

## TRUTHMAKERS, ENTAILMENT AND NECESSITY 2008

This is an addendum to “Truthmakers, Entailment and Necessity,” to appear in *Truth and Truth-making*, edited by E. J. Lowe and A. Rami, Acumen, 2008.

It is twelve years since the publication of “Truthmakers, Entailment and Necessity,” and some of my views on the topics discussed have changed in that time. More recent work on truthmaking (in particular, Lewis’ “Truthmaking and Difference Making,” reprinted in this volume) has convinced me that the idea that truth depends on ontology can be captured in a number of different ways. Which ways we take to be most appealing will depend on a whole host of views or commitments, not the least being those concerning what different kinds of things there *are*.

Elsewhere I have shown that the robust picture of truthmaking in “Truthmakers, Entailment and Necessity” can apply in a very simple ‘world’ in which the truthmakers are regions in which atoms are either present or not (Restall 2000). No strange ‘negative’ or ‘universal facts’ need to be added to that picture, regions together with their inhabitants can suffice, so worries about the queerness special of ‘negative’ or ‘universal facts’ need not worry the friend of robust truthmaking if the metaphysics is kind enough to supply everyday objects that do the job.

However, some of my views have changed more significantly, since 1996. I am now convinced by an argument of Stephen Read, in “Truthmakers and the Disjunction Thesis” that the ‘Or and Smhor’ argument in Section III of “Truthmakers, Entailment and Necessity” is too swift. In the rest of this note, I will give an account of Read’s concern, and then chart four possible responses to it from the perspective of one who wishes to maintain the broad outline of the position of “Truthmakers, Entailment and Necessity”.

The crucial case, for me, is the Read’s example of the horse race. We are to consider a circumstance  $s$ , including a field of horses, such that *if a horse race is run, then either Valentine or Epitaph will win*. Formalise this as  $\langle m \rightarrow (p \vee q) \rangle$ . So we grant that

$$s \models m \rightarrow (p \vee q)$$

The situation  $s$  makes it true that if a race is run, either Valentine is the winner, or Epitaph is the winner.

Now take a situation  $r$  in which we *start to run* that race. So

$$r \models m$$

The situation  $r$  makes it true that a race is run. (Let us grant that once a race is started, if it is called off before the expected conclusion, the result is *still* a race — a shorter race, but a race nonetheless.) It follows that if we consider the larger situation  $(s + r)$ , we have

$$(A) \quad (s + r) \models p \vee q$$

But in addition, we have

(B)  $(s + r) \not\equiv p$  and  $(s + r) \not\equiv q$ .

The race so far determines that one of Valentine or Eпитaph is the winner, but it does not determine that Valentine is the winner, and it does not determine that Eпитaph is the winner.

Here are the possible responses to such an example:

(1) *Reject the disjunction thesis.* This is Read's preferred option. Notice that this is compatible with relevantism about the notion of entailment used in expressing truthmaking, but it blocks the argument of my paper to relevantism from the case of logical truths such as  $\langle p \vee \sim p \rangle$ . I argue that we should accept a relevant entailment in the analysis of truthmaking, since the disjunction thesis together with a classical entailment analysis trivialises truthmaking. This argument breaks down in the absence of the disjunction thesis.

If you wish to *retain* the disjunction thesis in some form, you must respond to the dilemma of the appeal of (A) and (B). Here are the options. For the first option, we do not, in fact, modify Option (1), but we *extend* it with an explanation.

(1') *Restrictivism about truthmakers.* Yes, the existence of the race up to that point makes true the disjunction but neither disjunct, but the race up to that point is not a *genuine* truthmaker. Not every object is a genuine truthmaker. A genuine truthmaker is one that makes true each disjunct of every disjunction it makes true. A restrictivist about truthmakers does not take every object (or event or circumstance or situation) to be a truthmaker, properly so called — or at least, to be a truthmaker satisfying the disjunction thesis. The odd thing about the partially run race could be that it is a circumstance which 'projects' into the future. It makes claims on what happens later, without *determining* what happens later. This overreach is what makes it a counterexample to the disjunction thesis. But, on this view, it is not a worrying counterexample, for although  $(s + r)$  makes true  $\langle p \vee q \rangle$ , a more comprehensive circumstance (the whole race, for example) makes true one of the disjuncts, and — it is to be hoped at least — makes true a disjunct of *each* disjunction it makes true.

This kind of restrictivism (only special objects count as genuine disjunctive truthmakers) is a possible response, but as it stands, it is more of a *hope* than a response. What reassurance do we have that there are *any* truthmakers for which the disjunction thesis holds? If we are willing to grant that there are objects for which the disjunction thesis fails, why should any object be any different?

So the friend of the disjunction thesis should probably look elsewhere. Let's see what happens if we take one horn of the dilemma.

