

Truthmaking is Explanation by Things

Philipp Blum

Abstract

Truthmaking and so-called ‘truthmaker theory’ and ‘truthmaker arguments’ have received a lot of attention recently, but the debate has suffered from unclarity as to what exactly is at stake. In this paper, I outline a conception of truthmaking as a special type of explanation by things. I then apply this conception to some recent controversies about the plausibility of truthmaker arguments, against presentism in particular, that suffer from an inadequate understanding of the connection between truthmaking and explanation. I highlight and explain two such connections: understanding truth as a derelativisation of a metaphysically prior relation of truthmaking allows for an explanatory theory of truth itself, first, and also helps to explain why certain truthbearers are true: they are true because of their truthmakers. Understanding truthmaking as explanation by things, I argue, helps us see what is wrong with truthmaking without truthmakers and resist the temptation to cheat.

A respectable pedigree

Sometimes at least, we manage to speak of what there is. We make claims to the effect that such and such things exist and that such and such others do not. Sometimes we are right about this: we say of things that exist that they exist and of things that do not that they do not – and hence, as Aristotle noted (*Met.* 101b25), what we are saying is true. It is natural to think, then, that what we say constrains what we take the world to be like, and that the way the world is constrains which parts of what we are saying are true. These two constraints are very different, of course, and differ in more than just their direction: Special cases aside, we cannot influence the way the world is just by saying true things about it; the world, sometimes, grounds the truth of what we are saying: what we say is true *because* we get it right about the world.

A first stab: directions of fit

The world and what we say about it are connected by two different relations, which differ in their “directions of fit” – aboutness goes from what we say to the world and truthmaking from the world to what we say. One way to spell out the constraint imposed on what we say by what we are speaking about is as the relation between what we say and what has to exist in order for what we are saying to be true. Calling that which is true when we speak a “truthbearer”, we can formulate:

oc: A truthbearer p is *ontologically committed* to an entity e iff e has to exist for p to be true.

Could we then say that the entities we are committed to are those that *make true* what we are saying? That which makes some truthbearer true is sometimes called its “truth-maker”, its “ontological ground” or “existential grounding”. Truthmaking is then often characterised as the converse of ontological commitment:

tm-e: An entity e is a *truthmaker* for a truthbearer p iff “ e exists” entails p .

This is unsatisfactory, however:

- The parallelism is only apparent: OC, if true, is a criterion, or perhaps a stipulative definition; plausibly, it is true in virtue of the meaning of “ontologically committed” if true at all; TM-E, on the other hand, is perhaps an analysis, or a theoretical claim about truth, synthetic, even if a priori.
- As OC, TM-E should be cross-categorical; even then, there is still a difference, however: even if we understand necessitation of existence by truth, it is much harder to understand necessitation of truth by existence.
- Even if cross-categorical, necessitation is the wrong notion of sufficiency: necessary things do not ‘necessitate’ anything contingent, and necessary truthbearers are ‘necessitated’ by anything whatsoever. Logically, and more generally necessarily, equivalent truthbearers necessitate and are necessitated by the same things, but it is questionable whether they are committed to and made true by the same things.
- Commitment and truthmaking differ in specificity: “there are horses” commits me to any horse (but none in particular), while it is made true by each and every one of the horses all by itself.

A step back

One credo among others:

- The business of philosophy is to make sense of the world, both as we find it and as it is in itself.
- Part of this account is to provide explanations.
- Such explanations are of a special, ill-understood type. They are neither (purely) causal nor (purely) conceptual.

Sketch of a history:

- First, there was Frege. He said that something is an object iff it can be the referent of a name. And he ran into the paradox of the concept horse.
- Then, there was Quine. He said that to be is to be the value of a bound variable. And he did not allow for intensional contexts.
- Then, there was Lewis. He showed how to interpret quantified modal logic in an ontologically serious way. And he ended up with modal realism.
- Then, there was Armstrong. He did ontological justice to the predicate by accepting universals. And he ended up with a world of states of affairs.

Some general problems with ontological commitment:

- Quantification is not sufficient for ontological commitment: Does “there are three ways to make spaghetti” really commit us to ways of making spaghetti? “Mary observed what John knows”, “John is something Mary is too, namely generous” and “John works a way Mary has never noticed, namely efficiently” have anaphoric links into positions that are not for names.
- It is not necessary either: quantification gives us commitment only to whole domains; wholesale reinterpretation is possible; Newman problem: we are only ever committed to cardinality claims.

More generally, it does not capture ontological seriousness:

...the truthmaker insight, as I take it to be, prevents the metaphysician from letting dispositions ‘hang in the air’ as they do in Ryle’s philosophy of mind. For one who espouses truth-makers, such hanging on air is the ultimate sin in metaphysics. (Armstrong 2002: 29)

Why truthmaking?

The truthmaking intuition:

1. Truth is relational: being true is being *made* true by something.

2. Truth is grounded: true truthbearers are true *because* the world is how it is; truth is never brute.

These two tenets are interrelated: the relationality of truth means that the grounds must enter into true ascriptions of truth; the groundedness means that the other relatum of such ascriptions must be of an ontological, rather than say of an epistemological or representational nature. Three families of problems for truthmaking as necessitation (a makes it true that p iff a exists $\wedge \Box(a \text{ exists} \rightarrow p)$):

- (A) The relation is not cross-categorical.
- (B) Dependence cannot be characterised modally.
- (C) Specific focus on existence facts.

