

Truthmakers Without Truth¹

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It is often taken for granted that truth is mind-independent, i.e. that, necessarily, if the world is objectively speaking in a certain way, then it is true that it is that way, independently of anyone thinking that it is that way. I argue that proponents of correspondence-truth, in particular immanent realists, should not take the mind-independence of truth for granted. The assumption that the mind-independent features of the world, i.e. 'facts', determine the truth of propositions, does not entail that truth is independent of minds. This follows only on the further assumption that there exist propositions about every feature of reality independent of minds, which is something the immanent realist can and should deny.

I

Among proponents of the correspondence theory, J.M.E. McTaggart being the outstanding exception (1927, sect. 15ff), it is almost universally assumed that the correspondence theory of truth is wedded to the idea that truth is mind-independent.² That is, it is believed that, necessarily, *if* the world is objectively speaking in a certain way, then it is true that it is that way, independently of anyone thinking or speaking about the way the world is. In this paper I will argue that the correspondence theory is not wedded to the idea that truth is mind-independent. Furthermore, that in particular those philosophers who restrict the scope of reality to the spatio-temporal world, i.e. immanent realists or naturalists, can and should reject the mind-independence view. This discussion is wholly concerned with the correspondence theory of truth, and its implications.

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² The content of this paper is greatly inspired by J.M.E. McTaggart's reasoning in (1927, sect. 15 ff).

The correspondence theory, in its broadest sense, is the view that truth is a relation to reality (Marian David, 1994: 17). More narrowly, the theory construes truth as a relational property of propositions, which they bear in virtue of a certain kind of relation to a determinate state of a portion of reality, i.e. a state of affairs, or fact. A *fact*, accordingly, is a portion of reality as that portion is in itself, independently of how we think it is. Since at least one of the relata of the correspondence relation is mind-independent, the correspondence relation is assumed to hold whether we know it to hold or not; in the words of Ingvar Johansson (2004), it is *cognition-independent*. To sum up, correspondence-truth requires a fact at one end of the correspondence relation, e.g., the sun as it is in itself, but also something at the other end of the relation. Something distinct from the sun itself, but which is about the sun, and which corresponds to it or is somehow made true by the sun, say, the proposition ‘the sun is a star’.³ Truth, according to the correspondence theory, is correspondence of proposition to fact, or, of truthbearer to truthmaker.⁴ In the words of J. L. Austin: “It takes two to make a truth” (1964: 23).

Proponents of correspondence-truth, and others, usually take it for granted that truth is independent of what we think or say. I will call this *the mind-independence intuition*. I call it an intuition because when used explicitly as an argument, typically, the reader is asked to accept as self-evident some suggestion about what would be true even if no one was thinking about it. For instance, that if it were a fact that the sun is a star, it would be true that the sun is a star even if there did not exist beings able to think or express ‘the sun is a star’. The following passage by Scott Soames is a typical example of the kind of reasoning I have in mind:

Certainly a proposition can be true even if it has never been expressed by any actual utterance. It is also not absurd to suppose that it can be true even if there is no sentence that expresses it. For example, for each of the nonenumerably many real numbers, there is a proposition that it is greater than or equal to zero. If each sentence is a finite string of words drawn from a finite vocabulary, then the number of propositions outstrips the denumerable infinity of sentences available to express them - that is, there are truths with no linguistic expression. Moreover, if languages are man-made construc-

³ I will henceforth use single quotation marks to refer to propositional content, as opposed to that which the content professes to be about.

⁴ Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, & Barry Smith initiated the use of ‘truthmakers’ and ‘truthbearers’ as general terms for that which determines the truth-value of something, and that which has the truth-value, respectively (1984: 287-321).

tions, then propositions that are expressed by sentences could have been true even if no sentences had expressed them. For example the proposition that the sun is a star could have been true even if no one and hence no sentence had existed to express it (1999: 19).

