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4 **Is Truth Made, and if so, what do we mean by that? Redefining**

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7 **Truthmaker Realism.**

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16 **ABSTRACT**

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18 Philosophical discussion of truthmaking has flourished in recent times, but what exactly

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21 does it mean to ‘make’ a truth-bearer true? I argue that ‘making’ is a concept with modal

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23 force, and this renders it a problematic deployment for truthmaker theorists with nominalist

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26 sympathies, which characterises most current theories. I sketch the outlines of what I argue

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28 is a more genuinely realist truthmaker theory, which is capable of answering the

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30 explanatory question: In virtue of what does each particular truthmaker make its particular

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33 truthbearer(s) true? I do this by drawing on recent work by Frederik Stjernfelt on Charles

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35 Peirce’s account of the proposition as having a ‘particular double structure’, according to

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38 which a proposition not only depicts certain characters of an object, it also depicts *itself*

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40 claiming those characters to pertain to the object. This double structure, I shall argue, also

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43 resolves important issues in analytic philosophers’ truthmaker theory, including the proper

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45 distinction between reference and truthmaking, and a dilemma concerning an infinite

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48 regress of truthmaking.

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# 4 1. Introduction

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6 Truthmaking has been widely discussed of late, and even described as “one of the most

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9 important metaphysical topics of the late 20th-century and early 21st-century philosophy”

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11 (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2006a, p. 186), although pioneers such as Armstrong and Fox held that

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14 they were merely developing an idea pervasive in Western philosophy since Aristotle.1 But

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16 what exactly does it mean to ‘make’ a truth-bearer true? Making seems to be a notion with

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19 modal force: it supports counterfactuals. To claim that A ‘makes’ B is to claim, *ceteris*

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21 *paribus*, that if A did not make B then there would be no B. I shall argue that this modal

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24 force has been insufficiently appreciated, and this has significant consequences for using

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26 truthmaker theory as a support for *realism2*, although not in ways usually thought of.

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28 Although truth-‘making’ is often assumed to support realism, Sami Pihlström has

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31 usefully noted that it might just as well be deployed to explicate various forms of

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33 antirealism. To address this, I shall perform conceptual analysis on the notion of

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36 philosophical ‘explication’. I shall distinguish what I will call *nominalist* and *realist*

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38 explications – suggesting that where the former ‘bottoms out’ in brute statements of

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41 identity, the latter highlights principles with explanatory force. I shall then return to

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43 truthmaker theory and endeavour to explicate it realistically in these terms, focusing

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45 specifically on its postulated *truthmaking relation* between truthbearers and the world, and

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50 1 See (Armstrong 1997, p. 13 and 2004, p. 4), and (Fox 1987, p. 188).

1. 2 By *realism* here I mean a certain ‘broad church’ version of the view that in spite of its extreme generality
2. has in recent decades been influential in analytic metaphysics, particularly in “Australian realism” as
3. developed by Armstrong and his key (‘honorary Australian’) interlocutor David Lewis. This realism’s
4. clearest and most definitive claim is arguably a negative one – the avoidance of “some sort of pragmatism
5. or idealism”, as John Bigelow remarks below. That this realism has been a guiding light in truthmaker
6. theory can be seen in claims such as Greg Restall’s “Australian Realists are fond of talking about
7. *truthmakers*” (Restall 1996, p. 331)*.* There are of course many ways in which realism so broadly conceived
8. may be disambiguated. One way is realism about universals or scholastic realism, and in this paper I
9. advance this interpretation both because I see it as – ironically – relatively untried by truthmaker realists,
10. and because I believe it enables me to do interesting theoretical work.

4 asking: *In virtue of what does each particular truthmaker make its particular*

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6 *truthbearer(s) true*?

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9 I shall consider three answers to this question, which I shall dub Descriptive, Indexical

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11 and Iconic Models of truthmaking, then claim that none can account for the simultaneous

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14 structure and unity of the proposition. I will then turn to recent work by Frederik Stjernfelt

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16 on Charles Peirce’s notion of the proposition (or “Dicisign”), and suggest that it offers

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19 some fruitful new ways of thinking about how a genuinely realistic account of truthmaking

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21 might look, finishing with some thoughts about philosophical realism considered in a

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24 general sense.

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# 26 2. Truthmaker Theory vs. Deflationism

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28 A truthmaker for a true sentence (*p*) was influentially defined by Armstrong as something

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31 the very existence of which necessitates *p* (Armstrong 2004, p. 6)3. But how can a *thing*

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33 necessitate the truth of a *sentence*? The relation appears to be puzzlingly *cross-categorial*.4

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36 Over time further issues have emerged with this definition – for instance it doesn’t work

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38 for necessary truths under classical logic.5 Other difficult issues have concerned what might

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41 necessitate *negative facts* such as “There are no unicorns”, or *universal facts*, such as “All

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43 cats have whiskers” (Mulligan et al 1984), (Armstrong 2004, pp. 53-82).

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45 Nevertheless, many truthmaker theorists have believed that they are capturing a crucial

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48 *realist intuition*: our sentences must correspond in a determinate manner with ‘bits of the

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50 world’, or else we are just engaging in loose talk (or at best in some language-game which

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53 is merely *expressive*). Thus John Bigelow famously wrote:

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57 3 See also (Fox 1987, p. 189).

1. 4 This is apart from certain special cases where propositions make other propositions (or themselves) true.
2. 5 This has led some to suggest using relevant logic instead (Restall 1996), while others express scepticism
3. about that (Simons 2008, p. 13).

4 ...I have sometimes tried to stop believing in the Truthmaker axiom. Yet, I have

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6 never really succeeded. Without some such axiom, I find I have no adequate anchor

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9 to hold me from drifting onto the shoals of some sort of pragmatism or idealism

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11 (Bigelow 1988, p. 123).

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14 How does truthmaker theory anchor realism? Arguably by enabling a schematic yet

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17 important *explanation* for why truths are true. Thus “Snow is white” is not merely true in

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19 some random or primitive fashion, it is true because snow exists, and is white. As David

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22 Lewis puts it, “truths must have *things* as their subject matter” (Lewis 1992, p. 218). It

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24 must be conceded here, though, that there has been argument over whether truthmaker

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27 theory supplies an argument for realism, or vice versa, and metaphysicians have been

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29 advised that they can’t have it both ways (Beebee and Dodd 2005), (Tahko 2016).

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31 A natural enemy of truthmaker theories, which rejects the necessity of Bigelow’s

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34 anchoring move, is *deflationary* (or “redundancy”) *theories of truth*, frequently

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36 characterised by two claims:

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39 i) Truth is not a substantial property.