Does not ‘truth supervenes on being’ do the job? The strongest truthmaking principle Lewis (2003: 26) is prepared to accept:

...every proposition, no matter what lesser subject matter it may have, is entirely about being.
It cannot have different truth values in two worlds exactly alike with respect to being.

Three problems:

1. It rules out indiscernible worlds (on plausible criteria for the individuation of possible worlds).
2. It does not solve problem (A): It does not capture ontological seriousness.
3. It does not solve problem (B): It does not rule out malignant necessitators.

Truthmaker theory as a theory of truth

Historically, the truthmaker principle has often be used polemically. In this ‘cheater-catching’ role, strong arms have wielded it against the unreduced counterfactuals postulated by behaviourists (Armstrong 1968), phenomenalists (Armstrong 1993), dispositionalists and presentists.

It has recently been argued that cheating is not prohibited by the strongest acceptable truthmaker theory (Kierland and Monton 2007, Tallant 2009a and 2010). Why should we not just deny that truth must be grounded, rather than burdening ourselves with the difficult tasks of providing present and actual truthmakers for tensed and modal truths? To resist the temptation to cheat, we have to re-assure ourselves of our motivations to believe in truthmakers in the first place. In this paper, I attempt to stiffen genuine realists’ spine by providing an argument for truthmaker realism.

We should accept the demand for truthmakers, I will argue, because understanding truth as a derelativisation of a metaphysically prior relation of truthmaking allows us to explain *why* “[n]o sentence is true but reality makes it so” (Quine 1970: 10). This *sui generis* type of explanation has been overlooked (Daly 2005; Liggins 2005), when enemies and false friends of truthmaking argued that weaker truthmaking principles than maximalism (every truth made true) may satisfy our demands for explanation and that the truthmaker principle should be weakened to some general supervenience claim, providing ‘truthmaking without truthmakers’.¹ True supervenience theses are in need of explanation and only a cross-categorical relation of robust truthmaking, I will argue, can explain *why* there is a strong modal correlation between what is true and what there is.

The principal motivation of truthmaker theorists, I submit, is the following: truth has to be grounded in reality – which means that it has to be explained by *things*. Therefore, truthmaking – explanation by things – has to be distinguished from explanations why some sentences (including sentences ascribing the truth-predicate) are true.

1. Cf. Künne (2003: 148–174); the idea has been ‘rediscovered’ by Melia (2005), Hornsby (2005) and Schnieder (2006).

Such a theory of truthmaking as explanation by things is explanatory in two ways: it is an explanatory theory of *truth*, and it explains how truths are grounded in reality. Truthmaker theory (TT) is a version of the correspondence theory of truth and deserves to constitute the core of any realist metaphysics.²

It is a mistake to think that TT needs to be motivated by recourse to the thesis that for every true sentence there must be some explanation of why it is true. Opponents of TT are right in saying that explanations not citing truthmakers may do this job. Consider the explanatory ties between the following four sentences:³

- (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.

First stab: truthmaking is truth-grounding; truths are true because they have truth-makers. Problem: either this says (2) because of (3) (and owes us a story why also (2) because (1)), or it is not terribly explanatory (though people do write papers advocating it). Also: truthmaking is not dependence – “there are horses” does not depend for its truth on any one horse.

I agree, with Aristotle and both outright opponents and (even somewhat sympathetic) critics of TT that (2) because (1). I also agree with some critics of TT that (1) is, so to say, ‘ok as it stands’.

Whether or not (1) is itself in need of an explanation or of a sufficient reason – of a causal or some other kind – is not a question of concern to TT, while it may of course be an interesting question for other types of metaphysical theories.⁴ Because I think that TT is an explanatory theory of truth, I also agree with its critics that (3) because (2) and hence that (3) because (1). Because (4) is obviously true because of (3),⁵ (1) is explanatorily and thus metaphysically prior to all of (2), (3) and (4). So far so good: at least within TT, “there is no explaining the truth of propositions” (MacBride 2005: 134) like (1).

Opponents of truthmaker theory forget, however, about two other ways in which TT is explanatory. It is, first, an explanatory theory of *truth*, an account of what truth is, and, second, it’s central explanandum, the truthmaking relation, is *itself* a species of the explanation relation, i.e. explanation by things.

TT is an explanatory theory of truth in virtue of the claim that truth is a derelativisation of a metaphysically prior cross-categorical relation of truthmaking: being true is nothing but being made true by something.⁶ To be true is to be made true by something (compare: to be a sibling is to have a sibling, i.e. for there to be something which is one’s sibling; to be cool is to be considered cool; to be red is to be disposed to appear red).

TT explains the nature of truth in virtue of being a *formal* theory of the truthmaking relation, not by its material part that specifies what the truthmakers are.⁷ Opponents of TT have to tell us what truth is.

2. More on ‘realism’ below.

3. On some theories of truthmaking, the truth of (3) depends on whether Sam is essentially a dog. I am concerned in the following with the question *whether* there are truthmakers, leaving aside the conceptually posterior question *what* entities these truthmakers are plausibly taken to be. Even arch-enemies of the weakest, supervenience-only forms of truthmaking, such as Julian Dodd (2002: 72) and Joseph Melia (2005: 69), admit that singular existentials and essential predications have truthmakers (cf. also Lewis 1992: 216).

