

PHILOSOPHY 101: Homework #2 Solutions

February 22, 2011

1 Problem #1 (p. 33: #6)

We were asked to decide whether the statement expressed by the following sentence is an *exception* to the (OT) principle:

a. Pop U. Lar is well liked.

In order to answer this question, we must do three things. First, we must (i) be clear on which *statement* p is being expressed by the *sentence* a. Then, we must (ii) figure-out what the (OT) principle implies (and does *not* imply) about p . Finally, we need to (iii) decide whether p is an *exception* to (OT).

(i) For the purposes of this exercise, I will assume that sentence a expresses the following statement.

p . Most people in a certain group (let's call this group: P) feel a certain "positive way" about Pop U. Lar (let's call this "positive" psychological state or feeling: \mathcal{F}). In other words, *Pop U. Lar causes most people in a certain group P to be in a certain "positive" psychological state \mathcal{F} .*

(ii) Remember, the (OT) principle says that *the truth-value of p (indeed, of any statement) is determined by the actual characteristics of the things p is about, and not by what people think or feel about p .*

(iii) So, in order for p to be an exception to (OT), the following statement *must* be true:

(\dagger) The truth-value of p is *not* determined by the actual characteristics of the things p is about. Moreover, the truth-value of p is determined by what people think or feel about p .



But, (\dagger) is *false*. Why? Because, p is true if and only if most people in P feel \mathcal{F} about the *person*: Pop U. Lar. This has nothing to do with how people in P (or any other people, for that matter) feel about the *statement*: p . Therefore, p is *not* an exception to the (OT) principle. (Can you translate the argument I just gave into *standard form*?)

2 Problem #2 (p. 33: #7)

According to the Objective Theory of Truth (OTT), *every* statement p has a truth-value, even if the truth-value of p is not (or, even, *cannot be*) known by any person. This mistake involves a conflation of the following two *different* questions "What *determines* the truth-value of a statement p ?" vs "Can anyone *figure out* what the truth-value of p actually is?".

3 Problem #3 (p. 52: #1)



This question concerns the distinction between *honesty* versus *truthfulness* of persons. When a person promises to "tell the truth," they are only promising to be *honest*. That is, they are only promising to say what they *think is true*. However, just because someone is honest does *not* mean that they are *truthful* — *i.e.*, that what they say *actually is true*. Similarly, someone can be truthful without being honest. In other words, a person can say something that they *think is false*, but which is actually *true* (can you think of concrete examples to illustrate of each of these kinds of cases?).

4 Problem #6 (p. 49: #4)

- a. Mainly, my evidence concerning who the current president is comes from (i) the testimony of others (*e.g.*, news reports), and (ii) my memory (*e.g.*, I recall going to the White House in October and seeing Barak Obama's picture a lot, and I don't recall hearing that he has died or left office). But, most (if not all) of this evidence seems to trace back to (iii) sensory data (*e.g.*, observations of news reports on TV, or various sights and sounds at the White House in October, *etc.*). I think my evidence for this is pretty good, especially because Mr. Obama has been in the news so much lately!
- b. My evidence concerning who the *first* president of the US was, on the other hand, is of a different nature. Here, I have less direct kinds of evidence. I must rely entirely on the testimony from others (none of whom have "first hand" evidence either!). This will involve various sources of historical evidence (*e.g.*, history books, old paintings, antiques, *etc.*). Of course, much (if not all) of this evidence enters my mind via sensory experience. But, it is of a more "second hand" variety (I have no direct "eyewitness" type evidence). In any event, I think my evidence for this is quite good. I have studied a bit of US history, and this provides a rather firm basis for my belief about who the first president was.

- c. My evidence concerning whether the earth revolves around the sun is also somewhat “second hand.” After all, I have not *directly observed* the earth revolve around the sun. Nor have I performed the astronomical experiments, or even *seen* all the scientific evidence that (I have been told) supports this claim. But, I have observed the *effects* of the earth’s revolution around the sun (assuming, of course, that the earth *really does* revolve around the sun). And, as far as I know, our best scientific evidence does (strongly) support the claim that the earth revolves around the sun. Largely, though, I am relying on scientific authority here. Nonetheless, I think I have good evidence to believe that the earth revolves around the sun.¹
- d. I would rather not discuss my personal religious beliefs.
- e. My evidence concerning whether the sun will rise tomorrow comes from a combination of sources. First, I have directly observed this phenomenon occur every day for many years. Moreover, I have reliable testimonial evidence that it has occurred for thousands of years. Second, I have evidence for various scientific theories which predict this continued regular behavior (for several billion more years, at least). Of course, none of this evidence is *infallible* (the sun *may not* rise tomorrow). Nonetheless, I think it strongly supports my belief that the sun will rise tomorrow.²
- f. My evidence concerning whether there are other minds similar to my own is largely experiential and *analogical*. There seem to be lots of “objects” in my experience which behave (outwardly) a lot like myself. So, I reason (by analogy) that similar things must be going on *inside* these “objects” (*e.g.*, that they have *minds* which are similar in function to my own). Again, we cannot *directly* observe other minds, but we seem to be observing their *effects*.

¹Being philosopher of science, I could say *a lot* more about this one. One thing that is useful here is to always ask yourself: “as opposed to *what*?” Whenever someone asks you what evidence you have for believing some statement *p*, ask yourself what the *alternative* to *p* is supposed to be. This is especially useful for scientific statements like this one. For instance, one might ask, what evidence do you have for believing that the earth revolves around the sun, *as opposed to the sun revolving around the earth*. Such *contrastive* questions are often easier to answer.

²Another philosophy of science question! Those who are interested should read about “Hume’s problem,” *a.k.a.* “the problem of induction.”