

## Metaphysical Minimalism

FRITZ MCDONALD

Department of Philosophy, Oakland University, Rochester MI 48103, USA  
mcdonal4@oakland.edu

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**ABSTRACT:** Properties and facts play a central role within metaphysics, yet there is no widely accepted account of what constitutes a property or a fact. Traditional conceptions of these metaphysical notions raise serious philosophical puzzles, making the existence of each seem dubious. Drawing on the minimalist theory of truth, I argue in favor of a minimalist conception of properties and facts. A minimalist theory of properties and facts explains these matters in terms of the acceptance of trivial schemas. To make the case that minimalism is a superior approach to properties and facts, I argue against the standard views in the philosophical literature. I argue that the minimalist approach to properties has advantages over realism, nominalism, and the trope theory. I argue that the minimalist approach to facts is superior to the standard treatment of facts on correspondence theories. Metaphysical minimalism, a minimalist metaphysics of properties and facts, is a distinct and superior alternative to the theories of properties and facts currently on offer.

**KEY WORDS:** Facts, metaphysics, minimalism, truth.

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The minimalist theory of truth, developed and defended by Horwich (1998), holds that the notion of truth is best understood in terms of a trivial schema. For any proposition  $p$ , the following truth schema holds:

Truth Schema:  $\langle p \rangle^1$  is true if, and only if,  $p$ .

Contrary to inflationary approaches to truth such as the correspondence theory, pragmatism, and pluralism, no further explanation of truth is required according to minimalism beyond this trivial schema. I will argue that a similar kind of minimalism is the best approach to two central notions in metaphysics: properties and facts. Given the failures of traditional

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<sup>1</sup>  $\langle p \rangle$  shall be used throughout the article as a shorthand for “The proposition that  $p$ ”.

approaches to properties and facts, there is a strong case to be made in favor of minimalism not only about truth, but also about metaphysics.

### Properties

There is no single, universally accepted view among philosophers about the nature of properties. Three of the paradigmatic theories of the nature of properties are platonism, nominalism, and the trope theory.<sup>2</sup> The central positive issue theories of properties such as platonism and the trope theory are intended to address is the issue in virtue of what is a certain object with a property F an object with such a property. In virtue of what are all chairs objects that have the property of being chairs, and in virtue of what are all persons objects that have the property of being persons? When we have two dogs, Fido and Spot, and both dogs have the property of being dogs, how is it that these two different animals have one and the same property? This problem is the traditional “one over many” problem posed by Plato.<sup>3</sup>

To understand fully the various commitments of the philosophical theories of properties, it is useful to appeal to Keith Campbell’s way of characterizing these views. Campbell appeals to the distinction between entities that are universal and those that are particular, and also to the further distinction between entities that are abstract and those that are concrete. Keeping these two distinctions separate is quite important. Entities are universals if they are “unrestricted in the plurality of different locations in space-time at which they may be wholly present” (Campbell 1981: 477). A particular, unlike a universal, can only be at a certain place at a certain time. Abstract entities are those “got before the mind by abstraction, that is, by concentrating attention on some, but not all, of what is presented” (ibid., 478). No such process of abstraction is required in order to consider a concrete object, like a table, chair, book, or computer. To think of the whiteness of the computer, however, or the hardness of the table, one must concentrate on these particular aspects.

The platonist theory postulates the existence of abstract universal objects, a property (in the case of Fido and Spot) of being a dog, which all objects that have this property exemplify. There is a single entity that is

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<sup>2</sup> Proponents of Platonism include Plato (1997) and Frege (1997). Devitt (1980) has argued for the nominalist view I discuss in this article. Trope theorists include Campbell (1981) and Williams (1953).

<sup>3</sup> Plato (1997) and Armstrong (1978) have appealed to this argument in order to make a case for universals. Quine (1948) and Devitt (1980) have argued that the one over many does not present a convincing case for the existence of universals.

the property *F*, and this universal *F* is exemplified by all objects that are *F*. In addition to individual concrete chairs, there is an individual abstract object that is the property of being a chair. It is the relationship between the abstract object of being a chair and the individual chairs that is supposed to explain why it is that all chairs are chairs.

The trope theory differs from platonism insofar as it is, unlike nominalism, committed to the existence of properties but not to the existence of abstract universals. Rather, the trope theorist holds that properties are abstract particulars. There is not a single abstract object, the property of being a chair, which accounts for why all chairs are chairs. Instead, each chair is supposed to contain an instance of a trope of chairhood, which is some part of the chair. All of the other aspects of the chair – its hardness, its being made of wood, its shape – are also tropes, and the chair itself is a collection of these tropes.