4. Fetridge’s truthmaker principle (“For every sentence which is true there must be some explanation of why it is true”, 1990: 42) is to be rejected, or, at least, does not help motivate truthmaking theory. While I agree with critics of TT – with Daly (2005: 100) that “invoking truthmakers for truths does not thereby explain those truths”, with Liggins (2008: 179, 186) that “for every truth, there is something in virtue of which it is true” does not motivate TT 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 (cf. also Liggins 2005) –, I think they are mistaken in taking their sound points to count against TT.

5. I suppose this is readily conceded by all sides (already Descartes remarked that existential generalisations are true because of their instances). TT explains why this is so; opponents of TT owe us an explanation.

6. TT may well be a theory of truth without essentially involving the truth-predicate, except to facilitate generality of exposition (cf. Fox (1987: 189), Bigelow (1988: 127), Lewis (2001a: 248), Künnle (2003: 164), Horwich (2008: 262)).

7. We may thus agree with Horwich that “[w]e must first grasp what truth is, and only then can we go on to say which entities are needed to make true all the various kinds of proposition there are”, but do not have to conclude from this that “we see a truthmaker

Truthmaking without truthmakers will not achieve this task: while to say that some truthbearer x is true iff p , for some sentence “ p ”, may be an statement of a criterion of material adequacy for definitions of the truth-predicate for some language (Tarski 1935) or the schema for the axioms of a theory about what we are competent of if we grasp the concept of truth (Horwich 1990), it is not a theory of the *property* of truth. Even though this has been argued already extensively in the case of Tarski (cf. e.g. Field 1972) and is explicitly acknowledged by minimalists, lessons learned are quickly forgotten. I will therefore illustrate the point with respect to the recent discussion of how presentists could forgo the requirement to produce truthmakers for past-tensed truths, urged upon them by many.⁸

It has been recently argued, by Gallois (2004: 649), Kierland & Monton (2007: 490), Tallant (2009a: 423) and Sanson & Caplan (2010: 38), that presentists may legitimately dodge the truthmaker requirement by weakening the truthmaking principle to supervenience of truth not on how things are, but rather on how they are, were or will be.⁹ Legitimate doubts have been raised about whether such a restriction of the requirement (and the corresponding enlargement of the supervenience base) could be justified on general, non ad-hoc grounds.¹⁰ Even if it could, however, it would radically distort TT: the restricted principle would explain the (present) truth of some past- or future-tensed sentence by *another* sentence, which does its (present) explaining only if it is (presently) true. No explanation by things is provided: the bulge in the carpet is just moved to another sentence.¹¹

Not just the explanandum, however, but also the explanans is of the wrong kind. What the past events made true and what the future events will make true are not, after all, sentences like “Caesar crossed the rubicon” or “There will be a fox in the garden”, but rather sentences like “Caesar crosses the rubicon” and “There is a fox in the garden”. To make the past- and future-tensed sentences true, we need to incorporate the pastness and futurity into the truthmaker – exactly what the weakening of the truthmaking principle was supposed to avoid.¹² Because truth has to be grounded, the present truth of the past-tensed sentence is in need of a present ground – the past ground of its present-tensed cousin will not do; not just because it is past, but because it is not a ground of *this* truth.

As far as I see, cheaters have three options at this point: they can give up on their cheating, postulating present truthmakers for past truths;¹³ they can claim that the truth in need of a truthmakers is *both* expressed

theory as not aiming to articulate a concept of truth” (2008: 261). Armstrong (2004a: 129) makes this point when he replies to an earlier version of Horwich’s paper (Horwich 2004), that the latter “passe outre la distinction que je trace dans mon article [2004c] entre une théorie générale de ce que signifie “rendre-vrai” , et les hypothèses métaphysiques d’après lesquelles certaines entités sont des vérificateurs corrects pour certains vérités.”

8. A canonical statement of this line of criticism is to be found in e.g. Armstrong (2004b: 145–150).

9. Such ‘wide-base truthmaking’ (Caplan & Sanson 2011: 198) is attributed by Armstrong (2004b: 147) to John Heil. Cf. also Westphal (2006: 4), though he is not a presentist.

10. Keller (2004: 92) and Cameron (2008b: 412) express doubts about this. Krämer (2010: 292) raises problems about the correct formulation of such a restriction.

11. Jonathan Tallant, for example, has proposed the following ‘cheating’ truthmaker principle: “...a proposition is true if and only if, either: (a) there exists an entity that makes that proposition true; or, (b) there does not exist an entity and that makes the proposition true; or, (c) there could have existed an entity that would make the proposition true; or, (d) there has existed an entity that makes the proposition true...” (2009a: 426) This does not offer an analysis of truth (and hence I do not see why Tallant (2009a: 429) thinks his ‘cheating’ truthmaking principle “make[s] the concept of truth more complicated”); it does not account for the truth of a proposition in terms of *things* that make – or made, or could make – it true. This explanatory inadequacy as a theory of *truth* is even more obvious in the case of Tallant’s later replacement principle – “For every proposition, that proposition is true iff it accurately characterizes its subject matter” (Tallant 2010: 503): while it may be “extremely elegant” (2010: 503), it is also extremely uninformative; it corresponds more or less to the “correspondence platitude” of Crispin Wright (1992: 27) (cf. Dodd 2002: 75). (It also distorts TT in other ways, as someone holding that mental predications are made true by brain states does not normally think they are *about* brain states).