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42 ii) The key to our use of the concept of truth lies in its disquotational character:

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44 “p” is true iff p.6

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47 Although Armstrong has argued that one can have both a truthmaker and a deflationary

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49 theory of truth by holding that truthmaker theory provides the “ontology” of truth, while

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51 deflationism takes care of the “semantics” (Armstrong 1997, p. 128), this overlooks the

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54 fact that deflationism is usually understood as claiming that the “disquotational” semantics

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60 6 This formulation is derived from (Price 1998, p. 41).

4 of truth is not only correct, but *all* there is to say about truth.7

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# 7 3. Truth-‘making’ and Realism

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9 So far we seem to face a stark choice between an account of truth that is realist because

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11 ontologically robust – truthmaker theory – and an account of truth that is antirealist because

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14 ontologically minimalist – deflationism. But Sami Pihlström has astutely pointed out

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16 (Pihlström 2005) that the alignment is not necessarily so straightforward, since the notion

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19 of ‘making truth’ has equally been deployed by pragmatists in a constructivist, ‘world-

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21 making’ sense. For instance, William James in his 1907 pragmatism lectures somewhat

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24 notoriously argued that truths are ‘*made’ rather than found*, and “Truth is *made*, just as

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26 health, wealth and strength are made, in the course of experience” (James, 1907, p. 104).

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28 F.C.S. Schiller further extended this thinking by including in his 1907 collection *Studies in*

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31 *Humanism* essays entitled “The Making of Truth” and “The Making of Reality”. Lest these

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33 philosophical moves seem the effusions of an alien tradition, in the heart of analytic

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36 philosophy Nelson Goodman also developed a principled irrealism about truth in *Ways of*

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38 *Worldmaking* (1978).8

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41 Having created conceptual space for understanding truthmaker theory as an account of

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43 human-made truth, Pihlström argues that it is better to interpret the theory thus, by outlining

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45 some *prima facie* serious problems for Armstrong’s allegedly realist (explicitly non-

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48 constructivist) account. For instance, Pihlström asks how the allegedly necessary relation

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50 between truth-bearer and -maker (Truthmaker Necessitarianism) might square with

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1. 7 For argument that the standard division into ‘metaphysical’ and ‘deflationary’ accounts of truth
2. constitutes a false dichotomy, see (Legg, 2014).
3. 8 Only one contemporary analytic truthmaker theorist seems to have had an inkling of this possibility:
4. Barry Smith, who writes, “Truthmakers, like visual fields, are cognition-dependent entities which exist only
5. as a result of certain sorts of cognitively effected demarcations of reality” (Smith 1999, p. 289).

4 Armstrong’s professed naturalism (Pihlström 2005, pp. 125-6). He also asks what might

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6 serve as the truthmaker for the truthmaking relation itself, given that we presumably want

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9 to say that it is *true* that white snow truthmakes “Snow is white” (Pihlström 2005, p. 125).

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11 This poses something of a dilemma: if we say that the above is not true, we seem to

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14 undermine the objectivity – and thus the point – of truthmaker theory, and if we say that it

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16 is true, we seem to create an infinite regress requiring a further truthmaker for the truth that

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19 “Snow is white” is made true by white snow…and so on. (Another way to explore the same

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21 issues might be to ask whether the truthmaking relation is *reflexive*.)

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24 It seems that more specificity is needed if we wish to position truthmaker theory as a

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26 realist explication of truth. Perhaps we could qualify our claim that truthbearers are made

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28 true by distinguishing: ‘made true *by the world*’ – a realist claim – from ‘made true *by us*’

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31 – an antirealist claim.9 Here it is tempting to draw on our earlier definition of a truthmaker

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33 as something the very existence of which necessitates that a sentence is true, to define

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36 realist truthmaker theory as claiming that truthbearers are ‘made true by something *that*

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38 *exists*’. However that won’t do – and the proposed realist side of the distinction is

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41 correspondingly revealed as ambiguous – for don’t we exist?

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43 We now appear to reach something of an impasse between realist and antirealist

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45 explications of truthmaking. Yet I don’t believe this issue is irresolvable. My argument will

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48 follow a somewhat uncharted course through the landscape of discussion in this area, by

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50 aligning realism with a certain understanding of realism about universals, and antirealism

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53 with a certain understanding of nominalism. I shall argue that this alignment is fruitful in

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55 revealing that most truthmaker theory developed so far has been nominalist in spirit,

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1. 9 Another interesting distinction to explore could be that between ‘made true by us’ and ‘made by us’. I am
2. grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

4 thereby opening up the possibility of a more deeply realist truthmaker theory which is so

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6 far unconsidered. So I will now explore the general nature of philosophical explication,

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9 presenting ‘nominalist’ and ‘realist’ understandings of it, before in section 5 arguing that

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11 standard versions of truthmaker theory are all more or less nominalist in spirit.

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# 14 4. Two Models of Philosophical Explication

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16 Although debates between nominalists and scholastic realists were (in both ancient and

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19 medieval times) extraordinarily complicated and hedged with a variety of hybrid and

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21 middle positions, one very broad line of argument counterposes a kind of *nominalism*,

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24 which seeks to reduce general predicates, such as ‘ – is white’ either to some number of

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26 particular white things, or (in the case of Ockham) to particular mental acts of apprehending

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28 whiteness,10 to a kind of *realism* which considers general predication to be *sui generis*,

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31 despite the more complex ontology that this forced realists to develop and defend. Drawing

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33 on this contrast, I will distinguish two broad kinds of philosophical explication, which I

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36 shall refer to as explication ‘in a nominalist spirit’ and ‘in a realist spirit’. (I have chosen

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38 to use the term ‘explication’ here rather than ‘analysis’ or ‘explanation’ in order to leave

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41 open whether the process is *a priori* or *a posteriori*.) I will call what is explicated a

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43 ‘phenomenon’, which is just intended to be as ontologically neutral a term as possible.11

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45 *4.1 Explication in a Nominalist Spirit: Explication as Identity*

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48 To explicate a phenomenon (‘X’) in a nominalist spirit is to locate (or postulate) *an entity,*

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50 *or set of entities*, with which X may be *identified*. A notable example is David Lewis’

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53 project of “Humean supervenience”, which has the following manifesto:

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1. 10 Likewise, see the “semantic” defence of nominalism in (Devitt 1980).
2. 11 It is neutral, that is, amongst the plethora of ontological forms currently posited and discussed in analytic
3. metaphysics – such as objects, events, states of affairs, properties, tropes, facts, and more.

4 It is the doctrine that all there is to the world is a vast mosaic of local matters of

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6 particular fact, just one little thing and then another (Lewis 1986a, p. ix).

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9 One notorious application of this is Lewis’ analysis of *modality* (Lewis, 1986b), which

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12 claims that the possibility that I could be an opera singer can be identified entirely with the

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14 fact that in another possible world there *exists* a certain entity  a counterpart of me who *is*

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16

17 an opera singer.