According to Soames, there exist propositions that have no linguistic expression because there is a greater infinity of propositions than there are linguistic expressions. The passage also clearly illustrates that the mind-independence intuition of truth is closely linked to another idea also widely taken for granted by contemporary philosophers, notably that *propositions* exist independently of minds. Soames clearly assumes that propositions are mind-independent and therefore exist whether or not anyone thinks or expresses them. Indeed, he further strengthens his claim that there are *some* propositions that have no linguistic expression, by advancing the point that if there were no thinking beings, *no* proposition at all would have a linguistic expression, not even those that are presently expressed by sentences, and yet, he suggests they *could* be true. I interpret the contingency of the truth of the proposition 'the sun exists', implied by the term 'could', not as due to the contingent existence of propositions, but to the contingency of the existence of the sun; i.e. to the contingency of the truthmaker, not the truthbearer. If the sun did not exist, the proposition 'the sun exists' would still exist, but be false. However, if the existence of propositions were contingent, then Soames argument would fail since there would be no guarantee that for every real number there would be the proposition ' x is greater than or equal to zero'. Soames' main point is surely to show that it is only a matter of contingent fact that propositions have linguistic expressions at all, while it is assumed to be a matter of objective necessity that there exist propositions about every feature of reality, whether actual or merely possible, and that are therefore true or false independently of minds.

It is still a matter of some controversy whether or not one should assume that propositions exist independently of minds (for an overview, see Rosen 2001), even though contemporary philosophers do not seem to be particularly worried about this controversy. In general, philosophers take it for granted that it would be of no significant importance to assume, for the sake of convenience, that there exist propositions about everything, independently of minds. There is even a name for the assumption that for all being, there is a proposition (not necessarily thought by anyone) that truly renders the nature of this being. Stephen Read calls it *expressibility* (2000). Of course, *if* truth is correspondence between proposition and fact, and *if* propositions exist independently of minds, then propositions can be true or

false independently of being thought or expressed by someone. I do not dispute that. What I object to is the assumption that it is somehow self-evident, or unproblematic to assume, that propositions do in fact exist independently of minds.

Let us consider another example of the impact of the mind-independence intuition in contemporary philosophy, notably Hugh Mellor's abandonment of his token-reflexive account of the truth-conditions of tensed propositions, i.e. A-propositions:

In *Real Time* I defended the token-reflexive view that an A-proposition like '*e* is present' is true at a *B*-time *t* if and only if a token of it - e.g., a statement of it, or someone's belief in it - at *t* would be true. But Quentin Smith (1993a chapter 3) and others have shown that this cannot cope with propositions like 'there are no tokens now', which can be true even though they can have no true tokens (1998: xi-xii).

For the purposes of this paper it is not necessary to know the details of the token-reflexive analysis, it is enough to know that the existence at a particular time of a particular instance (token) of a tensed proposition, i.e. a sentence, an utterance or a thought, is an essential part of the truth-condition of that very proposition. Mellor, agrees to the idea shared by Quentin Smith, Soames and every proponent of 'expressibility', that propositions can be true even though there is no one to think or express them. He draws the conclusion that his account is inadequate because it cannot account for the truth-conditions of propositions that *cannot* have any true instances, and yet be true when no instances of it exist, such as 'there are no linguistic tokens now'.

The suggestion that when there are no thinking beings, and hence no linguistic tokens, it would be true that 'there are no linguistic tokens' is by no means justified by the correspondence theory. The correspondence theory does not say that, necessarily, for every feature of reality, whether actual or merely possible, there is a proposition about it, which can be true or false by corresponding to fact. It is perfectly compatible with the correspondence theory to deny the reality of Platonic propositions, and hence to say that when there are no thinking beings it is a matter of objective fact that there are no linguistic tokens and it is a matter of objective fact that there are no propositions either that could correspond to that fact. Accordingly, it would be a matter of objective fact that there are no truths *about* the lack of linguistic tokens, when in fact linguistic tokens are lacking.

When in fact there are no linguistic tokens, on this view, there will be no correspondence-truth, in the form of propositions bearing the relational property of truth. To my mind, then, Mellor's token reflexive analysis is perfectly adequate because I only see a need to account for the truth of propositions that actually exist.

II

The idea that there will be no truth unless there exist thinking creatures able to form propositions about the determinate states of the world, will strike many readers as being highly provocative and counter-intuitive, even absurd or at least implying numerous difficulties. For instance, it might be received as analogous to the idea that 'to be is to be perceived'. That is, the claim that there will be no truth about the sun being a star unless the proposition 'the sun is a star' exists in the mind of a thinking being, could be understood as an analogous to the idea that there are no trees in the forest unless someone perceives the trees. The worry is that by denying the existence of truths about the sun, one is denying the existence of a mind-independent reality. This worry is unfounded. A world devoid of thinking beings would still be a world of many determinate states of affairs, i.e. facts, even though it lacked entities that were about these facts, and which held a relation of correspondence to them. It would be a world that did not contain anything that *corresponded* to the ways the world is; it would be a world that only contained the ways the world is, period. Indeed, I suspect that it is the conviction that many things exist that are never thought of that lends credibility to the mind-independence intuition, because when we try to imagine what it would be like for something to be true in the absence of thinkers, we imagine what it would be like for something to exist in the absence of thinkers. Or, in other words, we consider whether the truthmaker of that proposition could exist in the absence of thinkers. From the conclusion that the truthmaker could exist in the absence of thinking beings, we are tempted to draw the further conclusion that truth is independent of minds, because the existence of the truthmaker is thought to entail or necessitate truth. This last inference is mistaken, or, at least, dependent on further assumptions, which will be discussed in section III below.