12. The point is simple and has been made by Keller already in 2004 (with respect to the closely related problem of how presentists account for singular propositions about past things): “It’s not enough to say that the proposition’s constituents *did* exist and *did* stand in a certain relation, because that would only show that the proposition *did* exist. *The Tower was on the Thames* is true *now*.” (2004: 93).

13. Despite what they ‘officially’ say, this seems to be a popular strategy: “The now absent fox is what makes propositions about it, expressed by sentences in past tenses, true ones.” (Westphal 2006: 2) He does not tell us, however, what an absent fox is. Kierland and Monton postulate “the past”, “an aspect of reality [which] cannot be reduced to *things* or the *properties* they possess (i.e., how these

by the present-tensed and by the past-tensed sentence,¹⁴ or they could postulate a special, transtemporal truthmaking relation between past events and present truths.¹⁵ None of these is appealing.

We may, of course, opt out of truthmaking theory altogether,¹⁶ but to weaken TT in this way is to lose “the distinction between those who want to abide by a genuine truthmaker requirement and those who think truthmaking unimportant” (Heathwood 2007: 141). Other presentists have accepted the demand for truthmakers and tried their best to meet it, postulating haecceities (Adams 1986), fundamental and past- or future-directed properties, of individuals or the entire world (Chisholm 1990; Bigelow 1996),¹⁷ maximally consistent sets of propositions as ersatzist past and future times (Bourne 2006), a combination of these (Crisp 2007), eternally existing fundamental particles (such as those discussed by Keller 2004) or God’s memories (Rhoda 2009). Without either postulating such existing shadows cast by non-existing objects¹⁸ or denying the truth of singular past-tense sentences (Sider 1999; Markosian 2004), presentism dodges the truthmaker requirement.

Cheating presentists often claim to take inspiration from Bigelow’s and Lewis’ “mere supervenience” truth-making principle. If Bigelow and Lewis are allowed to have truthmaking without truthmakers, why could not the cheating presentists have the same? Both Lewis and Bigelow remark that the general supervenience principle, that truth supervenes on being, makes both truth- and falsemakers equally plausible:

The Truthmaker principle turns out to imply something about how possible worlds can and cannot differ. It says that every difference between worlds [...] is a *two-way* difference in population: each world has something that the other lacks. In other words, every difference between worlds requires a difference-maker. In fact, two difference makers: one in one world and the other in the other. (Lewis 2001b: 606)

If something is true, then it would not be possible for it to be false unless either certain things were to exist which don’t, or else certain things had not existed which do. (Bigelow 1988: 132-133)

While it certainly makes it easier to deal with negative existentials, this retreat gives up the important link between truth and existence, lying at the bottom of the truthmaking intuition. It also distorts TT in other ways, turning it into a claim about which sentences are fundamental.¹⁹ Thirdly, it presupposes modal realism:

things are” (2007: 491), but which has a ‘shape’ that makes it true that Socrates existed (but not, for example, that Sherlock Holmes existed). When does the shape of the past make it true that Socrates existed? Now – but then it cannot be the shape of the *past* (cf. Sanson & Caplan 2010: 31, fn. 10). Kierland & Monton (2007: 496–497) deny this, holding that the shape of the past (and the past) is a present aspect of reality, but this is something I just utterly fail to make sense of. Tallant (2009b: 409) postulates “ungrounded tensed facts residing at the present moment”, but does not really explain how there might be such things.

14. This may be why most of them take the truthbearers in need of truthmakers to be propositions. If the truthbearers are not temporally individuated, however, it is hard to see why TT needs a restriction at all: why is it not just sufficient that the truthmaker requirement was satisfied in the past?

15. Perhaps such cheaters would take their inspiration from Dummett’s so-called “truth-value link”, which is prominently discussed in Westphal (2006), forgetting that it is just this – a truth-*value* link, not a truth-*making* link. Postulating a truthmaking relation holding between the past events and the present past-tense sentences about them, makes the presentists’ predicament worse, not better, for this is then just another cross-temporal relation they have to account for (cf. Armstrong 2004b: 147).

16. One way to do this, it seems to me, is to give up on the cross-categoricity of the truthmaking relation, construing it e.g. as an asymmetric relation between *propositions* like entailment (McGrath 2003: 674).

17. Such irreducibly tensed properties have recently been re-postulated under a different name and a slightly changed conception of them by Ross Cameron (2008a, 2011) as temporal distributional properties. MORE CITATIONS: Tallant & Ingram (2015) generalises the argument of Tallant & Ingram (2012a, b) against Cameron (2011, 2013) – THIS IS IN TM AGAINST PRESENTISM AND IN RELATIONS

18. This is how Lewis (2004: 8) glosses the interpretation of Meinong given by Terence Parsons (1974, 1980).

19. This mistake is quite common, and shared by both enemies and false friends of truthmaker theory: “...claims about which kinds of entity (if any) serve as truthmakers boil down to theses about which existential theses are explanatorily fundamental.” (Horwich 2008: 273) “But why think it is an advantage to suppose, at the start of metaphysical enquiry, that all categories of truth claim can be explained in terms of one single category, namely the category of positive, tenseless, existential assertion?” (Goff 2010: 49)

To try to analyse ‘the absence of falsemakers’ in terms of the unrealized possibility that the world might have been such that ‘unicorns exist’ is true seems ludicrous if it is *truthmakers* one is seeking. (Armstrong 2004b: 70)

The most important drawback of the weakening of TT to a mere supervenience principle, however, is that the supervenience itself is left unexplained. And we know from other areas of philosophy that supervenience principles, if true, require explanation, ideally in terms of some robust relation that grounds the modal covariation.