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19 That Lewis calls his view “modal realism” is somewhat confusing with respect to the

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22 medieval conception of realism on which I am drawing, since Lewis can be categorized as

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24 a modal nominalist in the particularity of the existents into which he believes modality may

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27 be analysed without residue.12 Leaving that aside, though, Lewis also applies Humean

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29 supervenience-style explications to causation, laws of nature, mental phenomena, and other

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32 traditional metaphysical topics.

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35 *4.2 Explication in a Realist Spirit: Explication as Explanation*

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37 On the other hand, to explicate X in a realist spirit is to *provide general principles of which*

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39 *X-like phenomena are a special case*. Consider Robert Nozick’s elegant account of

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42 knowledge in terms of “tracking the truth” (Nozick 1981). Here a notoriously difficult

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44 philosophical concept is explicated via a quite different and extensively theorised concept

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47 – counterfactual dependence. Consider also Plato’s account of the desire to do philosophy

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49 in terms of a kind of intellectual *eros*, which locates becoming attracted to philosophy

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52 within a much wider pattern of felt attraction. One sign of a good realist explication is that

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54 it possesses further explanatory power. So, for example, one might think that if philosophy

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59 12 Lewis’ possible worlds are maximal sums of spatiotemporally related concrete particular objects (Lewis

60 1986, p. 86).

4 is a form of love, it should follow that when one praises the loved object to people who do

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6 not share that love, they will never quite ‘get’ what one is talking about.

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9 When realist explications are so understood, we may note that only they have modal

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11 force and are thus *explanations*. Only they can generalise into new situations to deliver

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14 new insight. Particulars don’t generalise. (“Clark Kent is Superman” – end of story.)

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16 Moreover, the identity-based nature of nominalist explication implies that there is only one

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19 fundamental or ultimate explication of a given phenomenon, whereas a phenomenon can

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21 receive different realist explications which are equally successful on their own terms. (If a

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24 bridge collapses, one might explicate this by noting a structural weakness, or a heavily-

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26 loaded truck passing over, and both may be genuine explanations, although in certain

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28 contexts one may be more salient.)

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31 By these lights Armstrong often comes out as explicating reality and truth in a

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33 nominalist spirit. For he is fond of ontological reductions, claiming that all reality

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36 supervenes on a foundation of “physical entities governed by no more than the laws of

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38 physics”, so that common sense properties such as whiteness are but ‘second-class’

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41 (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 6-14). Could it be correct to accuse Australia’s most famous

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43 defender of universals of nominalism?13 Yet Armstrong has noted that one of his guiding

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45 metaphysical aspirations is to live up to the claim of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, that “all

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48 facts are first-order facts” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 2). Due to a shift in emphasis from using

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50 One-Over-Many arguments to using truthmaking to argue for his realist metaphysics, and

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53 a corresponding shift from universals to states of affairs, which are logically particular14,

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55 Armstrong arguably *has* shown a gradual slide towards nominalism across his career.

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1. 13 For an argument that Armstrong is in fact a “nominalistic Platonist” see (Legg, 2002).
2. 14 See (Armstrong 1997, p. 126) for “The Victory of Particularity” with respect to first-order states of

4 Some metaphysicians might wish to claim that nominalist and realist explications are

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6 ultimately equivalent in some important sense, for so-called ‘general principles’ are

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9 nothing but dispositions, the categorical grounds of which will be existents.15 Thus it will

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11 be argued that *all* explication reduces ultimately to identity claims. However this begs the

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14 question in favour of nominalism as I have just characterised it, so for now we shall try to

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16 leave this question open.

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# 19 5. Truthmaker Theory as Nominalist Explication

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21 Truthmaker theorists have so far mostly sought to explicate truth in a nominalist spirit (in

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24 my sense) insofar as they take themselves to be engaged in an *ontological* search – for

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26 existents which may be in some sense *identified* with the truth of truthbearers – namely

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28 truthmakers. Thus in 1984 Mulligan, Simons and Smith wrote (taking a particularly

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31 naturalistic approach):

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34 We remain convinced that it is possible to develop a theory of the truth-relation which

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36 appeals only to objects firmly tied into our ordinary and scientific experience. For it is

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39 in such experience, and not in the abstract models of logical semantics, that there lie

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41 the origins of our knowledge of truth and falsehood (Mulligan et al 1984, p. 318).

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44 At the same time, some truthmaker theorists do not search for truthmaking existents: a

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46 minority movement advocates ‘truthmaking without truthmakers’. One key proponent,

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48 Hornsby, explains that it is useful “to think of truthmaking even if there are no entities

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51 which make propositions true” (Hornsby 2005, p. 33). Another is Melia, who claims to

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53 provide “a way of accounting for certain sentences without having to postulate the entities

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1. affairs, although they contain universals as constituents.
2. 15 Armstrong himself heads in this direction (Armstrong 1997, chapter 5).

4 that the statement seemed to refer to” (Melia 2005, p. 75). But Melia claims that his

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6 motivation also stems from nominalism, although in this case he is not seeking to reduce

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9 general properties, but to postulate fewer individuals. This interesting position will be

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11 discussed further below.

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14 A further symptom of nominalism in contemporary truthmaker theorists is their

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16 approach to the truthmaking *relation*. John Fox, whose discussion of truthmaking links

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19 fruitfully with medieval metaphysical debates, notes that holding nominalism naturally

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21 leads philosophers to some form of truthmaker theory, while at the same time it discourages

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24 them from assigning the truthmaking relation any reality:

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27 …scholastic nominalism tended to agree with the formulation of the correspondence

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29 theory [of truth]. But they equated its ‘relation’ of correspondence with its adequate

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31 basis...no further entity, no ‘formal’ relation of correspondence, is required for the

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34 judgement to be true” (Fox 1987, pp. 200-1).

35

36

37 Other truthmaker theorists grant the relation *some* ontological status, but try to deflate that

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39 status as much as possible. Armstrong’s approach here is well-known: although he

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42 acknowledges that the truthmaking relation exists, he claims that it is *internal*, and thus

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44 “not something over and above its terms”, and “no addition of being” (Armstrong 2004, p.

45

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47 9). For this reason, famously, he dubs it an *ontological free lunch*. Both approaches –

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49 eliminativist in Fox’s case and reductionist in Armstrong’s – are nominalist in spirit.

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51 It is interesting to reflect on the significant influence that Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* has

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54 had on many truthmaker theorists.16 Although Wittgenstein himself never used the term

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1. 16 See for instance, (Armstrong 1997, p. 3). Wittgenstein also profoundly influenced Russell, who is
2. credited as a truthmaker forefather by Armstrong, and Mulligan et al.

4 ‘truthmaker’, the *Tractatus* arguably exemplifies nominalistic impulses regarding truth in

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6 a particularly pure form.17 For instance, Wittgenstein claims that theorising the relation

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9 between his atomic states of affairs and their corresponding atomic propositions is

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11 *impossible*, at least in propositional form:

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14 4.12 Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what

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17 they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical

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19 form (Wittgenstein 1961).

