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## Truthmaking: A Cognition-Independent Internal Relation with Heterogeneous Relata

*Ingvar Johansson*

*IFOMIS, University of Leipzig, Germany,*

### Abstract

For many assertions, the correspondence theory of truth seems intuitively to give the best account of the difference between truth and falsity, but one of its problems is how to explicate the notions of “correspondence” and “truthmaking”. In conformity with the view of David Armstrong, it is claimed that truthmaking is an internal relation between a truthmaker and a truth(-value-)bearer. The truthbearer (a token proposition) can exist without the truthmaker (an object or a state of affairs), and vice versa, but when both exist the truthmaker necessarily makes the truthbearer true and correspondence obtains. Contrary to Armstrong’s reductionist analyses of internal relations and propositions, however, it is argued that internal relations can have a mind-independent existence and “add to being”, that truthbearers and truthmakers are categorially different, and that the correspondence theory of truth requires a distinction between internal relations with heterogeneous and homogeneous relata, respectively.

### 1. The Correspondence Theory of Truth

Assume the following series of events: (a) you are standing in a room looking for a cat, (b) another person tells you “The cat is on the mat”, (c) you turn around and look in the direction of the mat, (d) on this mat you see the cat, and (e) you think “True, there it is!”. Often, as in this example, an everyday assertion and its confirmation are two temporally distinct events. First comes an apprehension of a speech act (b), and later comes a confirming perceptual act (d). Since *what* is perceived in the perceptual act in some way corresponds to *what* is spoken about in the speech act, the content of the perceptual act makes the assertion true; there is often (e) an immediate “perception-assertion transition” (Mulligan 1999). Situations like the

assumed one abound, and they constitute strong evidence in favour of a correspondence theory of truth. And this is so, even if they are philosophically reinterpreted to fit subjective idealism, social constructivism, or solipsism. Even if it is assumed that there is no language- and perception-independent world that may or may not contain the cat and the mat, there is nonetheless some kind of correspondence between the speech act and the perceptual act that cries out for philosophical analysis. In order to save space, however, I will in what follows simply take it for granted that there is a mind-independent world structured by universals that exist in the particulars of the world. Furthermore, the analysis will be restricted to ordinary positive empirical assertions; leaving, for instance, tautologies and negative existential assertions such as “There is no phlogiston” out of account; compare (Mulligan, Simons, Smith 1984, pp. 314-315).

The point of departure will be David Armstrong’s (1997) view on the relation of truthmaking or correspondence (he regards the terms as being ontologically equivalent). My view resembles his without however being identical thereto. Nor is my view identical with any of the recent defences of the correspondence theory of truth that I know of; see the books by (Fumerton 2002) and (Newman 2002), as well as the articles by (Smith 1999), (Bac 2003), (David 2004), and (Rami 2004); and the arguments I put forward have not been evaluated by the critics (Dodd 2000) and (McGrath 2003).

## 2. Armstrong’s Analysis and Its Reductionism

According to Armstrong, truthmaking is fundamentally an internal relation between a token proposition, the truth(-value-)bearer, and a truthmaker that is either a state of affairs or a constituent object of such an entity (1997, pp. 116-119 and 131). The term ‘token proposition’, however, is mine; Armstrong himself speaks only of ‘propositions’ (= ‘type propositions’), ‘token beliefs’, and ‘token thoughts’. Of course, when a truthmaker makes a token proposition true, it makes, necessarily and at the same time, the corresponding type proposition true.

An internal relation is a universal that has such a nature that its relata can exist independently of one another but is such that when, in fact, the relata exist simultaneously, then the relation is necessarily instantiated. For example, the determinate volume that is instantiated in my pen has an internal relation of ‘being smaller than’ to the determinate volume that is instantiated in my lamp, but, of course, this determinate volume of my pen can exist even if the determinate volume of my lamp does not exist, and vice versa. However, as soon as both the determinate pen- and lamp-volumes exist, there is necessarily also an

instance of the relation ‘being smaller than’. Contrast these facts with facts about the relation ‘being one meter apart’. Even if both the pen-volume-instance and the lamp-volume-instance exist and are one meter apart, they are not necessarily related by the relation ‘being one meter apart’. The latter relation is external to the relata at hand; it is an external relation.

Armstrong’s view, applied to the cat/mat example, is in accordance with the following common sense facts:

- the cat can be on the mat even if no one is thinking or talking about the cat and the mat (a truthmaker can exist independently of any token of the type proposition it makes true);
- one may think or assert that the cat is on the mat even if the cat is not in fact on the mat (a token proposition can exist independently of whether or not there is a corresponding truthmaker);
- necessarily: if someone has the thought or makes the assertion “the cat is on the mat”, and the cat is on the mat, then it is true that the cat is on the mat (necessarily: if both a token proposition and one of its truthmakers exist, then there is a relation of truthmaking between them; correspondence obtains).

Back to my introductory example. The proposition (be it type or token) that the cat is on the mat can be made true by many determinately different states of affairs, and the-cat-on-the-mat can be a truthmaker for other propositions as well. It makes for example also “An animal is on the mat” true. In this sense, there is a many-many relation of correspondence between propositions and truthmakers (Armstrong 1997, p. 129f).

So far so good. But now I want to criticize Armstrong’s reductionist accounts of internal relations and propositions, respectively. No analysis of the essence of truthmakers will be attempted.

Typical cases of internal relations are: ‘being larger than’, ‘being heavier than’, ‘being warmer than’, and ‘being more electrically charged than’. (Relations such as ‘being non-identical with’, ‘being instantiated by’, and ‘being inherent in’, which may also lay claim to be internal, will here without arguments be claimed to be categorially different). According to Armstrong’s analysis, when the relation ‘being larger than’ exists between the lengths of the individuals Peter and Paul, there is in the world nothing more than the possession by Peter and Paul of their determinate length instances. He claims that instances of internal relations are identical with the instances of their relata. I think such a view is false; my reason is the following.