Even if we accept that truthmaking is a relation, we may still ask how many truthmakers there are.

This explanatory rôle of TT provides a strong argument for truthmaker maximalism. Non-maximalist truthmaker theorists are committed to the claim that there are (at least) two ways for something to be true, and face the difficult task to explain why these are two ways for something to be *true*. To do without truthmakers for negative (Simons 2005: 255), Parsons (2005: 168), analytic (Rodríguez Pereyra 2005: 21) or higher-order (Mumford 2005: 267) truths is to endorse an explanatory burden: how, may we legitimately ask such philosophers, do they account for the (at least apparent) fact that we are predicating the same property of them as of humdrum positive, synthetic, first-order truths like (1)? It is as if they were claiming that there are two ways of being a brother: one that involves another entity than you (your brother), and another one that does not.²⁰

Understanding truthmaking as a species of explanation by things thus explains why TT purports to be an explanatory theory of truth and also allows for an argument in favour of truthmaker maximalism. The explanatory potential of TT goes even further than this: not only is it an explanatory theory of truth, but it also explains truths, though not in the way its critics take it to do.

Truthmaker theory as a theory of truths

It is a mistake to think that the explanations of truths offered by truthmaker theory are claims to the effect that they have such-and-such truthmakers. Consider:

- (5) Sam is a dog because “Sam is a dog” is made true by Sam.
- (6) “Sam is a dog” is true because it is made true by Sam.
- (7) “Sam is a dog” is true because of Sam.

As opponents of truthmaker theory have pointed out and I have conceded above, both (5) and (6) are false. (7), however, is true and provides an explanation of why “Sam is a dog” is true.

Horwich (2008: 267) and Schnieder think that TT is committed to (5). Liggins (2008: 190) thinks that truthmaker theorists who think that the truthmaking relation is explanatory are committed to (5) or (6)²¹

But in fact they are committed only to (7).

As has been argued above, (7) has to be understood as requiring the present (actual) existence of Sam for the present (actual) truth of the sentence ascribing doghood to it. We will now argue why it is because the sentence is *now* true (i.e.: is *now* made true) that there must be something *now* responsible for its truth. This

“Truthmaker theory just is a theory about which truths are brute: it says that the only brute truths are truths concerning what there is—every other truth must hold in virtue of one or more of these brute truths.” (Cameron 2008a: 293)

20. Different options are available to such theorists, but none of them seems very promising. They might claim that “...is true” is ambiguous (but how are they to account for “(1) is true, and so is “There are no unicorns” and the like?), that there are ways of being true and we apply the predicate ‘analogously’ to truths without truthmakers (cf. McDaniel 2009, 2010: for a related view about existence), or that both kinds of truth are determinates of a common determinable.

21. (6) is an instance of McFetridge’s principle mentioned above. Rodríguez Pereyra (2005) argues from (6) to the truthmaking principle.

is not because of any special principle that exhibits an anti-presentist (and anti-possibilist) bias, but because being true *is* (nothing but) being made true.

That truthmaking is a species of explanations by things has been seen more clearly by its enemies than by its defenders:

Nothing, no thing, makes sentences and theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true. That experience takes a certain course, that our skin is warmed or punctured, that the universe is finite, these facts, if we like to talk that way, make sentences and theories true. But this point is put better without mention of facts. (Davidson 1974: 194)²²

This is a denial of the truthmaker requirement precisely because no *things* are provided as truthmakers – what is inserted into the right-hand argument place of “...is made true by ...” is the nominalisation of a sentence, not a singular term. Truthmaking is taken to be a species of the sentential “because” connective, not the prenective “because of”, standing between a sentence (made true) and a singular term (for the truthmaker).²³

Truthmaking, as explanation by things, is cross-categorical (solving problem (A)), non-modal (solving problem (B)) and does not privilege existence *facts* (solving ‘problem’ C).

There are a number of criticisms against an identification of *being made true* with *being true because of*. One may doubt, first, that there is such a thing as explanation by things. A long-standing tradition, from Kant to Brandom and McDowell holds that explanations necessarily stay within the realm of reason. TT is opposed to that tradition, and derives from this very opposition the right to claim to be a version of the correspondence theory of truth.

Beyond dogs... – to facts? From TT to states of affairs:

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)

This presupposes necessitarianism. Better have contingent truthmaking than states of affairs.

Truthmaking is Explanation by Things

Explanation by things is a familiar feature of many types of explanation:

- rationalising: Sam left Maria because of Sally.
- evidential: They must be at home because of the light.
- causal: They had an accident because of the worn-off break.
- theoretical: Tritium is unstable because of its extra electron.
- essential: Tropes are non-transferrable because of their nature.
- mathematical: 2 is between 1 and 3 because of 1,2,3.