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21

22 This remark highlights a tension between the truthmaker theorist’s supposedly realist

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24 intuition that every true sentence must have a truthmaker, and the truthmaker theorist’s

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26

27 supposedly realist intuition that the truthmaking relation is real. Holding both claims

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29 simultaneously seems to create a kind of ‘Third Man’ regress, with truths requiring

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31 truthmakers to explain them, and truthmakers requiring truths about their functioning to

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34 justify them, to infinity.

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36 I have now argued that standard truthmaker theories seek to explicate truth in a

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39 nominalist spirit, which creates some tension within the view. In the next section I shall

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41 argue that this tension undermines their ability to deliver the reassurance metaphysicians

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44 such as Bigelow are hoping for.

45

# 46 6. Truthmaker Theory as a ‘Modal Free Lunch’

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48 It was earlier noted that ‘making’ is a notion with modal force. Although truthmaker

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51 theories differ in many ways over the connection’s exact nature and strength,18 all purport

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1. 17 For explicit recognition of this see (Skyrms 1981), which Armstrong acknowledges in a number of places
2. has greatly influenced him.
3. 18 From the apparent (albeit opaque) material implication of the early Wittgenstein, to the strict implication
4. of (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2006a, p. 188), and positions which do not fall into either camp such as (Linsky

60 1984).

4 to support counterfactuals of something like the following form: “If ***x*** [the truthmaker] did

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6 not exist, then ***p*** [the truthbearer] would not be true”.

7

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9 Yet there is an important difference between truth-‘making’ and more common-or-

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11 garden ‘makings’. Consider sunshine melting snow. One can ask, “By virtue of what does

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14 sunshine make snow melt?”, and one can answer, “by virtue of its warmth”. Warmth is a

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16 general property with a wide range of effects of which its effect on snow is a special case.

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19 So this is a realist explication. Similarly, one can ask, “By virtue of what do mother cats

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21 make kittens, not puppies?”, and one can answer, “By virtue of feline DNA.” In the senses

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24 I have outlined above, this second explication has both nominalist elements (identifying a

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26 set of particular complex molecules as *the* cause of kitten morphogenesis) and realist

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28 elements (detailing the systematic growth patterns that these molecules produce, by virtue

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31 of their structure).

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33 Now consider the question, “By virtue of what does the truthmaker for ‘snow is white’

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36 make that sentence true?” It might be retorted, “By virtue of its whiteness!” This answer

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38 will not do, however, because not all white objects truth-make ‘snow is white’. Consider

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41 white *paper*, for instance. Analogously, the answer, “By virtue of its being snow” is not

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43 sufficient because of *black* (i.e. polluted) snow. Rather, there is an important sense in which

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45 the truthmaker for “Snow is white” *is* the truth of the sentence. *Explicator* and *explicandum*

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47

48 are identical. Such an explication has no predictive power and supports no counterfactuals,

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50 except of the degenerate form, “If the truthmaker for ‘snow is white’ had not existed then

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53 ‘snow is white’ would not have been true”. Such counterfactuals are, however, a mere

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55 tautology within truthmaker theory. For, as we have already noted, this is explication in a

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4 nominalist spirit, and lacks modal force. Yet the use of the term “make” in the name

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6 “truthmaker” suggests otherwise.

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9 For this reason I would argue that the problem with much current truthmaker theory is

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11 not that it is a nominalist explication *per se*, but that it is *a nominalist explication*

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14 *masquerading as a realist one.* Rather than “truth-*making* theory”, a more appropriate

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16 name would be “truth-*being* theory”. This, label, however, unfortunately lacks the

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19 comforting ring to realists of “truth-maker” theory, where one imagines that the world

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21 somehow *brings it about* that one’s true sentences are true – although we make truth-

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24 bearers, it is in virtue of the world that they are true or false. To put the same point another

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26 way, nominalist truthmaker theory collapses into an Identity Theory of Truth.19

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28 We have seen that Armstrong claims that supervening entities constitute an ‘ontological

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31 free lunch’. Analogously, I shall introduce the term *modal free lunch*. This is sought when

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33 an explication of some phenomenon is offered as an *explanation* when it is actually an

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36 *identity*. So, I am claiming that standard (nominalist) truthmaker theory seeks a modal free

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38 lunch. Truthmaker theorists may object that their theory does not need to be explanatory,

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41 for all they are doing is providing the *ontology* of truth, and explanation is an

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43 *epistemological* matter. Yet this is arguably in tension with the profound explanatory

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45 justification for realism that so many truthmaker theorists have claimed. The move also

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47

48 seems to smack of desperation. If a theory is not explanatory *at all*, why should a

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1. 19 Armstrong comes close to admitting this when he acknowledges that supervenience relation between
2. truthmakers and truthbearers is *symmetrical* (Armstrong 2004, p. 8). This is not the usual understanding of
3. supervenience. This point is expanded on at (David 2005, p. 147). David does also qualify that Armstrong
4. explicitly repudiates the Identity Theory of Truth, giving a citation to support this (David 2005, p. 155). But
5. the citation is to Armstrong’s 1973 book *Belief, Truth and Knowledge*, and we have already noted that
6. Armstrong’s views evolved significantly through his career.

4 philosopher spend valuable time and energy framing it? The next section further expands

5

6 these points.

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8

# 9 7. Truth as Brute Dyadic Relation

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11 Despite the many fascinating differences between specific truthmaker theories, we can

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13

14 summarise a certain common ground in a ‘no-name brand’ truthmaker theory which makes

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16 the following three claims: i) There are truthbearers. ii) For each truthbearer there is at least

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19 one truthmaker.20 iii) Some relation connects truthbearers with truthmakers, thereby

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21 ‘making’ the former true. So far, the truthmaking relation is postulated as a brute, dyadic

22

23

24 relation.

25

26 A crucial explanatory gap faced by this brute dyadic approach can be exposed by

27

28 asking: *Why should we care about this two-place relation?* There are many possible two-

29

30

31 place relations between language and the world – why this one? Why do we aim for truth

32

33 and not for **T\***, which matches every true sentence with a particular grain of sand in the

34

35

36 Sahara desert? (There will be some overlap in sentences per grain, of course, but so is there

37

38 with truthmaking and things in the world). Or why not **T\*\***, which takes the original truth-

39

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41 relation and matches every truthmaker with the truthbearer which is next in English

42

43 alphabetical order? This is Putnam’s famous “model-theoretic” argument against

44

45 metaphysical realism (Putnam 1981) in new dress.