The idea that truth and objective reality are somehow inseparable has a strong hold on philosophers, wherefore there is reason to dwell on this point a bit further. The main culprit behind the allure of the mind-independence intuition could be the idea that because the truth-value of

propositions is determined by the facts, then truth is intimately connected with *how the world is in itself*. Having the idea that facts determine truth in the back of one's mind, and of course the conviction that truth is nevertheless a property of propositions, the following line of reasoning comes naturally: (i) if snow is in fact white, then it must be true that snow is white regardless of anyone thinking 'snow is white', because truth is about how things are in themselves not about how they are thought of by an observer, and (ii) there must then necessarily be the corresponding proposition 'snow is white' if snow is in fact white, otherwise there would be no truth about how things are in themselves, given that truth is a property of propositions, and (iii) that if it is denied that there would be truth in the absence of thinkers, this is received as tantamount to denying that there is any such thing as how things are in themselves because this is what truth is all about. The conclusion that unless there is truth there is no determinate reality does not follow from the correspondence theory, because although truth is intimately connected to how the world is, it is not *equivalent* to how the world is. Truth, according to the correspondence theory, is a property of propositions *about* the world, a property they possess in virtue of a relation of correspondence to the world; truth is not a property of the world itself. Hence we can have a determinate objective reality without truth. This should calm the jitters of immanent realists about the suggestion that truth is mind-dependent, at least to some extent.

It should be pointed out that even on this kind of mind-dependence view of truth, truth is not subjective. It only depicts the *existence* of propositions to be mind-dependent, but the *truth* of these mind-dependent propositions is still determined by the world. A proposition is still true in virtue of the facts, even though it does not exist in virtue of the facts. Furthermore, it would be entirely besides the point to object that an objective feature of the world would not be a truthmaker unless it made something true. The objective features of the world are popularly called 'truthmakers', only because it appears to be taken for granted that, necessarily, if something exists independently of minds, then there is a proposition about it and which is made true by that something. To my mind, this is not self-evident at all, and I continue to use the term 'truthmaker' merely for the sake of convenience.

III

The mind-independence intuition of correspondence-truth is dependent on the assumption that for every feature of reality there exists a corresponding proposition independently of minds. This is of particular importance for what is called *immanent realism*, or *natural realism*, the view that reality is confined to the spatiotemporal world, because they explicitly reject the reality of entities existing outside time and space, i.e. platonic propositions. Immanent realism is difficult to reconcile with the mind-independence intuition of truth because it is difficult to reconcile it with the mind-independence of propositions. Indeed, I think immanent realists can and should reject both the mind-independence of propositions and of truth.

Please note that immanent realism is not equivalent to nominalism, according to which there are no universals. Immanent realism does admit universals, in the form of universal features of things existing in the spatiotemporal world. Note also that immanent realism is not incompatible with the existence of abstract concepts, it just insists that they must exist in some form of material substratum, e.g. in the form of mental states in the minds of thinkers, mental states whose content is abstract. According to this view the universal property of being true exists in its instances, i.e. in the relational properties of those existing propositions that correspond to their subject matter.

I must also warn the reader not to understand the mind-dependence view of propositions as suggesting that propositions flicker in and out of existence as people shift their attention from considering one proposition to considering the next. There is a common-sense inspired idea about having beliefs, which fits naturally to the immanent realist view, and which appears to be the view adopted by every empirically orientated view on mental content, e.g. in psychology. This is the idea that our mind contains ‘propositional content’ in many different forms, some of which we need not always be conscious of having in order for that content to be firmly situated in the brain. Knowledge, memories and internalised attitudes are obvious examples. It would be contrary to common sense to assume that knowledge never really exists in the mind except for those brief moments when we intentionally direct our attention towards it. Admittedly, our capacity to be *conscious* of the contents of our minds is greatly limited, but our capacity to store knowledge in our minds is extraordinary. Just consider persons who remember the telephone book from front to back. Not to think of those that really know what Kant’s transcendental philosophy is

all about. Should we seriously consider the possibility that these persons merely have an extraordinary capacity to have the appropriate intentional stance to something existing outside time and space? If anything is, then this is a view that runs counter to common sense. Arguably, knowledge, memories and internalised attitudes are a few of many types of mental items, which can exist subconsciously, but never independently of a mind.