22. In part, Davidson (1999: 668–669) takes this back, holding that “saying the world makes some sentences true [...] is exactly as harmless as saying that a sentence is true because it corresponds to The One Fact, and just as empty”. Cf. Künne (2003: 160 et seq.) for discussion.

23. This is particularly clear in theories that analyse truthmaking as a type of grounding, rendering “*x* makes it true that *p*” as “*p*, because *x* exists” or, or alternatively, as “the truth of *p* is grounded in the existence of *x*” (cf. e.g. Correia 2005: §3.2 and Schnieder 2006).

- metaphysical: “Humphrey possibly wins” is true because of his (winning) counterpart.

There is thus nothing special about explanation by things.

It is not immediately obvious that all these explanations are elliptical, mere stand-ins for explanations that say what it was about Sally that made Sam leave Maria. With causation in particular, how plausible is it to maintain that its relata always are sentential in form (and that nothing counts as a cause unless it necessitates the effect)?

Or is perhaps truth just a connective (and therefore not a derelativisation of anything)? Mulligan (2010) distinguishes the truth predicate “...is true” (which takes a singular term to make a sentence) from the truth connective “it is true that ...” (which takes a sentence to make a sentence) and asks which one wears the trousers, answering that the connective, not the predicate is fundamental.

But non-committal quantification (as into “...” above) is mysterious. And we want to explain why the direction of explanation in the *T*-schema holds in the direction it holds (that is: why is it that it is because *p* that it is true that *p*?). An truth-as-an-operator story does not provide for this.

We want to explain *why* ontological seriousness is important:

Truth is a matter of reality, which means that if a statement is true, it is because reality renders it true: No sentence is true but reality makes it so... (Quine 1970: 10–11)

Facts on the cheap? Recently, some have flirted with the idea that truthmaker maximalism may even be strengthened: It is true that *p* iff “*p*” is made true by the fact that *p*. Such trivial truthmaking by pleonastic facts relegates all interesting questions to the theory of fact-making. But fact-making cannot play the theoretical rôle of truthmaking:

- Pleonastic facts mirror sentences (thus problem (A) is not solved).
- The dependence of truth on reality is not dependence between facts: the latter is constitution, the first is grounding.
- Pleonastic facts do not exist. Nothing really existing contains things such as negations and implications.

A further worry against the conception of truthmaking as explanation by things concerns the property identity itself. How is to be spelt out? Are we not able to have a full grasp of truth without ever having heard of truthmaking? Can we reductively explain (the nature of) truth in terms of a metaphysically prior relation of truthmaking? The advocate of TT has a ready answer at hand: the property identity in question is not a conceptual analysis, nor a reductive explanation, but a necessary sharing of truthmakers. What makes it true that some truthbearer’s being true is nothing but it’s being made true by some truthmaker is the very same thing that makes it true in the first place: the truthbearer and the truthmaker, bound together by the truthmaking relation.

Truthmaking is not just explanation by things, but explanation by a making relation: truthmakers make for truth in the way in which propensities (if they existed) make for probabilities, potentialities make for powers and essences make for necessities. For such explanations to succeed, the makings are not defined by their results: rather probability/powers/necessities are what propensities/potentialities/essences make.

The what and the how of truthmaking remain open questions, as does the difficult task to provide truthmakers for all the truths we want to accept. But still: Rather than trying to make our life easy, we should bravely face the explanatory demands imposed upon us by TT.

The hard work has only just begun.