46

47

48 *Why do we care about truth?* A plausible if extremely general answer goes something

49

50 like: “True sentences give us access to the way things are”. (Note that this answer invokes

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56

1. 20 This claim does assume the view known as *Truthmaker Maximalism*. But (Milne 2005 notwithstanding)
2. without it there seems little point in a truthmaker theory, as once one allows some truthbearers to lack
3. truthmakers, one must devise an alternative explanation for *their* truth, and why then can’t such an account
4. be developed for all truthbearers?

4 “the *way* things are”, not just “the things that are”.21) This highlights fundamental features

5

6 of our ordinary language concept of truth which are not guaranteed by **T**’s brute dyadic

7

8

9 relation. For instance, the relation must be *stable*: “Snow is white” cannot be truth-made

10

11 by white snow on Tuesdays and green cars on Wednesdays. Our brute dyadic relation does

12

13

14 not rule out such stability, but neither does it *ensure* it, and this seems somehow

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16 unsatisfying. Consider an analogous claim: that *gravity* is a two-place relation – a set of

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18

19 ordered pairs, each denoting one falling object and a number corresponding to its

20

21 acceleration in a particular context. Such a claim is not *false*, but one feels that the essence

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23

24 of the matter has been missed: that all gravitational accelerations are describable in a

25

26 general principle, expressible mathematically, which possesses extensive predictive power.

27

28 We have seen that it suits nominalist truthmaker theorists to treat the truthmaking

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30

31 relation as metaphysically transparent, or ‘internal’, effectively resting in an Identity

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33 Theory of Truth. I submit that a genuine realist would like some further explanations. She

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35

36 would like to ask: *In virtue of what does each truthmaker make its truthbearer(s) true?*

37

38 Since the topic of truthmaking rose to prominence, there has been a wealth of discussion

39

40

41 of the truthmaking relation’s nature and logical features. Is it a brute necessary connection

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43 (Bigelow 1988, Armstrong 1997 & 2004), or some kind of supervenience (Lewis, 2001),

44

45 or more recently, grounding (Schaffer 2008)? Is it *one-one* (Restall 1996) (Armstrong

46

47

48 2004, p. 11), *maximal* (Armstrong 2004, p. 7), (Milne 2005), (Schaffer 2008), or *minimal*

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50 (Armstrong 2004, pp. 19-23)? Yet despite all this detailed investigation, no-one appears

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53 to have considered the ‘in virtue of’ question above. Yet this is arguably one of the most

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56

1. 21 Others have made this point – see for instance Lewis’ correction of Quine: “I want to construe ‘being’
2. broadly: it covers not only *whether* things are, but *how* they are” (1992, p. 218). How this irenic claim fits
3. with Lewis’ Humean Supervenience manifesto is not entirely clear. See also (Cameron 2008), (Schaffer

60 2008).

4 important questions of all. Answering this question would presumably throw significant

5

6 light on the *nature* of truth, providing valuable ammunition against deflationism. I shall

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8

9 now briefly explore three different possible answers – the truthbearer *describes*, *indexes*,

10

11 and *pictures* the truthmaker.

12

13

# 14 8. Three Possible Explications of the Brute Dyadic Relation

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16 *8.1. The Descriptive Model.*

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19 The first answer is that a truthmaker truthmakes a truth-bearer by virtue of the latter

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21 providing a sufficiently good *description* of the former. This answer is modelled on

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23 Russellian22 definite descriptions, whereby objects are picked out by virtue of properties

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25

26 they possess, and where property and property-bearer part ways, the reference tracks the

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28 property, not the (ex-)bearer (e.g. “The Prime Minister of Australia”). Such phrases are

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30

31 easily transformable into propositions with truth-values, Ramsey-style, by adding an

32

33 existential quantifier (e.g. “Something is the Prime Minister of Australia”).

34

35

36 Such a conception of reference is fundamental to a Frege-Russell-Quine tradition in

37

38 philosophy of language, and through the idea of Ramsey-sentences has been influential in

39

40

41 recent analytic metaphysics (Lillehammer and Mellor 2005), (Jackson 1998). The

42

43 Descriptive Model seems to be what is envisaged by (Mulligan et al 1984) who describe

44

45 their preferred truth-makers (“moments”) as “existing dependent or non-self-sufficient

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47

48 objects” which require the existence of other objects in order to exist, such as “the lifting

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50 of the accident victim into the ambulance” (Mulligan et al 1984, p. 290). They explicitly

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1. 22 “Russellian” should here be understood in a broad sense indicating not every detail of the doctrine
2. adumbrated in “On Denoting” so much as the sweeping influence of these ideas through 20th century
3. philosophy of language (*albeit* amended by later philosophers such as P.F. Strawson, who noted that
4. descriptions such as “the F” need not uniquely refer to count as “definite”).

4 cite definite-description-era Russell as an inspiration (Mulligan, Simons and Smith 1984,

5

6 p. 296).

7

8

9 Restall also seems to invoke the Descriptive Model when he states:

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11

12 Firstly, think of a unicorn. Necessarily, if that unicorn exists, then the claim ‘a

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14 unicorn exists’ is true. So a unicorn is something whose existence would necessitate

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16

17 the claim ‘a unicorn exists’ (Restall 1996, p. 332).23

18

19 Here, “a unicorn exists” seems to be a kind of Ramsey sentence, as if the creature in

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21

22 question ceased being a unicorn, it would no longer truthmake the sentence, even if it still

23

24 existed (e.g. as a shape-shifting cat). This model arguably points us to a way of resolving a

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26

27 contested issue in truthmaker theory. The *necessitation* frequently attributed to the

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29 truthmaking relation often makes it seem as though certain key properties of the truthmaker

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31 must be *essential*, in ways that seem puzzling. For example it has been suggested that snow

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33

34 must be essentially white in order to properly truthmake “Snow is white” (because to the

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36 degree that snow is possibly orange, its truthmaking of “Snow is white” lacks legitimacy).

37

38

39 Yet snow is clearly not essentially white! So we have a problem.24 Perhaps this troublesome

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41 apparent demand for truthmaker essentialism rather signals that the truthmaking is in some

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44 important manner being performed by the ‘essence’ (i.e. property) itself.

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46 *8.2. The Indexical Model*

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1. 23 Here the point might have been more clearly made if Restall had said that a unicorn is something whose
2. existence necessitates *the truth of* the claim “a unicorn exists”, since the mere existence of an entity does
3. not necessitate that anyone *claim* that that entity exists. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pointing
4. this out.
5. 24 Truthmaker essentialism is adumbrated in (David 2005, p. 144). (Parsons 1999) discusses but ultimately
6. denies it. The above should not be taken as endorsing truthmaker essentialism as a plausible view, merely
7. as acknowledging its presence in the literature.

4 My second suggested model holds that truthmaking consists in the truth-bearer somehow

5

6 *indexing* the truthmaker. This model also looks to Russell – this time to what he called a

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8

9 “logically proper name”. This concept has been extended beyond Russell’s application of

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11 it solely to sense-data particulars (Russell 1985, pp. 61-3), most influentially by Kripke.