I have no illusions about the mind-dependency view of propositions being unproblematic. Some of these problems will be discussed in subsequent sections. For now, let me point out that I assume that there is no lesser mystery involved in the assumption that propositional content exists only in some form of material substratum, e.g. organic brains (whether it be in the form of conscious thoughts, immediate experience, knowledge, memories or internalised attitudes), than in the assumption that propositional content only exist in the form of immaterial eternal entities located outside space and time. The most important thing here to note is that this discussion does not concern the *existence* of propositional content, or even of abstract propositional content. In the background there is the question of *where* and *in what form* propositional content exists, but here the focus is on the philosophical consequences either of assuming that this content exists only in minds and products of minds, or if it exists outside time and space.

Contemporary adherents of immanent realism do not all explicitly endorse a mind-independency view of propositions, but implicitly many of them do. This is evident in discussions concerning the so-called *truthmaker principle*. The principle, in its simplest form, merely states that for every truth there is a truthmaker, and I have no qualms about that. This is just a slogan expressing the idea that facts determine the truth-value of propositions. But, a number of thinkers have felt a need to add what is meant to be a corollary, supposedly explaining, or completing, the principle. John Fox initially states the principle as follows: “for every truth there is a truthmaker; by a truthmaker for A, I mean something whose very existence entails A” (1987: 188-207). Fox then notes that according to standard usage only propositions entail, and suggests that ‘necessitate’, in a non-causal sense, is better (1987: 125). Transcribing the principle in accordance with his suggestion we have the following formulation: ‘a truthmaker for A, is something whose very existence necessitates A’. The corollary says that the existence of a truthmaker necessitates the existence of a true proposition, and I assume that this necessity is supposed to hold regardless of the contingent existence of thinkers/speakers. The existence of the truthmaker

is in any case presented as the necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of the truthbearer.

Others have suggested very similar formulations of the truthmaker principle, e.g. Bigelow (1988: 125).⁵ One should of course be careful in ascribing a mind-independency view to immanent realists, as opposed to merely complain about imprecision in the formulation, since this threatens to ascribe to them sympathy for platonic entities. It is clear however that in his latest work, David Armstrong is well aware of the problem of combining immanent realism and a mind-independence view of truth. He explicitly seeks to establish the mind-independency of truth within immanent realism.

Armstrong has endorsed the truthmaker principle for some time now, but it is only recently that he has explicitly addressed the problem being discussed here. In *A World of States of Affairs* he states that “the truthmaker for a truth must necessitate that truth” (1997, p. 115), which could be read as saying merely that the truth of a proposition, if it exists at all, is necessitated, but not the existence of the proposition itself. However, in *Truth and Truthmakers* Armstrong strengthens his claims, making it clear that he endorses a mind-independence view of truth. He first says that the relation is “absolute necessitation” (2004: 5), and somewhat later that “[...] the conglomeration of H₂O molecules at a certain place and time (the truthmaker) necessitates that <there is water at that place and time> (the truth) [...]” (2004: 6). Finally, he suggests the following working hypothesis about the nature of truth:

p (a proposition) is true if and only if there exists a *T* (some entity in the world) such that *T* necessitates that *p* and *p* is true in virtue of *T* (2004: 17)

To my mind this clearly indicates that a truthmaker, on Armstrong’s view, is something that necessitates both that a proposition exists and that it is true.

⁵ So have opponents to correspondence e.g. Julian Dodd (2002) and David Lewis (2001), then in order to criticise it, but not on the same grounds as me. Dodd criticises it for not specifying whether it is the mere existence of something, or the particular qualitative state of the thing, that is the truthmaker proper. Lewis uses this formulation of the truthmaker principle to argue that the correspondence-theory is not about truth at all, but about the existential groundings of truthmakers themselves. There are then other reasons to be wary of the formulation than the one I present.