References

- Adams, Robert Merrihew, 1986. Time and Thisness. In French, Peter A., Theodore E. Uehling, Jr. & Howard K. Wettstein (editors) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 11: Studies in Essentialism*, pp. 315–329. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. Reprinted in [Almog et al. \(1989\)](#): 23–42.
- Almog, Joseph, John R. Perry & Howard K. Wettstein (editors), 1989. *Themes from Kaplan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Armstrong, David M., 1968. *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Armstrong, David M., 1989. *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, David M., 1993. Reply to [Martin \(1993\)](#). In [Bacon et al. \(1993\)](#), pp. 186–194.
- Armstrong, David M., 2002. Truth and Truthmakers. In Schantz, Richard (editor) *What Is Truth?*, pp. 27–37. Number 1 in Current Issues in Theoretical Philosophy, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Armstrong, David M., 2004a. Défense de la théorie des vérificateurs: une réponse à Paul [Horwich \(2004\)](#). In [Monnoyer \(2004\)](#), pp. 129–140.
- Armstrong, David M., 2004b. *Truth and Truthmakers*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, David M., 2004c. Vérités et vérificateurs. In [Monnoyer \(2004\)](#), pp. 101–114. Largely identical with [Armstrong \(2002\)](#).
- Bacon, John, Keith Campbell & Loyd R. Reinhardt (editors), 1993. *Ontology, Causality and Mind – Essays in Honour of D.M. Armstrong*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beebe, Helen & Julian Dodd (editors), 2005. *Truthmakers. The Contemporary Debate*. Mind Association Occasional Series, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bigelow, John C., 1988. *The Reality of Numbers: A Physicist's Philosophy of Mathematics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bigelow, John C., 1996. Presentism and Properties. In Tomberlin, James E. (editor) *Philosophical Perspectives 10: Metaphysics*, pp. 35–52. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.
- Bourne, Craig, 2006. *A Future for Presentism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, Ross P., 2008a. Comments on [Merricks \(2007\)](#). *Philosophical Books* 49(4): 292–301.
- Cameron, Ross P., 2008b. How to be a Truthmaker Maximalist. *Noûs* 42(3): 410–421.
- Cameron, Ross P., 2011. Truthmaking for Presentists. In Bennett, Karen & Dean W. Zimmerman (editors) *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, volume VI, pp. 55–101. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, Ross P., 2013. Changing Truthmakers: Reply to [Tallant & Ingram \(2012a\)](#). In Bennett, Karen & Dean W. Zimmerman (editors) *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, volume VIII, pp. 362–375. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Caplan, Ben & David Sanson, 2011. Presentism and Truthmaking. *Philosophy Compass* 6(3): 196–208.
- Chisholm, Roderick M., 1990. Events Without Times. An Essay On Ontology. *Noûs* 24(3): 413–427.
- Correia, Fabrice, 2002. *Existential Dependence and Cognate Notions*. Thèse de doctorat, Département de philosophie, Université de Genève, Genève. Book publication: [Correia \(2005\)](#).
- Correia, Fabrice, 2005. *Existential Dependence and Cognate Notions*. Analytica: Investigations in Logic, Ontology, and the Philosophy of Language, München: Philosophia Verlag. Book publication of [Correia \(2002\)](#).
- Crisp, Thomas M., 2007. Presentism and the Grounding Objection. *Noûs* 41(1): 90–109.
- Daly, Christopher John, 2005. So Where's the Explanation? In [Beebe & Dodd \(2005\)](#), pp. 85–103.
- Davidson, Donald, 1974. On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47: 5–20. Reprinted in [Davidson \(1984\)](#): 183–198.
- Davidson, Donald, 1984. *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Davidson, Donald, 1999. Reply to [Neale \(1999\)](#). In [Hahn \(1999\)](#), pp. 667–670.
- Dodd, Julian, 2002. Is Truth Supervenient on Being? *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 102: 69–86.
- Field, Hartry, 1972. Tarski's Theory of Truth. *The Journal of Philosophy* 69(13): 347–375. Reprinted in [Field \(2001: 3–26\)](#) and [Jacquette \(2002\)](#).
- Field, Hartry, 2001. *Truth and the Absence of Facts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fox, John F., 1987. Truthmaker. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 65(2): 188–207.
- Gallois, André Norman, 2004. Comments on [Sider \(2001\)](#). *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68(3): 648–657.
- Goff, Philip, 2010. Orthodox truthmaker theory cannot be defended by cost/benefit analysis. *Analysis* 70(1): 45–50.
- Hahn, Lewis Edwin (editor) , 1999. *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Number 27 in The Library of Living Philosophers, LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co.
- Heathwood, Christopher, 2007. On what will be: reply to [Westphal \(2006\)](#). *Erkenntnis* 67: 137–142.
- Hornsby, Jennifer, 2005. Truthmaking without Truthmaker Entities. In [Beebe & Dodd \(2005\)](#), pp. 33–47.
- Horwich, Paul, 1990. *Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.
- Horwich, Paul, 2004. Une critique de la théorie des vérificateurs. In [Monnoyer \(2004\)](#), pp. 115–127. Reprinted, in substantially revised form, as “Being and Truth”, in [Horwich \(2010: 299–322\)](#).
- Horwich, Paul, 2008. Being and Truth. In French, Peter A. & Howard K. Wettstein (editors) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 32: Truth and its Deformities*, pp. 258–273. Boston, Massachusetts: Blackwell-Wiley. Reprinted in [Lowe & Rami \(2009: 185–200\)](#).
- Horwich, Paul, 2010. *Truth-Meaning-Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jacquette, Dale (editor) , 2002. *Philosophy of Logic: An Anthology*. Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.
- Keller, Simon, 2004. Presentism and Truthmaking. In [Zimmerman \(2004\)](#), pp. 83–104.
- Kierland, Brian & Bradley Monton, 2007. Presentism and the objection from being supervenience. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 85(3): 485–497.
- Krämer, Stephan, 2010. How not to defend ontological cheats. *Analysis* 70(2): 290–296.
- Künne, Wolfgang, 2003. *Conceptions of Truth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lewis, David, 1992. Armstrong on Combinatorial Possibility [critical notice of [Armstrong \(1989\)](#)]. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 70: 211–224. Reprinted as “Armstrong on Combinatorial Possibility” in [Lewis \(1999: 196–214\)](#).
- Lewis, David, 1999. *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, David, 2001a. Forget about the “correspondence theory of truth” . *Analysis* 61: 275–280.
- Lewis, David, 2001b. Truthmaking and Difference-Making. *Noûs* 35(4): 602–615.
- Lewis, David, 2004. Tensed Quantifiers. In [Zimmerman \(2004\)](#), pp. 3–14.
- Liggins, David, 2005. Truthmakers and Explanation. In [Beebe & Dodd \(2005\)](#), pp. 105–115.
- Liggins, David, 2008. Truthmakers and the Groundedness of Truth. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 108(2): 179–196.
- Lowe, Edward Jonathan & Adolf Rami, 2009. *Truth and Truth-Making*. Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing.
- MacBride, Fraser, 2005. Lewis's Animadversions on the Truthmakers Principle. In [Beebe & Dodd \(2005\)](#), pp. 117–140.
- Markosian, Ned, 2004. A Defense of Presentism. In [Zimmerman \(2004\)](#), pp. 47–82.
- Martin, Charles Burton, 1993. Power for Realists. In [Bacon et al. \(1993\)](#), pp. 175–185.

