1. INTRODUCTION

Truthmaking has taken center stage in recent thinking about ontological issues. Among the variety of uses of some truthmaker principle or other, one common idea is clear enough: a certain truth must have some real entity that serves as the ground of its truth. This is the realistic intuition about truth that stands behind the truthmaker principle. But the differences that exist between both the particular statements of the truthmaker principle and the conclusions for which it is meant to provide justification are also obvious and astonishing. More clarification would be helpful here.

The contrast between Armstrong and Lewis is particularly instructive. Armstrong accepts a truthmaker principle of the following form: Every truth requires some truthmaker, and a truthmaker is something which is such that its existence entails the truth (cp. Armstrong, 1997, pp. 115–116, 2002, p. 29). He
thinks that facts are the right sort of entity to serve as truthmakers for certain predications, facts being the instantiations of universals by (thin) particulars. So Armstrong uses a truthmaker principle in an argument for the acceptance of facts. But Armstrong also thinks there is no need for merely possible entities to serve as the truthmakers for true possibility statements. This is his favored combinatorial actualism (cp. Armstrong 1989). In contrast, David Lewis famously champions possibilia and possible worlds. Not exactly on the basis of a truthmaker principle, however! His official reason is the usefulness of merely possible entities for the explanation of modal and other notions, such as content, counterfactuals, and causation. To my knowledge, he never argued for modal realism by appeal to some truthmaker principle. But Lewis also clearly rejects facts. The situation then is this: one party accepts facts, on the basis of some truthmaker principle, and rejects possibilia, whereas the other party accepts possibilia and rejects facts.

But how about the truthmaker principle? Does Lewis reject the idea of a truthmaker principle? Earlier on, it is fair to say, truthmaking did not play any role in his ontology. But more recently, perhaps under the influence of Armstrong’s promotion of the idea, he has spoken favorably of a certain version of the truthmaker principle – in effect, a differential truthmaker principle (Lewis, 2001a). He extracts it from an initial, non-differential truthmaker principle, and then goes on and argues against facts on the basis of the differential truthmaker principle. But, as I will show in the following, Lewis’s argument against facts relies on a Humean recombination principle which is not acceptable for a variety of reasons that are independent of the issue of truthmaking. I will spell out these objections against the Humean recombination principle in Section 4. Then it will be shown that a modified (non-Humean) recombination principle is able to avoid these difficulties, but will no longer provide an argument against facts. So in the end, Lewis’s argument against facts fails. After having thus opened up the way for facts, I will end with some reflections on the intuitive foundations of truthmaking.