The conviction that the truthmaking relation is a matter of absolute necessitation is all the more troublesome for Armstrong since he finds the suggestion plausible that there could be a physical world without minds. Indeed, he uses this possibility as an argument against phenomenalism. According to phenomenalism, sense-data serve the role of truthmakers. But, in a world empty of minds, Armstrong argues, the phenomenalist must give a counterfactual analysis of every physical truth in terms of sense-data not actually had by anything. That is, the phenomenalist's own conclusion should be that in such a world there are no truthmakers for truths about a physical world, and hence no physical world (2004: 2). Now, the argument is powerful against phenomenalism, since they consider mind-dependent sense-data to be the truthmakers of truths about mind-independent facts, and those truthmakers disappear if sentient beings disappear.

Armstrong's admission that a world without minds is a real possibility threatens to backfire, when he assumes truth to be mind-independent. To claim that facts necessitate propositions and admit that thinkers are contingent beings makes it hard to deny the existence of Platonic entities. And yet Armstrong resists that consequence. He professes to look for a "this-worldly account of propositions" (2004: 12). At first he suggests that propositions are the 'intentional objects' of thoughts and beliefs, but hesitates to speculate too deeply about the metaphysical nature of these intentional objects. Nevertheless, he is forced to do just that because he recognises the problem with being an immanent realist and claiming that truth is mind-independent. An immanent realist needs a this-worldly account of propositions, but this-worldly accounts of propositions that exist independently of minds are hard to find. Initially, Armstrong, like me, identifies the possibility of construing them as representational states of minds as the natural this-worldly choice (2004: 14). But, to him, this is unsatisfactory:

Cannot there be truths which nobody has or will believe, or even formulate, much less state? Consider Newton and his image of the ocean of undiscovered truth that he said lay before him, reaching far beyond his own discoveries. We understand this well enough, and would continue to understand it even in the absence of an all-knowing creator or the ocean of truth yielding up all its secrets in the future. We may call such truths unexpressed truths. Generalising to include falsehoods, we can speak of 'unexpressed propositions'. True unexpressed propositions will be truths without any concrete truthbearers [...] They are, for me at least, conceptually very important. The reason for this is that the concept of such truths is needed to make sense of Truthmaker Necessitarianism (2004: 15).

Realising that he needs mind-independent propositions, Armstrong has to modify the initial idea about propositions as intentional objects, so that they no longer are dependent on being thought of or expressed by minds. His suggestion is that unexpressed propositions are possibilities of believing or contemplating or linguistically expressing the unexpressed proposition, i.e. he appeals to 'expressibility'.

Armstrong is stretching his immanent realism to the limits, and he is well aware of this. One particularly interesting worry discussed by himself is the danger of introducing uninstantiated properties into his ontology in the form of the uninstantiated content of an unexpressed proposition. Armstrong hopes that a deflationary account of these uninstantiated properties can be given, by equating them with the mere possibility of the instantiation of such a property. But, he does not mention the danger of making truth itself an uninstantiated property. When in fact there are no thinking beings, and hence no *expressed* propositions, there will be no concrete truthbearers actually bearing the relational property of being true. Armstrong admits as much. He admits that truthmakers can only actually necessitate possible intentional objects, which, were they to be actually realised by minds, could actually bear the property of corresponding to its subject matter (2004: 16).

To my mind, even though we admit that in the absence of minds there still exists the mere possibility of expressing a proposition about some fact, i.e. there exists an unexpressed proposition, which would have corresponded to its subject matter in case it had been expressed, then the lack of an actual truthbearer is equal to the absence of truth. There would be the possibility of truth, but no truth; possibility is not equivalent to an actuality. There would be no truth in the very same way as there would be no thinkers, and there would be the possibility of truth in the very same way as there would be the possibility of being thinkers. Indeed, unless there was the possibility of there being thinkers there would not be the possibility of there being expressed propositions, and that would seem to cancel the existence of unexpressed propositions.

I disagree with Armstrong about the mind-independence of truth, but my reason for disagreeing with him is not because I find his theory unintelligible or inconsistent. I disagree because I do not share his enthusiasm for preserving truth at all cost, for two reasons. Firstly, for the sake of ontological economy. To assume that mind-independent reality consists only of determinate states of the world, and the possible ways the world could be

different than it in fact is, seems more economical than to assume that in addition it consists of possible ways of believing or contemplating or linguistically express the ways the world is or could be, even when there are no thinkers that could have believed or contemplated these ways. Especially since it is doubtful whether this assumption can establish that when there are no minds there are still actual truths; it can only establish the existence of the mere possibility of the instantiation of truths. It can only establish the necessary conditions for truth, but not sufficient conditions.

