

## *Deflationism and Explanatory Asymmetry*

Any competent speaker of English both accepts as a trivial truth any instance of the form “if it is true that p then it is true because p” and rejects any instance of the form “if p then p because it is true that p” as a patent falsity. This is what I label “explanatory asymmetry”. Explanatory asymmetry expresses our intuition that truth is grounded on being and not the other way around. That is why accounting for the explanatory asymmetry is a task no theory of truth should escape. It has been claimed that deflationary conceptions of truth are inconsistent with the explanatory asymmetry (Vision, 1997, Rodriguez-Pereyra 2005, Douven, I., Hindriks F., 2005). The argument is that since according to Deflationism there is *at least* an a priori mutual entailment between “p” and “It is true that p”, then they should be substitutable *salva veritate* in any context, so that “it is true that p because p” should have the same truth-value as “p because p”, which is false (I call this the *inconsistency argument*).

My first point focuses on the inconsistency argument. The argument is unsound because it has a false premise: it is not true that expressions with the same content (even paradigmatic cases of synonymous expressions such as “bachelor” and “unmarried male”) are substitutable *salva veritate* in any context; and “because” contexts are precisely the sort of contexts in which substitution fails. It will be crucial here to distinguish between trivial and non trivial explanations: cognitively equivalent expressions are substitutable *salva veritate* in *non trivial* explanations but not in trivial ones as the peculiar kind of explanation which is involved in sentences like “it is true that p because p”.

It has been claimed that even granted that Deflationism is not inconsistent with explanatory asymmetry, it is hard to see where it can find the conceptual tools to account for an asymmetry no trace of which can be found in the theory. In fact according to Deflationism there is *no asymmetry* between “p” and “it is true that p”, either because they are supposed to have the same content or because their connection is taken to be exhausted by an a priori mutual entailment.

The other point of the talk concerns the problem of how Deflationism can account for the explanatory asymmetry. My account of explanatory asymmetry has similarities with those developed by W. Kuenne (2003), B. Schnieder (2006) and S. Barker (2007).

In particular I agree with Kuenne’s idea that sentences of the form “it is true that p because p” are conceptual explanations in which an asymmetrical relation of partial conceptual analysis holds between “p” (the *analysans*) and “it is true that p” (the *analysandum*). Nonetheless I think that Kuenne’s proposal does not provide a general clarification of such a relation, and in particular-of its asymmetry.

My aim is to clarify the relation of conceptual analysis focusing on the relations of asymmetric dependence holding between our linguistic competence on some items of the lexicon and our linguistic competence on other items. With regard to such dependence the couples of expressions of the form “It is true that p”/“p” share many similarities with other couples of expressions such as “bachelor”/“unmarried male” which are paradigmatic cases of expressions among which holds a relation of conceptual analysis.

Any Deflationist should be happy to accept that between our competence on “it is true that p” and our competence on “p” there is this kind of dependence since, according to Deflationism, the instances of T-schema (Minimal theory, in Horwich’s words) count as an implicit definition of “true”. I conclude that Deflationism is perfectly able to account for the explanatory asymmetry.

### **References**

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