- McDaniel, Kris, 2009. Ways of Being. In Chalmers, David J., David Manley & Ryan Wasserman (editors) *Metameta-physics. New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, pp. 290–319. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McDaniel, Kris, 2010. A Return to the Analogy of Being. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81(3): 688–717.
- McFetridge, Ian G., 1990. Truth, Correspondence, Explanation and Knowledge. In *Logical necessity: and other essays*, pp. 29–52. Number 11 in Aristotelian Society Series, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers. Written circa 1977 for the Birkbeck College Philosophy Society Magazine Phi.
- McGrath, Matthew, 2003. What the Deflationist May Say About Truthmaking. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66(3): 666–688.
- Melia, Joseph, 2005. Truthmaking without Truthmakers. In Beebe & Dodd (2005), pp. 67–84.
- Merricks, Trenton, 2007. *Truth and Ontology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Monnoyer, Jean-Maurice (editor) , 2004. *La structure du monde: objets, propriétés, états de choses. Renouveau de la métaphysique dans l'école australienne de philosophie*. Paris: Librairie philosophique Jean Vrin.
- Mumford, Stephen, 2005. The True and the False [critical notice of Armstrong (2004b)]. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 83(2): 263–269.
- Neale, Stephen, 1999. On Representing. In Hahn (1999), pp. 657–666.
- Parsons, Josh, 2005. Truthmakers, the Past, and the Future. In Beebe & Dodd (2005), pp. 161–174.
- Parsons, Terence D., 1974. A Prolegomenon to Meinongian Semantics. *The Journal of Philosophy* 71(16): 561–580.
- Parsons, Terence D., 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Quine, Willard van Orman, 1970. *Philosophy of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rhoda, Alan R., 2009. Presentism, Truthmakers, and God. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 90(1): 41–62.
- Rodríguez Pereyra, Gonzalo, 2005. Why Truthmakers. In Beebe & Dodd (2005), pp. 17–31. Reprinted in Lowe & Rami (2009: 227–241).
- Sanson, David & Ben Caplan, 2010. The Way Things Were. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81(1): 24–39.
- Schnieder, Benjamin Sebastian, 2006. Truth-Making Without Truth-Makers. *Synthese* 152(1): 21–46.
- Sider, Theodore, 1999. Presentism and Ontological Commitment. *The Journal of Philosophy* 96: 325–347.
- Sider, Theodore, 2001. *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Simons, Peter M., 2005. Negatives, Numbers, and Necessity. Some Worries about Armstrong's Version of Truthmaking [critical notice of Armstrong (2004b)]. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 83(2): 253–261.
- Tallant, Jonathan, 2009a. Ontological cheats might just prosper. *Analysis* 69(3): 422–430.
- Tallant, Jonathan, 2009b. Presentism and Truth-Making. *Erkenntnis* 71(3): 407–416.
- Tallant, Jonathan, 2010. Still cheating, still prospering. *Analysis* 70(3): 502–506.
- Tallant, Jonathan & David Ingram, 2012a. Presentism and Distributional Properties [on Cameron (2011)]. In Bennett, Karen & Dean W. Zimmerman (editors) *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, volume VII, pp. 305–314. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tallant, Jonathan & David Ingram, 2012b. Time for distribution? *Analysis* 72(2): 264–270.
- Tallant, Jonathan & David Ingram, 2015. Nefarious Presentism. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 65(260): 355–371.
- Tarski, Alfred, 1930. O pojęciu prawdy w odniesieniu do sformalizowanych nauk dedukcyjnych. *Ruch Filozoficzny* 12: 210–211.

- Tarski, Alfred, 1933. Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych. *Prace Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, Wydział III, nauk matematyczno-fizycznych (Travaux de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, Classe III, Sciences Mathématiques et Physiques)* 26. Lectures given at the Logic Section of the Philosophical Society in Warsaw on October 8, 1930 and at the Polish Philosophical Society in Lwów on December 5, 1930; reprinted in Zygmunt (1995: 13–172); a summary of the chief results was published as Tarski (1930) and a revised German translation was published as Tarski (1935); English translation Tarski (1956: 152–278).
- Tarski, Alfred, 1935. Der Wahrheitsbegriff in den formalisierten Sprachen. *Studia Philosophica (Commentarii Societatis Philosophicae Polonorum)* 1: 261–405. Translation of Tarski (1933).
- Tarski, Alfred, 1956. *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics. Papers from 1923 to 1938*. 1 edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Trans. J.H. Woodger; 2nd edition: Tarski (1983).
- Tarski, Alfred, 1983. *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*. 2 edition. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co. Trans. J.H. Woodger, edited and introduced by John Corcoran, 1st edition: Tarski (1956).
- Westphal, Jonathan, 2006. The future and the truth-value links: a common sense view. *Analysis* 66(1): 1–9.
- Wright, Crispin, 1992. *Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Zimmerman, Dean W. (editor), 2004. *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, volume I. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zygmunt, Jan (editor), 1995. *Alfred Tarski, Pisma Logiczno-Filozoficzne*, volume I. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe (PWN).