Secondly, I fail to see that it has been established beyond doubt that we need to assume that truth is mind-independent. For instance, we could say that what Newton intended to say, but formulated badly, was that there is an ocean of undiscovered facts (not truths) waiting to be discovered; there are innumerable many facets of the nature of mind-independent reality about which we know nothing and have no idea about. To deny that there is an ocean of undiscovered truths is not to deny that there is an ocean of undiscovered facts. Indeed, what does a scientist aim to discover? Does a physicist aim to discover all the unexpressed propositions that exist independently of her mind, or does she aim to discover the unknown determinate states and properties of the mind-independent world, and the laws of nature?

In the case of empirical truth, it is admittedly easier to accept that there could be facts without truth. If that was the only kind of truths we have, Armstrong would perhaps be more easily persuaded to abandon the mind-independence view of truth. I think however that where Armstrong feels the need for mind-independent truth to be greatest is not in relation to contingent truths, or empirical truths, but in relation to questions about necessary truths, or modal truths in general. I will discuss this matter in greater detail in the next section.

Armstrong finds truthmaker necessitarianism intuitively appealing, because he thinks truth is about how things are in themselves, and seeks to modify his immanent realism to fit that view. I find immanent realism intuitively appealing and would rather modify my view of truth to fit that view. I find it more plausible to think (like McTaggart (1927), and Johansson (2004)) that the *relata* of the truth-making relation can exist independently of each other, and hence that the truthmaking relation involves no existential necessity, but that when they both exist the truthmaker necessarily makes the truthbearer true. Accordingly, propositions are *true* in virtue of a fact, but this does not imply that the proposition *exists* in virtue of a fact. Immanent realists clearly should not accept principles that threaten to

commit them to the existence of Platonic entities or of something in the neighbourhood, like the existence of a mere possibility of the instantiation of a proposition about the mere possibility of the instantiation of a state of affairs. That is, to the existence of unexpressed propositions about possible but never realised states of affairs.

A final observation about the truthmaker principle is that on the formulation being discussed here the alleged ‘corollary’ is no corollary, i.e. it should not be understood as a further *explanation* or *clarification* of the claim that for every truth there is a truthmaker. The principle says that for every truth there is a truthmaker, but the ‘corollary’ says that for every truthmaker there is a truth. I agree to the former, but I disagree that the latter should follow from, or explain, the former. The former is based on the idea that the truth-value of propositions is determined by the facts, but the second is based on the idea that, necessarily, if there exists a fact there also exists the corresponding proposition, i.e. on expressibility. There is no self-evident connection between the two.

IV

I have already made one suggestion as to why philosophers may find the mind-dependency of truth counterintuitive. Notably, because they associate truth with *how things are in themselves* and therefore find the claim that truth is mind-dependent to be equivalent to the claim that how things are in themselves is dependent on minds. I detect traces of this in Armstrong’s work. As soon as he writes about how the physical world is, he does this in terms of physical truths, as if the physical world and truth are somehow equivalent or that the physical world somehow manifests truth. This is of course in line with his truthmaker necessitarianism, according to which a fact necessitates the existence of a proposition or unexpressed proposition. But even on that account there is a distinction between truthmaker and truthbearer; ontologically speaking truth is not identical with being even on Armstrong’s account. There is also the suggestion by Bigelow that truth, at least contingent truth, supervenes on being (1988: ch. 19), which has affinities with the earlier mentioned ‘expressibility’. The general idea is that necessarily, if the world is a certain way, it gives rise to truths about it. Now, I think I have convincingly argued for the point that to deny that there is truth in the absence of thinkers is *not* equivalent to rejecting that there are facts in the absence of thinkers. Immanent realists should there-

fore not be overly worried about rejecting reality when rejecting truth. But there are other worries.

One is the issue of analytic truth, which is generally regarded as a kind of truth that require no truthmaker, e.g. mathematical truths. Now, I have nothing further to add to what Armstrong says on this matter. I completely agree with him that even for these truths it is possible to find suitable this-worldly truthmakers. There is admittedly no particular concrete state of affairs which is the truthmaker of ' $2+2=4$ ', but I do not see why general features of the world, e.g. of how objects form sets (by fiat or because of natural boundaries or bonds), could not be truth-makers of abstract propositions (Armstrong 2004: ch. 8 & 9).⁶ How are we otherwise to understand the idea that mathematically formulated natural laws are true by virtue of correctly describing a general feature of reality? If ' $E = m \times c^2$ ' is true, this is surely because it is a correct description of the relationship between the energy, mass, and velocity of any object whatsoever. It is definitely not true by correspondence to one particular concrete state of affairs, not true purely in virtue of its meaning, the laws of logic and/or mathematics.

