

Fundamental ontology and ontology of epistemic processes

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We start from Mulligan's claim (in "Two Dogmas of Truthmaking") that in: « the proposition that Sam exemplifies sadness is made true by the obtaining state of affairs that Sam exemplifies sadness », exemplification is a relation (because exemplification relates a substrate and a property) but « made true » expresses no relation, but a tie of essence.

Such a difference between real ontological relations and "ties" (particularly when associated with truth) could be a trace, in the ontological way of speaking, of an epistemic way of speaking that the truthmakers trend has tried to erase. Their slogan could have been: do not bother with the infinity of propositions, go down to the fundamental entities. We do not want to come back to an epistemic and anti-realist or constructionist stance: we believe that sound epistemic operations are anchored on ontological bases. Such ontological bases have to be found for operations like identifying, classifying and making inferences (transformations between different ways of classifying). Truthmakers maximalism has problems with negative and disjunctive facts, but onto-epistemology of epistemic operations would not – since negation can be defined in terms of classifying and making inferences, as well as disjunction.

Objection: trying to find a basis for each epistemic operation implies an infinite regress. We have to presuppose the capacity of basic entities to distinguish from each other, and of another type, the capacity of types to be combined, and so on and so forth. But notice that when we just start from substrates and particular properties, for example, we also presuppose the capacity of entities of one type to distinguish from entities of another types (in a tropist ontology, particular qualities are presupposed to have the capacity to distinguish from the relation of com-presence).

Apparently, any ontology needs two regimes: a regime of functioning – entities are "at work"- while presupposing some capacities, a regime in which we begin to make explicit the ontology of these capacities. This difference is analogue to the difference between propositions and the set of their proofs. Martin-Löf gives the second as semantics for the first, but this would require a perfect and complete making explicit. Making explicit presuppositions is in fact only possible step by step, from the fundamental entities towards the different levels of epistemic operations. In this way, one level has not to wait for an infinite hierarchy in order to begin to work, even if making every operation explicit is an infinite task. This requires that making explicit the ontology of epistemic operations at higher levels should not change the basic ontological entities. To use an analogy, their projection on the level of basic entities should have a null value measure. Apparently this is only possible if such ontological operations are processes (not in the usual sense of four dimensional entities, but in the sense of entities the ways of being of which are their ways of doing) and if the type distinction is based on a confluence of processes that can be reapplied to such confluences.

In this framework, some ontological entities (for example the relation of com-presence in tropes) seem to be the trace of a collapse of the distinction between the two ontological regimes (functioning entities and making their functioning explicit), a distinction that precisely makes explicit the traces of epistemic operations in the truthmakers approach. It could be a kind of retrospective illusion, a projection back onto

the basic entities of epistemic operations of identifying objects among a bundle of qualities.

A distinction among relations could be done, opposing relations with “null projection”, related to the operations of making explicit presupposed ontological processes, and relations that add structure to entities: characterizing relations and structural relations. Instantiation is a characterizing relation, connexion – except Bergman’s connexion, a non-relational tie, which is a characterizing relation - is a structural one. Of course making explicit adds structures, but in principle these structures have a null projection. Exemplification introduces a new structure (the diagonal relation between universal property and particular substrate, or universal substance and particular accident), and this could be an argument against an ontology requiring the four corners of the ontological square: it mixes processes that add structure and processes that make explicit. Mulligan’s “tie because of essence” seems to be a characterizing relation.

Is “making true” a characterizing or a structural relation? The problem is related with that of “facthood”: how is a fact made, and to what extent are complex ontological entities like a state of affairs required? If we needed an additional structure for passing from fundamental entities to states of affairs, we would have confused processes that make explicit with processes that add structure. Surely such an additional structure is required for causal facts, but this does not seem to be the case for simple facts (Sam is sad). Our hypothesis is that truth requires to make explicit 1) the basic ontological entities, 2) the epistemic operations or processes and their ontological type, and in the end 3) the coherence between the structure of the bundle of entities (if there is such structure) and the structure of the epistemic processes. The “tie because of essence” seems to indicate this coherence. If we emphasize the characterization aspect of the notion of “making true” and believe (wrongly) that characterization relations have to be cancelled out we are led to a disquotational theory of truth. If you are a correspondentist, you focus on the structural aspect of the problem. Truth seems to imply a “tie” or an articulation between a structural constitution and a characterizing (or making explicit) constitution.