The nominalist theory balks at the postulation of either of these sorts of abstract entities, abstract universals or abstract particulars, and claims that there are no such things as properties. Instead, there are only predicates and objects. The proper approach is to eschew talk of an object having the property of being *F*, and just to note that the object is *F*. There is nothing to say over and above the predication of “*F*” of the object. As Michael Devitt has noted, the nominalist offers an answer to the question of the one over many problem, “In virtue of what are *a* and *b* both *F*?” The answer given by the nominalist is simply that this is true in virtue of the following:

- (1) *a* is *F*;
- (2) *b* is *F* (Devitt 1980: 95).

As Devitt notes, this cannot be all there is to be said regarding properties on an adequate nominalist account, for there are a number of meaningful expressions purportedly referring to properties that cannot be explained by claims such as (1) and (2) alone, such as “humility is a virtue”.

Many disputes in metaphysics are cast in terms of denials of the existence of a given property. Secondary quality theorists deny the existence of objective colors. Atheists deny the existence of certain religious properties, such as grace. Moral antirealists deny that moral properties exist. How are we supposed to read any claim denying the existence of a property? The trouble is that it seems that one needs to appeal to one or another of these philosophical theories of properties in order to cash out this denial of existence, and doing so will require becoming entangled in this debate over the nature of properties.

Take, for example, the nominalist theory. The nominalist denies that there are properties.<sup>4</sup> Instead, there are only predicates and objects to which predicates apply. If this is correct, then as Devitt (2002) points out, the nominalist is automatically committed to denying the existence of any property whatsoever. Denial of the existence of a given class of properties is just a particular instance of the nominalist's general position on the nonexistence of properties.

On the other hand, if we are to understand positions that claim properties do indeed exist, then we would have to appeal to either the platonist theory or the trope theory in order to fully spell out what this commitment amounts to. It is far from clear, however, that all of those who accepted that a contested class of properties – such as objective colors, religious properties, or moral properties – genuinely do exist would also be comfortable claiming that there are either abstract universals or abstract particulars. One could coherently imagine a philosopher being perfectly comfortable claiming redness, grace, or goodness exists without feeling particularly attracted to either platonism or the trope theory. For these reasons, as noted above, assertion or denial of the existence of any sort of properties would be tangled into these vexed issues.

### **A Deflationary Account of Properties**

All three of the traditional accounts of properties discussed above are deeply unsatisfying, and each results in either regarding the existence of properties as a mysterious matter or revising our ordinary practice of attributing properties.<sup>5</sup> The platonist makes it difficult to understand how it is even possible that objects could have properties. We are driven to a philosophical paradox by the account given of the relationship between objects and properties. If having a property, and being in a relation, are explained by the postulation of properties and relations, then we will need to account for the relation that binds the property to the object. The trouble that presents itself is that this relation of exemplification, the relation that binds property to object, itself stands in need of explanation. Postulation

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<sup>4</sup> The term “nominalist” is sometime used in a broader sense, to mean not the view that denies the existence of properties, but only a view that denies the existence of universals. In this broader sense, the trope theory is considered a form of nominalism. In order to keep all of the terminology of this article clear, I am only using the term “nominalist” in the narrow sense I have spelled out here.

<sup>5</sup> The criticism of the traditional account of properties is indebted to Wittgenstein's (1953) account of philosophical problems in the *Philosophical Investigations*, and to discussions with Paul Horwich of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy.

of a further relation to relate property, object, and exemplification will result in infinite regress, a philosophical paradox.<sup>6</sup>

The trope theorist, on the other hand, presents a view that is deeply revisionary of our ordinary view both of properties and objects. We would normally say that there is only a single property of being a dog, or a single property of being a table. On this view, however, there are many properties of being a dog, as many properties of being a dog as there are dogs. Where there is a dog, there is a trope of being a dog. Perhaps even more difficult to understand is the position of trope theorist on the existence of objects. For Campbell, the basic kind of entity is a trope, and objects are collections of such tropes.

On the view that tropes are the basic particulars, concrete particulars, the whole man and the whole piece of cloth, count as dependent realities. They are collections of co-located tropes, depending on these tropes as a fleet does upon its component ships (Campbell 1981: 479).

Thus the trope theorist makes even ordinary objects such as tables and chairs seem obscure and mysterious. What exactly are the tropes that a chair consists of? Where does one trope end and the other begin? How do all of these tropes “hang together”?