Assuming, then, that there are this-worldly truthmakers of mathematical truths, then to deny that ' $7 + 5 = 12$ ' would still be true even in the absence of minds does not entail that there is something subjective in the way mind-independent objects form sets. It is just to deny that in the absence of thinkers there would still be propositions about the way they form sets.

To reject mind-independent truth also has disturbing consequences for those who understand modalities, here confined to necessity, in terms of what is true in all possible worlds. The worry might be stated as follows. *If* a necessary truth is one that is true in all possible worlds and there are possible worlds in which there are no minds, then, on the mind-dependency view of truth there are possible worlds in which it is not true, say, that ' $2 + 2 = 4$ '. Consequently ' $2 + 2 = 4$ ' is not necessarily true and from this it would seem to follow that $2 + 2$ is not necessarily 4, which it plainly is. However, the necessity of $2 + 2 = 4$, can be accounted for in the absence of true propositions about this modal fact. Notably by pointing out that very plausibly, even though there are some worlds where there are no propositions at all, there is no possible world where two objects joined with two other objects amount to anything else than 4 objects. Very plausibly, this is a necessary fact, even though it is not necessary that there exist a proposi-

⁶ For another concise discussion of this subject, see Lowe (2002:375 ff).

tion that corresponds to this fact. Consequently, it is possible to account for necessity without resorting to the notion of truth in all possible worlds.

Now, it is surely possible to accommodate for some notion of ‘true in all possible worlds’, which would be compatible with my suggestions above. An anonymous referee suggested that I adopt a weaker version of the notion of ‘necessary truth’, e.g. as one that is true in all possible worlds in which the corresponding bearer of truth exists.⁷ Or, like Jonathan Lowe has suggested in conversation, that in order for a proposition to be ‘true in a possible world’ it is not required that there exist truth-bearers in that particular possible world with respect to which the truth of the truth-bearer is being evaluated.

However, it isn’t really the ‘to be or not to be’ of the notion of necessary truth *per se* that is the issue here; it is whether necessary truth is somehow constitutive of, or basic to, metaphysical necessity. The initial worry was generated from the assumption that if there are no necessary truths, nothing is necessary, which has affinities with the intuition that if there is no truth there is no such thing as how things are in themselves. That is, it is assumed that to deny that there are any necessary truths is tantamount to denying that anything is necessary. This inference is invalid, and an example of how the mind-independence intuition of truth implicitly finds its way into many objections to the mind-dependency view.

The idea that necessity should be understood in terms of truth in all possible worlds could be objected to on the basis that the notion of truth in a possible world is metaphysically dubious, even though it may have its justified use in modal logic. If truth is a property of propositions, in virtue of their correspondence to an objectively existing feature of the world, there is not much sense at all in talking about truth in a possible world, unless one is prepared to consider possible worlds as being just as existing and real as the actual world. If possible worlds are assumed to exist, a proposition existing in our world can be considered necessarily true by corresponding to facts in every possible world. However, if one is not prepared to admit this kind of *existential parity* of all possible worlds, often called modal realism (Lewis 1986), I find it difficult to motivate talk of truth in all possible worlds, except in the derivate sense of ‘truth’

⁷ The referee noted that on this view it is going to turn out that the thought that there are thoughts is a necessary truth. In all possible worlds in which the thought (the truth-bearer) exists, it is true; therefore it is necessarily true according to the modified definition. But, it clearly shouldn’t turn out, on my view, that the proposition that there are thoughts is necessarily true. Since I do not think that truth determines necessity, I am not worried about this consequence.

all possible worlds, except in the derivative sense of ‘truth’ already discussed above, notably in terms of what *could* be thought of truly were that world to obtain. But, the mere possibility of the existence of a correspondence relation, just in case the world had been different, is not a correspondence relation and hence not a truth. Just as the possibility of losing an election, or having lost an election in case things had turned out otherwise, is not a lost election.⁸ However, again, the motivation behind talking about *truth* in a possible world seems to be that this is believed to be somehow equivalent to talking about how that possible world *is*, because it is assumed that if those worlds are in a certain way, then it would be true that they are that certain way.