12

13

14 Kripke points out that in certain cases where I only know the meaning of a name such as

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16 “Saul Kripke” through a property – such as “the author of *Naming and Necessity*” – if the

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19 property and name-bearer part ways (if Kripke didn’t actually author *Naming and*

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21 *Necessity*, but someone else did), then “Saul Kripke” still tracks Kripke himself, as that is

22

23

24 his name (Kripke 1980, pp. 83-92).

25

26 Truthmaker theorists often seem to talk tantalisingly *as if* an Indexical Model is how

27

28 they envisage the truthmaking relation. It might be argued that such an account is not

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30

31 plausible if we understand a truthmaker as something the existence of which *necessitates*

32

33 the truth of the truth-bearer. How can a named object necessitate anything? However this

34

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36 arguably treats necessitation too much like deducibility, whilst necessitation is, properly

37

38 regarded, *purely metaphysical*. Thus a possible model for necessitation under the Indexical

39

40

41 Model is precisely the identities around which we have seen that nominalist explication

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43 often turns. This seems to be precisely how Armstrong is thinking (Armstrong 2004, p. 9),

44

45 as a way to resolve the cross-categorical nature of his own truthmaking relation.

46

47

48 But I will now present a third – relatively unexplored – model of “correspondence”

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50 between truthmaker and truth-bearer.

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53 *8.3. The Iconic Model*

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55 This model takes as its paradigm representing *relations* through an isomorphically

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57

58 structured sign, as geographical relationships are represented by a map, holding that

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4 truthmaking consists in the truth-bearer somehow *picturing* the truthmaker. This model has

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6 not been much considered by truthmaker theorists25 – it would seem because it naturally

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8

9 pertains to diagrammatic representation rather than the linguistic representation they have

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11 generally focussed on. Yet there is no principled reason why truthmaker theory must

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14 restrict itself to linguistic representation.

15

16 There is actually an intriguing representative of this model in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*.

17

18

19 Wittgenstein, who chose his words with notorious care, referred to the relation between

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21 atomic propositions and the states of affairs he postulated as their truthmakers as *picturing*:

22

23

24 2.19 Logical pictures can depict the world...

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26 2.21 A picture agrees with reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or

27

28 false.

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31 Although Wittgenstein’s choice of the term “picturing” has been widely considered gnomic

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33 and unhelpful, he was here arguably attempting to distinguish an Iconic Model of

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35

36 truthmaking from its cousins.

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38 Wittgenstein’s atomic states of affairs comprise objects whose natures enable them to

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41 combine ‘like the links of a chain’. Atomic propositions can truly describe these states of

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43 affairs by ‘picturing’ their logical structure.26 Although much scholarship has been devoted

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45 to the nature of Wittgenstein’s objects, a close reading of the *Tractatus* suggests that

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48 Wittgenstein did not consider this question very important. In fact he even suggests that

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50 reference to particular objects can drop out of a complete theory of the world,27 thereby

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1. 25 although see (Smith and Murray 1981)
2. 26 “2.12: the picture is a model of reality” (Wittgenstein 1961).
3. 27 “5.526: We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, i.e. without
4. first correlating any name with a particular object” (Wittgenstein 1961).

4 suggesting that where truth proper resides is in his objects’ *arrangement* into logical

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6 pictures.

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9 It might be argued that the Iconic and Descriptive models are equivalent. Doesn’t the

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11 latter pick out aspects of the world in terms of *properties* they possess, and the former pick

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13

14 out *relations* they bear to one another, and isn’t a property just a one-place relation? But

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16 the two models differ not merely in *what* is represented but in *how* it is. In the Iconic Model,

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19 each sign may be understood through its structure to *intrinsically* signify a particular

20

21 relation, whereas the correspondence between predicates and properties under the

22

23

24 Descriptive Model is generally merely conventional. (Compare a map of Australia, which

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26 signifies iconically by virtue of its shape, with the descriptive word “cat”.) It was arguably

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28 this ‘intrinsicality’ of iconic signs that led Wittgenstein to embrace his Picture Theory of

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31 Meaning.

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33 To sum up, we now have three different possible models of the structure and operation

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36 of the truthmaker relation. Which, if any, is correct? I shall now suggest that the three

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38 models are all as they stand insufficient, but nevertheless serve as crucial conceptual

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41 components for a more richly structured model, which I shall outline and then recommend.

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43 To the extent that our account of truthmaking will now become even more structured, we

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45 will plunge further into truthmaker theory that is realist in the sense I have been arguing

46

47

48 for.

49

# 50 9. Beyond the Dyadic Relation

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53 To develop this more fully realist truthmaker theory I draw on recent original work by

54

55 Frederik Stjernfelt on Peirce’s theory of propositions (Stjernfelt 2014, 2015). In his later

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57

58 writings, Peirce substituted the term “*Dicisign”* for “proposition” in many places, in order

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60

4 to indicate that his theory of the proposition encompasses more than just linguistic

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6 sentences (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1022).

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9 *9.1. A “Particular Double Structure”*

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11 First of all, it is important to recognise the fundamental difference between propositions

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14 and terms, which renders the former an entirely new level of semantic functioning.

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16 Whereas a referring term merely picks out something in the world, a proposition can be

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19 true or false – it conveys *information*. For this reason, where some philosophers of

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21 language have held semantic compositionality, others such as Frege have held that terms

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23

24 are best understood as ‘propositional functions’. This so-called ‘priority of the

25

26 propositional’ has even been considered a distinguishing feature of post-Fregean analytic

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28 philosophy.28

29

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31 What enables propositions to rise to this ‘next level’? In a key advance on our brutely

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33 dyadic truthmaker relation, rather than being merely paired off in *reference* or

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36 *correspondence* pairs between words and world, propositions possess an internal structure

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38 with a distinctive representational form. A proposition is a sign which *says something*

39

40

41 *about something*, or, more specifically: “[a] proposition is a sign which separately, or

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43 independently indicates its object.” (Peirce 1998, p. 307). This gives the proposition what

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45 Stjernfelt calls a “particular double structure”. This structure is not descriptive, indexical

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48 or iconic *per se*. Rather, in Peircean terms, it consists in an index and an icon *fused together*

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50 so that something is both picked out and described at the same time. Stjernfelt explains:

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1. 28 Robert Brandom concurs, placing the insight within his distinctive inferentialism by categorising it as the
2. smallest unit of meaning for which we can take *responsibility* (Brandom 2000).

4 One and the same complex sign–the Dicisign–in some way indicates an object…and

5

6 at the same time, furnishes a description of that object given in the predicative…aspect

7

8

9 of the Dicisign (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1026).