The nominalist, in reaction to the mysteries presented by the views of the trope theorist and the platonist, denies the existence of properties altogether. This denial, unless supplemented with an account of ordinary talk, fails to make sense of our ordinary discussion of properties. Devitt correctly notes that:

We all assent to, express, believe statements like the following:

...Red resembles orange more than it resembles blue;  
 ...Red is a colour;  
 ...He has the same virtues as his father;  
 ...The dresses were of the same colour.  
 ...[T]hese statements seem to require the existence of properties for them to be true (Devitt 1980: 99).

Without, as Devitt notes, a method for paraphrasing ordinary talk of properties, the truth of these statements is left unexplained.

Consider, for example, the claim that humility is a virtue.<sup>7</sup> One might consider paraphrasing this claim without a reference to the property of humility as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> There is a vast literature on this regress problem. The regress problem was first noted by Plato himself in the *Parmenides* (1997). A recent presentation of the regress problem as a serious issue for theories of properties is Lewis (1983).

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Borut Cerkovnik for discussion of this issue.

All humble persons are virtuous persons.

This paraphrase would fail to properly convey the proper meaning of “humility is a virtue”. Assume, for the sake of argument, that humility is a virtue. It is not the case, even if humility is a virtue, that all humble persons are virtuous persons. An individual who is only humble, yet has no other redeeming qualities, would not be a virtuous person. The paraphrase of this claim miscasts the relationship between humility and virtue. The claim that humility is a virtue states a relation among properties: humility is one of the properties that belong to the class of virtue properties. Talk of properties allows us to make meaningful statements of this sort.

The error that is at the source of all of these various theories of properties is an error of the sort that Wittgenstein noted in the *Philosophical Investigations* as characteristic of philosophical perplexities. Each of these positions results from thinking of properties as being analogous to concrete objects, and expecting talk of properties to function in a way similar to discussion of concrete objects. This is a result of the use of noun phrases such as “the property of being blue” or “the color of this computer” in discussing properties. When we talk of the property P as being a thing that in virtue of which certain objects have the property P, or share the property P, we are misled into thinking that there is some explanatory relationship between something similar to a concrete object, the property P, and the things that have this property. The platonist is led by thinking of properties in this way to make the relation between objects and properties mysterious. The trope theorist makes ordinary objects themselves puzzling. The nominalist avoids these troubles by denying the existence of properties but as a result cannot capture of our ordinary talk of properties.

Is there an account of the notion of property that accords better with our ordinary linguistic practice? Is there some noncontroversial account of properties to which we could turn in order to characterize disagreements over ontology? If we were to attempt to characterize the use of the term “property” in ordinary, nonphilosophical contexts, we would find that there is little difference between attributing a property F to an object x and saying that x is F. Is there a circumstance in which we would say that water has the property of being wet, but deny that water is wet? Is there a circumstance in which we would say that Barack Obama has the property of being a Democrat, but deny that Barack Obama is a Democrat? These entailments work in the opposite direction as well: There is little room for saying that Susan is a redhead but denying that Susan has the property of being a redhead.

Noting this uncontroversial fact regarding the notion of property, we can characterize our use of the term “property” by the following schema, suggested by Horwich:

For any object  $x$ ,  $x$  has the property of *being F* if and only if  $x$  is  $F$ . (Horwich 1993: 74)

There is little room, if properties are understood in this sense, for disagreement over whether a certain property is being attributed to an object by a speaker. For, whenever a speaker predicates  $F$  of an object, it just trivially follows that this speaker is attributing the property of being  $F$  to that object.<sup>8</sup>

Seeing that this is the notion of property employed in ordinary contexts, we once again see where the three traditional accounts of properties discussed above went wrong. The platonist and trope theorist led to theories that made the relationship between objects and properties, or objects themselves obscure due to the feeling that there was a deep mystery regarding how a certain object could have a property  $F$ . The nominalist denies the existence of properties for the same reason: Given that properties are so mysterious, and the only way to account for this mystery is to postulate the existence of a strange sort of object, properties must not exist at all.

In order to avoid confusion, it should be noted that the minimalist account of properties is not a nominalist view – it is a view that, like platonism, holds that there are properties. Unlike platonism, the minimalist account claims that there is nothing further of significance to be said about the ontology of properties beyond what is spelled out by the trivial property schema. It is through the use of this schema to talk about properties that the minimalist account is able to avoid the problems that plagued the nominalist regarding statements quantifying over properties (such as “humility is a virtue”).

