treated along these deflationary lines, the truth predicate is quite inert with respect to force, and it cannot function to make explicit what we are doing when we engage in this or that speech-act.

Thus while Brandom talks the talk of a *Conceptual Deflationist*, critics argue he does not (and cannot) walk the walk. This is because his account of ‘taking true’ is not at all deflationary. In fact, the evidence suggests that he holds a commitment view that shares much in common with Peirce’s.[[50]](#footnote-51) If he refuses to tie this account to a robust or substantive norm of truth, it’s unclear how he can make sense of either representational discourse, or the act of assertion. This is far from a decisive argument against Brandom’s approach, but it should be sufficient to illustrate that - even setting aside Brandom’s misinterpretation of PT, and their fundamental differences over the semantics/pragmatics distinction - Brandom’s view does not obviously provide Horwich the support he needs to respond to the pragmatist critique of Minimalism developed herein.

Hence, I think we have yet to find in the work of any deflationist or Minimalist a compelling case for the conclusion that the truth-predicate has no other function over and above its denominalizing (or prosentence-forming) role. I believe Horwich’s Minimalism also fails to establish that we either don’t need, or cannot have, an illuminating philosophical analysis of the implicit and explanatory uses of the concept of truth in connection with the speech-act of assertion. We thus have every reason to continue engaging with the insights of pragmatists (classical and contemporary) about truth, and to expect and demand that contemporary deflationists do the same.

Reference Policy for C.S. Peirce

If a passage occurs in the *Collected Papers*, the citation is “CP *n.m*; year,” where *n* is the volume number, *m* the paragraph number, and the year is that of the quoted text. If a passage occurs in the *Writings of Charles S. Peirce*, the citation is “W (*v: p*)” where *v* is the volume number and *p* the page number.