(2) *Accept (A) and reject (B).* Despite appearances, the race thus far determines which horse will win.

This is unpalatable. It flies in the face of the examples we give that restricted parts of the world make true only limited truths. The *event* of the victory is not a part of the part of the race so far, and what makes it true that *Valentine* wins is Valentine's victory (or any other situation *including* Valentine's victory). It is a bitter pill to swallow that a half-run race determines the victor. This seems to rule out on *logical* grounds the plausible thought that the very same first half other race can be completed in very different ways.

So, let us consider the remaining options. The most straightforward of these is the opposite of Option (2).

(3) *Reject (A) and accept (B)*. Given the disjunction thesis, and given the fact that the half-run race does not make it true that Valentine wins, or that Epitaph wins, on this option, we maintain that it does not make true that either Valentine or Epitaph wins.

This also seems unpalatable. It seems that we must reject the plausible reasoning which held first that  $s \models m \rightarrow (p \vee q)$  (that circumstances were such that *if* a race were run, then the winner would be either Valentine or Epitaph) and that  $r \models m$ , that the half-run race makes it true that a race is run. But according to Option (3), we must reject one of these seemingly obvious truths. It looks like this option is just as bad as those that have gone before, and that the dilemma is a sharp one.

In the rest of this note, I wish to explain why I think that Option (3) is not so bad, and that the ideas motivating the original paper lead us to conclude that in fact,  $\langle m \rangle$  (that a race is run) is *not* made true by  $r$  (the half run race), despite appearances, and that the disjunction thesis is to be retained.

To do this, we supplement our picture slightly, with a crucial distinction.

(3') *Pluralism about truthmaking*. There is a very real sense in which a given circumstance  $a$  might make things true in *one* sense, but not another. There are genuinely different senses of truthmaking. We could say that for an object (or circumstance)  $a$ ,  $\langle p \rangle$  is *inevitable* if and only if in any *world* in which  $a$  features,  $\langle p \rangle$  obtains. This is truthmaking defined by *classical* entailment. In this sense, any for any object  $a$ , a logical truth such as  $\langle p \vee \sim p \rangle$  is inevitable, since in any world in which  $a$  occurs,  $p \vee \sim p$ . If you like, we can say that if for  $a$ ,  $\langle p \rangle$  is inevitable, then  $a$  *weakly makes*  $\langle p \rangle$  true. But we must have the understanding that there need be no connection between  $a$  and  $\langle p \rangle$  for this to be the case: logical necessities are weakly made true by anything and everything.

The crucial idea behind weak truthmaking is a kind of supervaluation: look at *every* world in which  $a$  features. If in each of these worlds (somehow or somewhere, whether through  $a$  or elsewhere)  $\langle p \rangle$  is true, then  $\langle p \rangle$  is weakly made true by  $a$ .

(This notion of robust truthmaking and weaker, supervaluationist truthmaking was independently made in a paper of mine (2005) discussing two different notions of truth-at-a-time, one supervaluing over all histories, and the other, staying local. The result is a logical framework synthesising a classical supervaluation semantics with a truth-value-gap Łukasiewicz-like semantics by separating the notion of what is inevitable at a point of time from that which is *made true* by history up to that point in time.)

Now consider the horse race. Look at why we think that  $\langle m \rangle$  is made true by  $r$ . The fact is that *however* things turn out, whether we have a long race or a short race, whether it is stopped mid stream or runs its natural course, in any world including the start-of-the-race  $r$ , we have a race. What *constitutes* the race may be different in each case, and hence, what *relevantly* or *robustly* makes  $\langle m \rangle$  true might differ in each case. The reasons we have for thinking that  $r$  makes  $\langle m \rangle$  true only support the claim that  $r$  weakly makes  $\langle m \rangle$  true. Acknowledging this means that we can bear the cost of denying that  $r \models m$ . We do not need to deny that there is *any* sense in which it is true, when  $r$  has obtained, that  $m$ . However, it is not *made* true (in the strong sense) by  $r$ . What makes it true that  $m$  is the *race*, and that is not yet complete.

It follows that the friend of the disjunction thesis can freely deny (A) while accepting (B). Given the half-run-race, it is inevitable that either Valentine or Epitaph is the winner. We need not go further and say that the half-run-race *makes* either Valentine or Epitaph a winner. What makes Valentine or Epitaph *win* is the victory at the end of the race.

This case should not be a surprise, for those who take objects (such as truthmakers) to come into existence over time. If a truthmaker for  $\langle p \rangle$  (say, that Penny Wong is the Prime Minister of Australia, following Kevin Rudd) does not exist and neither does a truthmaker for  $\langle \sim p \rangle$ , then the disjunction  $\langle p \vee \sim p \rangle$  is inevitable, and is weakly made true by anything existing. For a *strong* truthmaker for the disjunction, and for either disjunct, we must wait.

#### REFERENCES

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