### Facts

Certain traditional versions of the correspondence theory of truth have defined true propositions (or utterances) as those propositions (or utterances) that correspond to the facts. This characterization is, for reasons discussed above, incomplete. In order to complete the theory, the correspondence theorist would have to tell us what a fact is. Is it some sort of object? In

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<sup>8</sup> As noted above, the account of properties presented here is due to Horwich (1993). A similar account of properties is discussed by Stephen Schiffer in his book *The Things We Mean*. According to Schiffer, “It is a *conceptual truth* that if Lassie is a dog, then Lassie has the property of being a dog” (Schiffer 2003: 61). I find Schiffer’s characterization of properties as “pleonastic entities” secured by “something-from-nothing” transitions a bit misleading. The point is not that properties are created or brought into existence by appeal to the minimalist property schema. Rather, as with truth, the point is that it is a mistake to say anything about properties over and above what is stated by this schema.

what way does this object resemble, or correspond, to a proposition? Is a fact some sort of (in J. L. Austin's phrase) "linguistic *Doppelgänger*" (Austin 1950: 123)?

Is there any need to posit the existence of these kinds of facts as objects over and above the concrete objects we are already familiar with? As Quine (1960) points out, the sentences "Fifth Avenue is six miles long" and "Fifth Avenue is a hundred feet wide" would presumably be made true by different facts on the correspondence theory. However, in order to explain fully what makes such sentences true, we need not posit entities such as facts over and above objects. We can account for the truth of these sentences in terms of a single, more familiar object – Fifth Avenue:

Our two sentences last quoted are true because of Fifth Avenue, because it is a hundred feet wide and six miles long, because it was planned and made that way, and because of the way we use our words; only indirection results from positing facts, in the image of sentences, as intermediaries (Quine 1960: 247).

Thus it seems that facts, as traditionally conceived of by the correspondence theorist, are both obscure and theoretically unnecessary.

One way of making the notion of a fact less obscure would be to think of facts as a kind of composite, made up of objects and properties. The trouble with thinking of facts in this way is that it fails to offer a fully comprehensive account of facts. There are true statements that are true even though the truths that they state are not related to any specific property or objects. As Strawson (1950) points out in his criticism of Austin's (1950) defense of the correspondence theory of truth, the theory of facts as composite objects only works for a restricted set of examples, such as the fact that the cat is on the mat. This fact might be thought of as composed of the cat and its relation to the mat, but such a composite object does not exist for every true statement.

...[F]acts of the cat-on-the-mat-type are the favoured species for adherents of Mr. Austin's type of view....Other species of fact, however, have long been known to present more difficulty: the fact that the cat is not on the mat, for example, or the fact that there are white cats, or that cats persecute mice, or that if you give my cat an egg, it will smash it and eat the contents (Strawson 1950: 467)

There are no plausible candidates for the objects and properties that would be the components of these facts noted by Strawson. Consider as well examples of facts regarding the nonexistence of entities, such as the fact that there are no unicorns. What entity would be the object that is a component of such a fact? To avoid the postulation of unicorns, an alternative



approach to facts is required. A better theory of facts would allow for negations, generalizations, and denials of existence to state facts.

An argument due to Frege (1918–19), Gödel (1944), Church (1956), Davidson (1984), and Neale (2001) raises a further, serious difficulty for proponents of any version of the correspondence theory spelled out in terms of facts.<sup>9</sup> This argument is often called the “slingshot argument”. If, according to the slingshot argument, a statement is made true by corresponding to a particular fact, then all true statements are made true by corresponding to the same fact. Instead of there being individual, distinct facts that make different statements true, there could only be one fact, in Davidson’s term, “The Great Fact”.

The slingshot argument, as Davidson presents it,<sup>10</sup> is based on the following two assumptions: (1) If a sentence *S1* corresponds to a certain fact *F*, then any logically equivalent sentence *S2* that we substitute for *S1* will correspond to the same fact *F*; (2) If a sentence *S1* corresponds to a certain fact *F*, then the substitution of a singular term *T1* (contained in *S1*) for a coextensive singular term *T2* will yield a sentence *S2* that corresponds to the same fact *F*.

Take as our example of a statement that happens to “correspond to a fact” the true sentence *S1*:

*S1*: The Yankees won the 1998 World Series.

By assumption, this statement is made true by the fact that the Yankees won the 1998 World Series. Appealing to assumption 1, if we substitute for *S1* the sentence *S2*, which is logically equivalent to *S1*, we have substituted a sentence that corresponds to the same fact *F*.