10

11 As Peirce puts it:

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13

14 …every proposition is a compound of two signs, of which one functions significantly,

15

16

17 the other denotatively. The former is intended to create something like a picture in the

18

19 mind of the interpreter, the latter to point to what he is to think of that picture as being

20

21

22 a picture of (Peirce 1905, p. 43).

23

24 Consequently it is no coincidence that most propositions in Indo-European languages

25

26

27 have the grammatical structure *Subject* and *Predicate*. For all the rich analysis of ‘logical

28

29 features’ of the truthmaking relation in the literature – such as entailment and conjunctive

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31 principles (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2006a, 2006b), reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity

32

33

34 (Schaffer 2008) – no-one seems to have thought of mining this structural feature of

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36 propositions for truthmaking insight. Returning to our familiar example of “Snow is

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39 white”, Peirce states that the true sentence’s relation to the white snow is twofold: it picks

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41 out the snow *and* describes it simultaneously. Yet this does not mean that each Dicisign

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44 has the following two *objects*: i) a particular (or set of particulars), ii) a property or

45

46 universal predicated of it – in this case: i) snow, ii) whiteness. We shall see shortly that

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48 although each Dicisign does have two objects, they are more complicated (and interesting)

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50

51 than this.

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53 It’s worth noting that a sign does not require explicit subject-predicate grammatical

54

55

56 structure in order to function as a proposition. A *photograph* can qualify:

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4 The photograph’s indexical connection to its object via focused light rays stemming

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6 from the object, influencing a photographic plate…plays the Subject role of the

7

8

9 Dicisign, granting the connection of reference…while the shapes, colours and other

10

11 qualities formed on that plate play the Predicate role…(Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1025).

12

13

14 But there must be some double structure in order for the Dicisign to convey information,

15

16 or it will degenerate either into simple pointing (index-only signification), or what Peirce

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18

19 calls a “vague dream” (icon-only signification).

20

21 *9.2. The Dicisign’s Two Objects*

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23 But we have not yet plumbed the radical difference of Dicisign theory from standard 20th

24

25

26 century accounts of the proposition.29 We can approach that by asking: How do the index

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28 and the icon combine to convey information? This is a question about the Dicisign’s *syntax*,

29

30

31 and how it functions. Stjernfelt’s reply is as follows: “The Predicate not only depicts certain

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33 characters of the object, it also depicts the Dicisign claiming those characters to pertain to

34

35

36 the object” (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1026):

37

38

39 The syntax claims that the Dicisign is really indexically connected to the real fact to

40

41 which the Subject and Predicate correspond. What is often taken to be the function of

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43

44 the copula, Peirce instead analyses as an index connecting the tokens of the Subject and

45

46 the Predicate respectively, in the sign (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1031).

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48 This claim is deep and difficult but very important. The claim is that the Dicisign’s very

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51 combination of subject and predicate indexes relevant (isomorphic) ontological structure.

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53 So just as “– is white” is predicated of “snow” in “Snow is white”, this syntactic

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58

59 29 Stjernfelt distinguishes Peirce’s account from that of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein at (Stjernfelt 2015,

60 p. 1031).

4 relationship in the Dicisign *indexes* the way that whiteness is instantiated by snow in the

5

6 world.30

7

8

9 This means that the Dicisign’s two objects are actually as follows. The first is the state

10

11 of affairs referred to (in our case: *white snow*). The second is “the very reference relation

12

13

14 of the Dicisign to that [first] object” (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1033)  that is, *the way in which*

15

16 that Dicisign says something about the first object – that is, the way in which “Snow is

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19 white” picks out white snow. This means that there is a recursive character to Dicisigns,

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21 according to which, as Stjernfelt puts it:

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23

24 …the syntax of the Dicisign connecting its two parts mirrors (1) that of the

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26

27 combination of its real object and its alleged property into a [state of affairs], as well

28

29 as (2) the indexical relation which the Dicisign claims to exist between itself and its

30

31

32 object” (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1034).

33

34 The syntax of the typical English Dicisign ultimately reduces to the way that words

35

36 which denote subject and predicate are placed together in a linear sentence. This syntax

37

38

39 rests on linguistic *co-localization*, which provides a (simple, abstract) *picture* or *icon* of

40

41 the corresponding worldly state of affairs. In that sense, Wittgenstein’s Picture Theory of

42

43

44 Meaning is vindicated. But (arguably the most original and challenging part of Dicisign

45

46 theory) it is precisely that iconic structure that enables the Dicisign to *index* the isomorphic

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1. 30 Peirce arguably expresses this point when he says, “The most perfectly thorough analysis throws the
2. whole substance of the Dicisign into the Predicate.” (Peirce CP 2.318, 1903). One might protest that such a
3. move robs the Dicisign’s subject of all meaning, which cannot be correct. But this depends what one means
4. by ‘meaning’. The subject retains a pure indexing role with regard to the Dicisign’s first object, which is its
5. proper function. Meanwhile, the predicate, properly analysed (which may not correspond exactly to the
6. proposition’s ‘surface grammar’) assumes the entire iconic signification. There is a further important story
7. to tell, which must be postponed to another time and place, about how these icons and indices are mobilised
8. to co-function by an overall *interpretation* which counts as a *symbol* in Peirce’s sign-theory. I am grateful
9. to challenges from an anonymous referee on these points.

4 state of affairs. So Wittgenstein would have been even more correct if he had defined a

5

6 “Picture-Pointing Theory of Meaning”.31

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8

9 Stjernfelt claims that co-localization “seems to form a primitive, pre-linguistic syntax”

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11 (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1032), speculating that human languages evolved from simple placing

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13

14 of objects and sounds together physically, into the rich grammatical structures we see

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16 today. Our grammar still has co-localization at the root of its functioning, he claims,

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19 although it has ramified into a series of “conventionalizations”. A simple example is a

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21 portrait with attached name (N), where if N is placed *underneath* the portrait, the Dicisign

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23

24 conventionally identifies the sitter, and if placed *inside* the portrait, it conventionally

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26 identifies the painter. Nevertheless, in both cases it is placing the name *with* the portrait

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28 spatially that creates a proposition which is true or false.

29

30

31 *9.3. Real Truthmaking and Reflexivity*

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33 The Dicisign’s recursivity arguably holds the key to resolving the dilemma of the *reflexivity*

34

35

36 (or not) of the truthmaking relation that troubles nominalist truthmaker theory. Stjernfelt

37

38 claims that the Dicisign’s double structure blurs the distinction between object and meta-

39

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41 language by operating at both levels simultaneously (Stjernfelt 2015, p. 1026). How? Just

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43 in the way that, as noted, the predicate simultaneously depicts certain characters of the

44

45 object *and* depicts the Dicisign’s own claim that those characters pertain to that object,

46

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48 thereby serving as its own index to the (truth-making) fact in question. Packing both

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50 functions into the one truthbearer enables us to account for how it is *true* that white snow

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53 truthmakes the sentence “Snow is white”, without triggering the infinite regress which was

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1. 31 Or, even better, a “Picture-Pointing Theory of the Meaning of Propositions”, since the meanings of terms
2. and arguments require a different analysis. I am grateful to John Bishop for incisive discussion on this
3. point.

