

Problèmes de Métaphysique I et II

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Truthmakers and Explanation, February 27, 2008

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David Liggins, Truthmakers and Explanation

The ‘truth supervenes on being’ account of truthmaking is too weak to fulfill the cheater-catching rôle of truthmaker theory.

McFetridge’s version of maximalism is better suited for the task :

E For every sentence which is true there must be some explanation of why it is true.

But this does not provide us with a grounding of truth in reality : the explanation of why “*p*” is true will simply be “because *p*”. It is of no help to require that the explanation “must talk about the world” or “mention how some entities in our ontology stand” – because in many cases “because *p*” will do just that.

David Liggins, Truthmakers and the Groundedness of Truth

(E) does not support truthmaker maximalism because the relevant explanations do not have to be in terms of something’s existing, but could be in terms of something’s being such-and-such.

Truthmaker maximalism does not explain the truth asymmetry. Rodriguez-Pereyra claims that

TA “*p*” is true because *p*; but it is not the case that : *p* because “*p*” is true.

is explained by the grounding asymmetry :

GA “*p*” is true because *o* grounds “*p*”; but it is not the case that : *o* grounds “*p*” because “*p*” is true.

which he claims to be an “instance” of

RA *a* has the property of being *R*-related to *b* because *a* stands in relation *R* to *b*; but it is not the case that : *a* stands in relation *R* to *b* because *a* has the property of being *R*-related to *b*.

But, as Liggins points out, (GA) is an instance (and an existential generalisation) of (RA) only if to be true is to be grounded in something.

In what sense is truthmaker theory explanatory

Truthmaker theory explains the nature of truth (not : truths). It holds that

1. truth is a derelativisation of a relation of truthmaking;
2. truth is not brute.

This explanatory rôle of truthmaker theory provides a strong argument for maximalism. Non-maximalist truthmaker theory is committed to the claim that there are two ways for something to be true, and has the difficult task to explain why these are two ways for something to be *true*.

In what sense is the truthmaking relation explanatory

Consider

- (1) Sam is a dog.
- (2) "Sam is a dog." is true.
- (3) "Sam is a dog." is made true by Sam.
- (4) "Sam is a dog." has a truthmaker.
- (5) (1) because (3).
- (6) (2) because (3).
- (7) (2) because (4).
- (8) (2) because of Sam.

Liggins thinks that truthmaker theorists who think that the truthmaking relation is explanatory are committed to (6) or (7) ((6) is an instance of (E) above). Schnieder thinks they are committed to (5). But in fact they are committed only to (8).

Application to negative existentials

Main line : it is always a mistake to reify absences because, once reified, they're no longer absent.

Even once we've given up on truthmaker necessitarianism, we still face an explanatory task : why do these black dogs (which happen to be all the dogs) make it true that all dogs are black while these black dogs (or their counterparts) which live in a world where they are accompanied by a white dog do not make it true that all dogs are black?

Answer : they're being all there are is something about they're being a certain way, even though it's not something about they're being such-and-such.

Relational intrinsic properties ?