The suggestion that there are no necessary truths, does not entail the absurd view that nothing is necessary, or that everything we have hitherto considered to be necessary, really isn’t. As far as I can tell, the idea that there are no necessary truths only questions the idea of *de dicto* necessary truths, i.e. the idea that there are propositions that are true purely in virtue of their meaning and the laws of logic, regardless of how the world is, e.g. mathematical truths. According to the immanent realist *de dicto* necessity reduces to *de re* necessity, which is standardly defined in terms of how things cannot be different than they in fact are. Or, in terms of possible worlds, how things are in every world where they exist. Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz offer the following account of necessity: for any entity *e*, *e* is essentially (necessarily) *P*, just in case *e* is *P* in every world where *e* exists (1997: 3). They do not define necessity in terms of what is *true* about something in every possible world, but in terms of how that thing *is* in every possible world. This is in perfect agreement with what Kit Fine has earlier argued, notably that we should think that something is a certain way in all possible worlds, because it is essential to the thing to be that way, rather than thinking that something is essential because it is a certain way in all possible worlds (1994: 1-16). According to him, *de re* essences are ontologically prior to truth in all possible worlds, and constitutive of necessity, and I agree. Indeed, in this respect Armstrong holds the same position (2004: 95-96).

⁸ According to Lewis’ modal realism even possibilities, if real at all, must be real by existing. Since they clearly do not exist in this world, there must be other worlds where they do exist. According to him, the possibility of a lost election is nothing but a lost election, only it is located in some other possible world than ours.

Arguably, necessity *de re* is not essentially a property of propositions, notably the property of being true in all possible worlds. Truth is usually considered to be a property of propositions, a property they owe to the world. So, if the truth-value of propositions is determined by the world, it seems natural to conclude that the only thing that could make certain propositions true in all possible worlds is the fact that the world is necessarily in a certain way, or that all possible worlds are necessarily the same in some respects. Therefore, to deny mind-independent truths is not to deny mind-independent necessities and possibilities altogether. It is possible to think of the world as having necessary and contingent features even in the absence of thinking minds, propositions, and truth.

The inclination to spell out our ideas about what is necessary in terms of what is true in all possible worlds, may well have to do with the idea that truth is somehow at the rock bottom of objectivity, or in some way identical to or equivalent to, objective reality, and that the objective features of reality should therefore be cashed out as truths. Consequently, there is a tendency to talk about *propositions* as being either necessary or merely possible, instead of talking of certain *features of objective reality* as being either necessary or contingent. But, surely, all talk about necessity and contingency start from the idea that in some respects the *world*, or something in the world, could not have been otherwise than it is, while it could have been otherwise in other respects.⁹

The intuition that, surely, many things are true that are never thought of, loses much of its appeal when it is realised that a fact can be conceived to exist without the corresponding proposition. In the same way, the idea that there is no necessity unless there are necessary truths (= propositions that are true in every possible world), loses much of its appeal when it is realised that necessity does not depend for its reality on the existence of propositions that are true in every possible world. I, for one, can accept the idea that there are no necessary truths, as long as it does not exclude necessities from the world.

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⁹ This, I believe, is Saul Kripke's view. Kripke does not talk about necessities in terms of necessary truths, but in terms of necessary facts: 'it will be a necessary fact about Nixon that in all possible worlds where he exists at all, he is human[...]' (1980: 46).

I have argued that the correspondence theory in itself does not support the mind-independence intuition about truth. The theory is equally compatible with the idea that truth is also, apart from being truthmaker-dependent, mind-dependent. The mind-independence intuition relies on the further assumption that propositions exist independently of minds. Immanent realists deny the reality of platonic entities and therefore should be suspicious of the mind-independence intuition. I have suggested that the intuitive appeal of the mind-independence of truth, even for those who reject the reality of Platonic propositions, derives from the idea that truth is determined by how things are in themselves. Further, I have tried to argue that the idea that facts determine truth does *not* entail that if things are as they are in themselves, it is true that they are that way, nor that the rejection of truth in the absence of thinkers is equivalent to the claim that there is no such thing as how things are in themselves. The main aim has been to point out what I think is a problem in the predominant view of correspondence-truth, held by immanent realists. Notably, to deny the existence of Platonic propositions and yet hold that truth is mind-independent. The conclusion is that immanent realists can and should abandon the corollary of the truthmaker principle. They should acknowledge that for every truth there is a truthmaker but admit that there can be truthmakers in the absence of truth.

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