

Connectives, prenegatives and dishonoured cheques of metaphysical explanation

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Abstract

Throughout his work, Kevin Mulligan has shown an ongoing concern with the theory of metaphysical explanation. What do we aim for, when we e.g. try to elucidate the natures of essence, value, perception, truthmaking, norms, emotions, relations, colours? Mulligan has done more than anyone to elucidate what he calls the “metaphysical “because””, in terms of which we formulate metaphysical explanations. Things mentioned on the right hand side of such explanations, a natural thought goes, are more fundamental than those that are mentioned on the left hand side. They stand to the latter in a relation of grounding, and the holding of this relation makes the “because”-sentence true. In recent work on Künne’s “modest account of truth”, however, Mulligan has flirted with the idea that “because”-sentences themselves are fundamental, i.e. not further analysable and not underwritten by real relations, in virtue of the obtaining of which they are true. In my contribution to this Festschrift, I argue that we (and he) should resist this temptation: while it is true that operator-locutions are often convenient, they do not reveal the fundamental metaphysics. There is no explanation to be had without accepting something doing the explaining.