

Tropes and Truth

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The advantages of trope theory for metaphysics and ontology have been brilliantly articulated by Kevin Mulligan. Rejecting the existence of properties, following a tradition of Hume and Reid, leads to parsimony. We wish to add a caveat. Using tropes referentially to refer to a plurality of individuals by exhibiting what they are like has an epistemological advantage for securing truth. When the individual trope is used as an exemplar or sample to represent a plurality of objects directly, then, it refers to itself as an exhibit of the individuals in the plurality. The exemplar used in this way, in exemplar representation, represents and is true of itself as one of the individuals it represents in a reflexive loop. The direct reflexive representation is a secure truth loop. We argue that the security of the truth connection is lost if properties or even predicates are brought into the connection. Tropes used in exemplar representation can provide the secure truth connection only if properties do not function in a mode of presentation of the facts that sensory particulars represent. Goodman is a source of the notion of exemplar representation, which he called exemplification, but he brought in properties as what was exemplified, and lost, thereby, the security of the self-representational truth loop of the exemplar reflexively back onto itself. Using the exemplar itself as directly referential, as a mode of presentation of facts about itself, without connecting it with properties or predicates, what Lehrer has called, exemplarization, is required to secure a truth connection between representation and experience.