

Truthmaking is not necessitation

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I argue against **Truthmaker Necessitarianism**, the thesis that “the determining of a truth by a truthmaker is an absolute necessitation”, i.e. that if a is a truthmaker for p , it is so necessarily if it exists:

1. Truthmaker necessitarianism is ill-motivated by the sufficiency argument.
2. Necessitation is not sufficient for truthmaking.
3. Necessitation is not necessary for truthmaking.

I The sufficiency argument

“If it is said that the truthmaker for a truth could have failed to make the truth true, then we will surely think that the alleged truthmaker was insufficient by itself and requires to be supplemented in some way. A contingently sufficient truthmaker will be true only *in circumstances that obtain in this world*. But then these circumstances, whatever they are, must be added to give the full truthmaker.” (Armstrong 1997: 116)

The sufficiency argument establishes **Truthmaker internalism**, the thesis that truthmaking is an internal relation. Why does Armstrong conclude necessitarianism?

Sometimes, Armstrong calls a relation internal iff it supervenes on the intrinsic properties of its relata; sometimes, he calls it internal iff it is necessitated by its terms. If truthbearers can have contingent intrinsic properties, the notions come apart. Reason for this: slip from thin to thick particulars. But the very distinction is problematic:

1. The thin particular is the “thing taken in abstraction from all its properties” and would stand to them in an external relation, creating a Bradleyan regress.
2. The thick particular is the “particular taken along with all and only the particular’s non-relational properties” and has them necessarily.

2 Necessitation is not sufficient for truthmaking

At least three sources of malignant necessitators: necessary truths, extrinsic essential properties, necessary but accidental properties.

3 Necessitation is not necessary for truthmaking

Armstrong’s account of totality states of affairs:

It is an extrinsic property of the fusion of some things of a sort that they are *all* of a certain type. The truthmaker of the latter truth is some totality state of affairs: the fusion stands in a contingent and external relation T to some ‘unit-property’ G that Armstrong calls “alling” or “totalling” and which he takes to be a universal.

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Totality states of affairs are paradoxical, however, and hence do not exist. If there were any totality states of affairs, some truthbearer of the form “These are all the totality states of affairs there are” would be true. If it were true, it would be made true by some totality state of affairs. In this ‘limit totality’, the totalling relation would hold between the fusion of all totality states of affairs and the (second-grade) property *being a totality state of affairs*. But this is impossible: while the fusion has to be the fusion of *all* states of affairs, it cannot contain the limit totality itself, for the limit totality is a proper part of the fusion.

Call a totality state of affairs ‘self-predicative’ if the unit-property occurs as a ‘predicative component’ in the states of affairs in the totalling fusion. If there are totality states of affairs, not all of them are self-predicative. Call the totality of non-self-predicative totality of states of affairs ‘ X ’. Is X self-predicative? If it is, *being non-self-predicative* would have to be totalled in some state of affairs in the fusion, which is impossible. If it is not, then X belongs to the fusion, which is also impossible.

Intrinsic truthmaking of extrinsic predications:

If a is extrinsically F , the truthmaker for this truth is b , where $b \neq a$. If b is in some, not necessarily mereological, sense composed out of a , then a is a proper part of b , hence $b = a + c$. Let w be some possible world where a' is an intrinsic duplicate of a but lacks F . If $a = a'$, then $b = a' + c$ makes it true that a is F in w even if a is not F . Hence $a \neq a'$. Consider $b' = a' + c$. It does not make it true that a' is F . If it were an intrinsic duplicate of b , however, it would have to make it true that a is F – which seems quite mysterious. If b' does not make it true that a is F , then we may ask what makes *this* true? It must be an extrinsic property of b' , hence a regress is on its way. If b is not composed out of a , the same problem arises: $c = a + b$ is different from b , and we then ask whether $c' = a' + b$ makes it true that a is F .

Necessitarians not only have to claim that the composition of intrinsic duplicates does not yield compounds that are intrinsic duplicates, but that composition of intrinsic duplicates does not even make for counterparthood. Let α be the unicorn replacement and β be the centaur replacement and W the rest of what there is. If α and β were different things, then our world would be heavily overpopulated with strange entities. Thus suppose $\alpha = \beta$. Because lacking centaurs is an extrinsic property of our world, it is possible that an intrinsic duplicate of W exists together with some centaurs. In such a world, however, α cannot exist – even though there are no unicorns there, α would also exclude the centaurs if it existed.

Necessitarianism and indiscernibles:

Is the truthmaking relation haecceistic in the sense of distinguishing between non-identical indiscernibles? Neither answer is available to the necessitarian.

Suppose a makes it true that p . If there could be another entity, a' , indiscernible from a , but coexisting with it, and if the truthmaking relation is not haecceitistic, then a and a' would make the same truths true. But one truth made true by a' is that a' exists. If both a and a' existed, then a would also make it true that a' exists. By necessitarianism, however, this possibility is actual: because a exists, it actually makes it true that a' exists as well. And this is not just actual, but necessary as well: a could not exist without making true what it can make true at all. So if the truthmaking relation does not distinguish indiscernibles, if two indiscernibles can exist *with* each other, they could not exist *without* each other. But we clearly do not want to say that just because I could have an indiscernible twin, this twin actually exists (and that I make it true that he exists)! This not only concerns existence statements, but all truths that imply the existence of their truthmaker. If indiscernible truthmakers make the same truths true, then they cannot exist in isolation. But they clearly can. So necessitarianism, together with weak and plausible assumptions about modality, commits us to haecceistic truthmaking.

Haecceistic truthmaking is implausible: In what could the ontological grounding consist? Haecceistic truthmaking is also incompatible with truthmaker internalism: if truthmaking does not distinguish between intrinsic duplicates, then a fortiori it does not distinguish indiscernibles. So truthmaker internalism is in tension necessitarianism.