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1. Horwich 1990/1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Horwich’s initial description of his methodology and his reasons for pursuing it echo, for example, Blackburn 2011’s elegant description of a pragmatist approach to philosophical analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Rorty 1986 notes three non-explanatory uses of ‘true’ - disquotational, endorsing and cautionary (an example of the latter being ‘Your belief is perfectly justified, but perhaps not true’). Then there is also the use of ‘true’ as an intensifier (‘He was a true friend’). Then there are the implicit and explanatory uses, both of which will be discussed in detail here. Truth is also often used in connection with *sincerity*, both as a substantive and as an intensifier (as in ‘Tell me the truth’ or ‘Do you truly believe that?’). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. ‘deliberately’ because Horwich considers it a *virtue* of Minimalism that it contends ‘that truth has a certain purity - that our understanding of it is independent of other ideas’ (1990/1998, p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. C.S. Peirce was the founder of pragmatism, yet his subtle and complex views about truth receive only a single, rather bewildering mention in Horwich’s book under the label of ‘constructivism’. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Edwards 2012 provides a compelling argument - from within a contemporary Analytic framework - against the dichotomy. Note that pragmatists are characteristically suspicious of dichotomies - see Peirce on ‘synechism’ (e.g. CP 7.569), or James 1907/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. This, at least, is Horwich’s understanding of ‘inflationism’ in his book. No doubt there are others who would dispute the characterization, such as (again) Edwards 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. See e.g. Brandom 1994, Price 2011, and Blackburn 2011. For more on whether and in what way this inferentialist thought is also attributable to Peirce, see Legg 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. See Horwich 1998 and 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See Horwich 2012 and Macarthur 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. See for example the remarks in James’s *Pragmatism* (1907/2014). For discussion, see Bird 1986, chapter 3. Putnam 1981’s ‘internal realism’ has something in common with the view, but Horwich’s formulation doesn’t come close to expressing it accurately or charitably. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See Misak (*forthcoming*). I first discovered the useful notion of the *weak man* fallacy in Aikin & Talisse (2014), chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Dewey, for example, in his *Logic*, concedes that ‘The best definition of *truth* from the logical standpoint… is that of Peirce’. However, he then opts to talk almost exclusively about warranted assertibility *instead* of belief, knowledge or truth, on the grounds that philosophers have an unfortunate habit of seeing these concepts (wrongly, he thinks) as entirely separable from the forever-ongoing activity of actual inquiry. See esp. the discussion at Dewey 1938, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Bar-On and Simmons 2007, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. See Grover, Camp and Belnap (1975), Brandom (1988) and (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Quotes from Brandom, 1988, pp. 76-7. For more on this, see Howat 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. See [censored works by author] for something more like a full elaboration and defense. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Brandom 1988, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Peirce seems to have held that applying the pragmatic maxim *in a given context* reveals only part of the relevant sign’s ‘Final Interpretant’. The only way to specify that fully would be to have grasped the practical significance of a concept’s application in every possible context, which it’s not clear Peirce thinks is (or need be) an achievable outcome. I also suspect Brandom is misreading the pragmatic maxim by focusing solely upon Peirce’s first and most notorious formulation. I set these abstruse interpretive issues aside here since my target is Minimalism *qua* Conceptual Deflationism, rather than Brandom *qua* interpreter of Peirce. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. See Russell (1946/2009) Chapter XXIX and Howat 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Hookway, 2002, p. 69, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Hookway 2002, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. I think this is important to add, since we cannot not rule out *a priori* the possibility of individuals holding intractable false beliefs. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. For more on the method of science, see Peirce 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Here I think Horwich and the pragmatist agree that to think otherwise is to be deceived by a specious linguistic analogy or theory of meaning. They may differ, as mentioned, on how pervasive this analogy is in the theory of meaning more generally. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. I first encountered this thought in Hookway 2002’s reading of Peirce on truth, see esp. chapter 2. Note that I focus only on assertion here, but I think a very similar paper might just as profitably focus upon inquiry. Heney (2015) would make for an ideal starting point. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. CP 5.546 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. This is a quotation from an early draft of Boyd 2016, which mounts a compelling case for reading Peirce as holding a commitment view of assertion. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Horwich 1990/1998 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Hookway, 2002, p. 63. Emphasis added. Hookway is drawing upon Brandom 1988 and 1994 here. Brandom uses the term ‘force-redundancy’ rather than ‘force-equivalence’. I use the latter term because Horwich is not a redundancy theorist - see his *Postscript* (pp. 120-46). The phenomenon that matters to my argument here is specific to the equivalence of assertions of *p* and sincere utterances of the form *it is true that p*. I am *not* interested in or theorizing about the much broader phenomenon of two utterances having equivalent illocutionary force. An anonymous referee suggested this might be seen as a problematic disanalogy between content- and force-equivalence, i.e. that the broader phenomenon of equivalent forces may have nothing to do with truth. But the broader phenomenon of content-equivalence (e.g. synonymy of two or more expressions) may have nothing to do with truth either (unless one simply presupposes truth-conditional semantics, which seems likely to beg the question). There is undoubtedly more to say here about competing pictures of truth’s relationship to meaning inherent in Minimalist and pragmatist approaches, but this fact is (a) beyond the scope of this paper and (b) consistent with my claim that there is a substantive debate to be had between pragmatism and Minimalism that Horwich has wrongly overlooked. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. An anonymous referee wonders what we are learning about truth. We are learning that the concept plays an essential role in explaining the nature of assertion, which makes the concept explanatorily (not ontologically) substantive, which is inconsistent with *Conceptual Deflationism,* which means Minimalism is false. See the first objection and reply below for a more detailed version of this line of thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Bar-On and Simmons 2007, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. A similar argument could be constructed, I suspect, in the cases of judgement, belief and inquiry. The basic thought would be that one must rely upon the concept of truth both implicitly and explanatorily both in engaging in or reflecting upon these practices. These uses of the truth-predicate cannot, I suspect, be accounted for by ES either (they are not denominalizing), and thus also support (g). However, to prove (g) I take it we only need the argument to work for one case (though see my response to the *Reality Approach* in the Objections & Replies). For more, see e.g. Engel’s response to Rorty’s deflationism in their 2007 exchange, esp. p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Horwich 1998, p. 3. See also pp. 96-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. See Halton (1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. One interesting suggestion is that one could try relying upon the concept of *reality* instead. See the next section for more on this. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this concern. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Saul 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. This is more obvious, of course, when you restore contexts of utterance - say, the zookeeper *asserting* ‘Pangolins eat stones’ in an educational setting; the child *expressing uncertainty* or surprise by uttering ‘Pangolins eat stones?’ in class; someone imagining themselves a zoolinguialist like Dr. Doolittle issuing the ersatz *command* ‘Pangolins, eat stones!’. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. This is a vastly compressed version of Bar-On & Simmons (2007)’s central argument. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Horwich 1990/1998, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. I am indebted to an anonymous referee for raising this objection. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. CP 5.407, emphasis added. See Hookway 2002, chapter 2 and Heney 2015 for discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. In the index to Horwich 1990/1998 has one entry for ‘Belief: analysis of’. The discussion to which it refers (p. 92) concerns the logical analysis of belief as a relation between a person and a kind of entity (a proposition). Horwich does not mention, however, how that relation is to be explained/construed, if not in terms of a commitment to the *truth* of the relevant proposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Brandom 1988, Section III. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Brandom 1988, p. 83-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. I cannot speak for James or Dewey; I leave that to others. For an invaluable comparison of Peirce’s semeiotic with traditional philosophy of language, see e.g. Atkin (2008). In addition to the issues already noted above, I think Brandom’s (5) also ignores Peirce’s mature views about the significance of the pragmatic maxim, and the relationship between the first, second and third grades of clarity. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. MacFarlane (2010) argues, I think rightly, that pragmatism needn’t entail inferentialism (simply consider that Davidson can reasonably be considered a pragmatist). There are also crucial differences between ‘strong-’ and ‘hyper-’ inferentialism. Lastly, it’s not obvious to me that anything I’ve said here commits the pragmatist to thinking there are substantive connections between *meaning* and truth. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Williamson (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Bar-On and Simmons 2007 provides a more detailed and compelling argument along these lines than I can in the space available. See esp. p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)