As has been made abundantly clear by phenomenological philosophy and perceptual psychology, we perceive much more than things and their most conspicuous front side property instances. We often perceive also phenomena such as colour-constancy-in-colour-variation and gestalt properties, and in my opinion also internal relations. If Peter and Paul differ significantly in length and are standing beside each other, then we can perceive their length difference. The question whether this length difference is perceived directly or only indirectly as part of the fact *that* Peter and Paul differ in length is of no importance for my argument. I merely claim (first premise) that it is an empirical fact that some internal relations are in some sense perceivable. Now, whether I perceive Peter and Paul as being of equal or unequal length may affect my future actions. That is (second premise), what is perceivable can have causal effects. When these facts are combined with the principle (third premise): “If a hypothetical entity can be shown to have causal effects then it cannot be an ontological nothing”, then we get the conclusion that internal relations cannot be ontologically eliminated.

In this Peter-Paul example, the relation ‘being larger than’ exists only *as perceived*. I have so far only proved that such a perceived internal relation cannot be eliminated. However, from a realist point of view, there seems to be no reason to restrict the existence of such a relation to its existence in thoughts and perceptions. For instance, even before mankind discovered the planets Jupiter and Pluto and that Jupiter is larger than Pluto, there must have been a mind-independent instance of the internal relation ‘being larger than’ between the volume instances of these planets. In my opinion, Armstrong wrongly identifies what is an “ontological free lunch” (here, an instance of an internal relation) with the entities (here, the relata) the lunch is based on (1997, p. 117).

If there can be a completely mind-independent internal relation between two mind-independent relata such as the volume instances of Jupiter and Pluto, then it seems to be the case that there can be *cognition-independent* internal relations between two mind-dependent relata such as two pains. Your pain may be more intense than mine even if no one whatsoever is cognizing this relation. But what about internal relations between mind-dependent token propositions (in beliefs and assertions) and mind-independent truthmakers? Can such internal relations be cognition-independent relations? They cannot be completely mind-independent since one of their relata is now assumed to be mind-dependent.

Propositions have two features that are especially important to my argument. First, they have *aboutness* or *directedness*, i.e., they have intentionality. In this sense of ‘about’, a proposition is necessarily about something even when it is false and this something does not exist; in another sense of ‘about’, however, it is about something only when it is true. Second,

if a proposition has a truth-value, then nothing can change this truth-value. This means among other things that the proposition (be it type or token) in the introductory example is about the-cat-on-the-mat at a particular place and time. The general content or meaning in “The cat is on the mat” might be called “propositional content” (Searle 1983).

Armstrong says: “Truth attaches in the first place to propositions, those propositions which have a truthmaker. But no Naturalist can be happy with a realm of propositions” (1997, p. 131). In saying so, however, he identifies naturalism with his own reductive brand of naturalism. All naturalists have to deny the existence of a Platonic realm of propositions outside the spatiotemporal world, but as is argued in (Searle 1983) and (Johansson 2004) they do not have to deny the existence of non-reducible intentional states within this world. Although I am an Aristotelian, my defence here of the correspondence theory of truth does not reject the possibility that type propositions may be Platonic entities. However, my defence requires the view that the aboutness or directedness of propositions cannot possibly be reduced to something else.

What happens if one tries to take away the intentionality of propositions? Suppose, as a thought experiment, we were to imagine that the characteristic aboutness of propositions does not exist in the cat/mat example used. This would mean would mean that the propositional structure heard in the utterance “The cat is on the mat” and the seen structure the-cat-on-the-mat differ only with respect to specificity; obviously, the fact the-cat-on-the-mat lacks intentionality. That is, what is perceived is more specific than what is asserted, but the speech act is just as little about the-cat-on-the-mat as this fact is about the speech act. If propositions lack aboutness, then (i) the token proposition of the assertion “The cat is on the mat” lacks aboutness, (ii) this assertion is incapable of representing something outside itself, and (iii) it can, empirically, be neither true nor false. Our thought experiment takes away the obvious asymmetry which exists between assertive speech acts and what they are about. The mind-to-world direction of fit of assertions (Searle 1983) disappears. This is a *reductio ad absurdum*. Propositions have intentionality. Q.E.D.

### 3. Truthmaking as a Cognition-Independent Internal Relation with Heterogeneous Relata

Out of the analysis made, the following four conclusions can be drawn.

First, like instances of other internal relations, instances of truthmaking add to being. When they exist, they exist whether or not there is a cognizing subject who thinks or perceives the truthmaking in question. This is the fact which makes it possible for human beings to assign propositions wrong truth-values.

Second, if all propositions are mind-dependent entities, then in a world without minds there can be no truthmaking. Truthmaking is on this assumption not a mind-independent relation, but it is nonetheless a cognition-independent relation. Even though one of its relata (the token proposition) is mind-dependent, the relation itself can exist without being cognized. If, on the other hand, type propositions are mind-independent Platonic entities, then truthmaking is a completely mind-independent relation.

Third, since all truthbearers have intentionality but many truthmakers lack it, the truthmaking relation must be able to relate categorially heterogeneous relata. In this respect truthmaking differs essentially from the examples of internal relations first presented which have homogeneous relata. The latter relate only determinates that belong to one and the same determinable. For example, 'being heavier than' can only be a relation between instances of the weight determinable.

Fourth, if the intentionality of the truthbearer is regarded as a special kind of relation, then this relation must not be conflated with the relation of truthmaking itself. If intentionality is regarded as a relation, then truthmaking is a doubly relational affair.

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