4 presented earlier. To review: the regress may be posed as a dilemma. Should we say that

5

6 it's *true* that white snow truthmakes “Snow is white”? If we say no, our truthmaker theory

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9 doesn’t seem to be worth much. If we say yes, we seem to require a further truthmaker for

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11 the truth that ‘“Snow is white” is made true by white snow’, and whatever that truthmaker

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13

14 (T) is, we then face the question, ‘Is it true that T truthmakes the statement that white snow

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16 truthmakes “Snow is white”’?...and so on. Now, the Dicisign’s second object blocks the

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19 demand for T, because reference (object 1) and truthmaking (object 2) are two different

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21 functions performed by the proposition itself.32 We see here a structural explanation of the

22

23

24 truthmaking of “Snow is white” replacing the positing of a further (truthmaking) entity –

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26 this is therefore a realist solution in my sense.

27

28 To sum up, then, it seems that Dicisign theory offers useful tools for explicating

29

30

31 truthmaking in the realist spirit which I have outlined. This explication eschews merely

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33 postulating truthmaking *entities* – rather, it provides a general account of truthmaking

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35

36 *structure –* which nonetheless provides explanations which are genuinely new. For

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38 instance, Peirce’s account of the way in which index and icon fuse to convey information

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41 creates a rich framework for further explicating the simultaneous structure and unity of the

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43 proposition.

44

45 *9.4. Answers to Objections*

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48 A Peircean account of truthmaking is novel, and philosophers schooled in standard

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50 approaches may well have questions. Firstly, the nominalistically inclined may remark, “It

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1. 32 A final objection at this point is that it seems perverse to think that the proposition is made true, not by
2. white snow, but by its own semiotic relationship with white snow. But is this really perverse? Why? Isn’t
3. some sort of ‘semiotic relationship’ between proposition and fact precisely what is wanted in a truthmaker?
4. Here I urge the astute reader to be careful not to beg the question for the nominalism that I have suggested
5. runs through much previous truthmaker theory.

4 is all very well to talk of ‘structures’, but what *are* they, metaphysically speaking? You are

5

6 here bloating our ontology with mysterious entities – which is surely antinaturalistic!” The

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8

9 reply is that we are not postulating *entities*, but *functional principles*, and in interpreting

10

11 otherwise the nominalist begs the question in favour of his own identity-based

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13

14 philosophical explication.

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16 Secondly, it might be argued that the account seems fair enough for standard

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18

19 (“positive”) subject-predicate sentences like “Snow is white”, but does it have anything to

20

21 say about standard problem-cases for truthmaker theory such as negative and universal

22

23

24 truths? I don’t think that this problem is insoluble, it is just necessary to think about ways

25

26 in which negation and universal quantification might be *iconised*. For instance, negation

27

28 might be conceived as putting some kind of separating ‘wall’ between two concepts – for

29

30

31 instance placing the Universe (or ‘our possible world’) on one side, and unicorns on the

32

33 other.33 Having explicated negation, universal statements such as (**x)Ux** (“Everything is

34

35

36 a unicorn”) might be explicated in terms of existence and negation in the standard manner:

37

38 **~(x)~Ux** (“Nothing is not a unicorn”).

39

40

41 Relatedly, this theory enables a distinction between a proposition’s *reference* and its

42

43 *truthmaking*, as the Dicisign’s first and second object. We have seen some truthmaker

44

45

46 theorists explicitly warning not to conflate truthmaking with reference – the “truthmaking

47

48 without truthmakers” flag-wavers Melia and Hornsby. So far, we applaud these theorists.

49

50 But in their principled avoidance of reifying truthmakers, they have avoided giving *any*

51

52

53 theoretical account of truthmaking. This leads Melia for instance to merely gesture at *how*

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58

1. 33 This is exactly what happens in Peirce’s graphical logic system, the Existential Graphs, with the so-called
2. ‘cut’ which represents negation. For further details, see (Roberts 1973).

4 he considers language connects with the world.34 The realist approach seeks – and I have

5

6 argued, is able to provide – more information than this.

7

8

# 9 10. Conclusion

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11 Are truthbearers *made* true? And if so, what do we mean by that? We want what is true to

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13

14 depend on the world *and* we want an account of how that is the case. A truthmaker theory

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16 should provide both. Nominalism has always been ill-suited for such a task.

17

18

19 We have seen that *making* is a concept with modal force. It supports counterfactuals,

20

21 and thus explanations. For this reason I have argued that it should be viewed in a realist

22

23

24 light, and nominalist truthmaker theorists are illicitly seeking a ‘modal free lunch’. I have

25

26 suggested that a certain nominalist philosophical explication consists in establishing

27

28 identities between particular things, while a realist explication provides principles which

29

30

31 enable counterfactual reasoning and, thus provide explanatory power beyond the situation

32

33 at hand. Why not try for the realist explication, if it can be had? (Of course, if one believes

34

35

36 that it can’t be had, it surely won’t be.)

37

38 We saw that Wittgenstein ruled the truthmaking relation unexplainable in principle,

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40

41 writing:

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43

44 4.12 Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what

45

46 they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical

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48 form.

49

50

51 In one sense, Peirce’s theory manages to achieve what Wittgenstein said was impossible –

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53 enabling the Dicisign to represent what it has in common with reality – in the form of the

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1. 34 “Consider ‘there are three ways in which Joe could win his chess match.’…What makes the quantified
2. sentence true is nothing more than that P and Q and R” (Melia 2005, p, 84).

4 Dicisign’s second object. Yet in another sense it doesn’t, since we have seen that the

5

6 Dicisign’s structure *iconises* the worldly fact, rather than presenting it discursively. In

7

8

9 Tractatarian terms, we might say that the Dicisign’s second object still *shows*, rather than

10

11 *saying*, what it has in common with reality. So it all depends what one means by ‘represent’.

12

13

14 But then again, we have now seen that that ‘showing’ is not *purely* iconic, but takes a

15

16 hybrid icon-index form. The need for this indexical dimension is something Wittgenstein

17

18

19 arguably missed – although it is arguably evident in the ordinary language concept of

20

21 ‘showing’, where, for instance, showing my friend my cellphone involves not just allowing

22

23

24 him to passively see its outlines, but bringing it *to* him, *pointing it out*.

25

26 This paper has been written in the hope that redefining truthmaker realism might have

27

28 implications for redefining realism more generally. Contemporary analytic philosophy has

29

30

31 recently seen a tidal wave of nominalism. Even the scholastic realists are nominalists.35

32

33 Yet why should philosophers be ashamed to seek further explanations?

34

35

36

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