*S2*: (the *x* such that *x* is identical with George W. Bush and *S1*) is identical with (the *x* such that *x* is identical with George W. Bush)

Given that *S1* is identical in truth value with sentence *S3*,

*S3*: The Red Sox won the World Series in 1918.

we can substitute *S3* for *S1* in sentence *S2* without changing the reference of the singular term in the subject position. Thus, appealing to assumption 2, we see that *S4* corresponds to the same fact as the fact to which both *S2* and *S1* correspond:

<sup>9</sup> The most comprehensive defense of the slingshot argument is Stephen Neale’s *Facing Facts* (2001).

<sup>10</sup> The following formulation of the slingshot argument is based on the formulation in Davidson (1967).

$S4$ : (the  $x$  such that  $x$  is identical with George W. Bush and  $S3$ ) is identical with (the  $x$  such that  $x$  is identical with George W. Bush).

Given that  $S4$  is logically equivalent to  $S3$ , we can make another appeal to assumption 1 to establish that  $S3$  corresponds to the same fact as  $S4$ , as well as the same fact to which  $S1$  and  $S2$  correspond.

To reiterate, the argument is as follows:

SS1:  $S1$  corresponds to fact  $F$  (assume for the sake of reductio)

SS2:  $S2$  corresponds to fact  $F$  (SS1, assumption 1)

SS3:  $S4$  corresponds to fact  $F$  (SS2, assumption 2)

SS4:  $S3$  corresponds to fact  $F$  (SS3, assumption 1)

Thus, if  $S1$ , “The Yankees won the World Series in 1998” and  $S3$ , “The Red Sox won the World Series in 1918” are made true by corresponding to a fact  $F$ , they are made true by corresponding to the very same fact. Repeated appeals to this line of argument would establish Davidson’s conclusion that, if statements are made true by corresponding to facts, then all statements correspond to one and the same “Great Fact”.

Davidson takes the moral of this argument to be that we should reject philosophical theories spelled out in terms of facts: “The strategy of facts, against which I have been inveighing, is something else: a philosophical theory, and a bad one” (Davidson 1984: 50). Quine and Davidson are not the only philosophers whose views lead them to rejection of talk of facts. Other versions of the correspondence theory of truth, such as the version of Tarski’s theory proposed by Field (1972), make no appeal to facts in order to explain the relationship between language and the world. As Davidson (1984) points out, if the Tarskian theory of truth is correct, a full definition of truth can be given by appeal to principles regarding the denotation of referring terms and the satisfaction of predicates. No appeal to facts is required on such an account.

Non-correspondence inflationary theories of truth including the pragmatist theory and the coherence theory also seem to require no appeal to this correspondence notion of facts. For example, if true propositions are defined as propositions that are useful to believe, then we need not make any appeal to facts in order to explain the nature of truth. We need only appeal to an account of practice that will tell us which propositions are more or less useful. Also, none of the deflationary theories of truth makes appeal to the notion of a fact in explaining the role of the truth term. It would seem that the only theory of truth that gives facts an essential role to play is the version of the correspondence theory that is susceptible to the slingshot argument. Should we then follow Quine and Davidson in rejecting facts *tout court*?

Davidson's counsel to regard talk of facts as part of a useless philosophical theory overlooks that talk of facts, in ordinary contexts, serves important purposes. For example, we certainly wouldn't want to follow the strategy of rejecting facts to the absurd consequence of refusing to recognize as meaningful statements such as "Voters will decide in this election based on the facts on the ground in Iraq", or "Successful scientific theories are based on the observed facts". Davidson seems to recognize this to some degree when he calls "talk of facts...harmless," but he fails to offer any account of facts (Davidson 1984: 50).

A way to properly characterize the way the notion of fact is employed in ordinary contexts without making appeal to any strange, theoretically unnecessary entities is provided by a schema similar to the minimalist truth schema. Truth is characterized in terms of acceptance of instances of the following schema:

<p> is true if and only if p.

Whenever we accept that p, we also accept that it is true that p. It is also the case that whenever we recognize that a certain proposition, <p>, is true, we are inclined to claim that it is a fact that p. Given that it is true that electrons have negative charge, it is a fact that electrons have negative charge.<sup>11</sup>

Given that this is the case, we can characterize our notion of fact in terms of acceptance of the following schema:

*That p is a fact if and only if p* (Horwich 1993: 74).

We can appeal to this minimalist fact schema in order to see that the notion of fact plays a generalizing role similar to the generalizing role played by the notion of truth. Talk of the facts in a particular domain is a shorthand allowing us to refer to a number of true propositions without stating them one at a time. For instance, take the sentence "Voters will decide in this election based on the facts on the ground in Iraq". What this means is that, for all propositions <p>, if <p> is a proposition regarding the current situation in Iraq, and it is a fact that p, then the voters will make decisions in the election based on the belief that p. By the equivalence schema, this

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<sup>11</sup> That there is such a relationship between facts and true propositions should not lead us to think that facts are themselves true propositions. Propositions, as meanings of statements, are a different sort of entity entirely from facts. To talk about facts, generally, is not to talk about meanings. The fact that electrons have negative charge is not itself a semantic entity, and it thus differs in kind from the meaning of the statement "electrons have negative charge". The fact that electrons have negative charge is a fact regarding electrons and charge, not a fact regarding the meanings of "electron" and "charge". I am grateful to Saana Hirvonen for raising this issue.

amounts to the following: for all propositions  $\langle p \rangle$ , if  $\langle p \rangle$  is a proposition regarding the current situation in Iraq, and  $p$ , then the voters will make decisions in the election based on the belief that  $p$ .

The minimalist theory of also allows for the possibility of a fully comprehensive theory of facts. Given that facts are not thought of as composite objects, the minimalist theory of facts is not subject to the limitations that Strawson noted in Austin's theory of facts. Each of the following is a legitimate instance of the minimalist fact schema:

- SI1: That the cat is on the mat is a fact if and only if the cat is on the mat.
- SI2: That the cat is not on the mat is a fact if and only if the cat is not on the mat.
- SI3: That cats persecute mice is a fact if and only if cats persecute mice.
- SI4: That there are no unicorns is a fact if and only if there are no unicorns.

Given that the minimalist account of facts does not consider facts as being composite objects, it can allow for the possibility of negations, generalizations, and denials of existence to state facts.

This alternative, minimalist account of facts allows us to properly characterize the notion of facts used in ordinary contexts as well as to diagnose the error that led to the conclusion of the slingshot argument. The presupposition of the correspondence theory that truth involves correspondence to facts is rejected by deflationists generally, including the minimalist. A minimalist account of truth, by providing an account of truth that makes no appeal to correspondence to facts in its explanation of truth, is not damaged by the slingshot argument.

The trouble the slingshot presents for correspondence theories is that one cannot take the notion of fact to be an *explanatory* notion, one that plays an important role in a theory of truth, if the slingshot argument is successful. For how could correspondence to facts explain why certain statements are true, if it is the case that when any statement corresponds to a particular fact, it corresponds to all other facts as well? The minimalist account of truth and facts, in stark contrast, does not account for the truth of propositions in terms of a correspondence relation between propositions and facts. Thus the slingshot considerations regarding the relation of correspondence between statements and facts does not present any problem whatsoever for the minimalist account of truth and facts.

### **Truth, Properties, and Facts**

There are parallels between the truth schema, the property schema, and the fact schema. Each allows for the formulation of general claims that could not be stated without appeal to such schemata. None of these

schemata should be thought of as either introducing truth, properties, or facts into the world or eliminating truth, properties, or facts from the world<sup>12</sup>. Consider the schemata:

Truth schema:  $\langle p \rangle$  is true if, and only if,  $p$ .

Property schema: For any object  $x$ ,  $x$  has the property of *being F* if and only if  $x$  is  $F$ .

Fact schema: *That p* is a fact if and only if  $p$ .

Reading these biconditionals from the right hand side first (after the connective), and then to the left hand side (prior to the connective), might suggest that these schemata serve the purpose of introducing truths, properties, and facts into the world. Reading these biconditionals from the left hand side first, and then to the right hand side, might suggest that these schemata serve the purpose of eliminating truths, properties, and facts from the world. Neither of these readings is correct. The minimalist schemata are not stated for the purpose of eliminating truths, properties, or facts from the world. Truths, properties, and facts are indispensable for the purpose of making correct general statements about the world.

The minimalist schemata should also not be thought of as introducing truths, facts, or properties into the world. It is not due to these schemata that the truths, facts, and properties exist. That it is true that grass is green; that grass has the property of being green; and that it is a fact that grass is green are all so because of the green grass and not because of the philosophical schemata themselves. These schemata simply allow for us to speak of what is and what is not.<sup>13</sup>

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