

## **Truth Supervenes on Being**

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*Truthmaker* is the thesis that, for each and every true claim, there is something or other that—just by existing—makes that claim true. In other words, Truthmaker says that every truth has a ‘truthmaker.’ We shall begin by taking a look at what motivates some philosophers to endorse Truthmaker. We shall then look at a related thesis, which I shall call *Truth Supervenes on Being* (or TSB for short). TSB seems to accommodate what motivates Truthmaker while also having significant advantages over Truthmaker. I think most philosophers who think about these topics these days think TSB is by far the better view. But my main point today is that these two theses—Truthmaker and TSB—are pretty much equally good or, as I would prefer to put it, equally bad.

### **I. Motivating Truthmaker**

Bertrand Russell endorses Truthmaker throughout *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, insisting that each truth is made true by a ‘fact.’ J. L. Austin likewise embraces Truthmaker, saying: ‘When a statement is true, there is, *of course*, a state of affairs which makes it true’ (1979, 123). More recently, a growing number of philosophers have been insisting that, for each truth, there is something that makes it true. These include, among many others, William P. Alston (1996, 52), Kit Fine (1982, 69), E.J. Lowe (1998, 245), C.B. Martin (see Armstrong, 1989a), and, most adamantly and prolifically, David Armstrong (e.g., 1997 and 2004).

Truthmaker and closely related theses have been widely endorsed and nowadays seem to be gaining new momentum. Yet even Armstrong confesses: ‘The truth-maker principle seems to me to be fairly obvious once attention is drawn to it, but I do not know how to argue for it further’ (1989b, 89). Elsewhere, Armstrong follows up the claim that he has no argument for Truthmaker with:

My hope is that philosophers of realist inclinations will be immediately attracted to the idea that a truth, any truth, should depend for its truth [on] something ‘outside’ it, in virtue of which it is true. (2004, 7)

Similarly, David Lewis defends a related thesis—a thesis that shall be our main focus in this talk—by simply assuming Truthmaker as a starting point and then scaling it back in light of various objections (Lewis, 2001). Elsewhere, Lewis just asserts without argument that Truthmaker aims to preserve something ‘right and important and underappreciated. What’s right, roughly speaking, is that truths must have *things* as their subject matter’ (1999, 206).

No one gives much of an argument for Truthmaker. Instead, Truthmaker’s main support comes from something like the brute intuition that what is true depends on what there is or the world or things or being. Truthmaker’s defenders then maintain that Truthmaker is the best way to articulate that dependence. This is Truthmaker’s primary motivation.

Perhaps we can better appreciate this primary motivation by approaching it indirectly. So consider:

(1) If Queen Elizabeth II had been born in seventeenth-century Japan, she would have been a samurai warrior.

Many will object that (1) is not true. Now I suppose you could object to (1) by arguing that, had Her Britannic Majesty been born in Japan four hundred years ago, she would

have been a geisha, rather than a samurai. But I am confident that most who object to (1) do so because they object to all substantive claims about what the Queen would have been like, had she been born long ago in the Land of the Rising Sun.

One objection to all such claims says that nothing could *make true* any substantive claim about what HRH would have been like, had she been born in Japan in the seventeenth century. Therefore, this objection concludes, no such claim is true. This objection trades on the idea that all truths must be ‘made true’ by something. And so those who find this objection to (1) compelling should support something like Truthmaker.

I do not know of any philosopher who endorses (1). But Armstrong, Lewis, and Martin object that some do endorse other claims that are not made true by being (see Lewis, 1999, 207). That is, they object that some philosophers cheat by violating something like Truthmaker. Indeed, Theodore Sider goes so far as to say that catching these cheaters is the whole point of Truthmaker (2001, 40). And insofar as we think that those who violate something like Truthmaker really are cheating, we should endorse Truthmaker or some similar claim.

‘Catch the cheaters’ is not really a second motivation for Truthmaker, to be added to the primary motivation already noted. It is, instead, that primary ‘truth depends on being’ motivation seen in a different light. For the idea or intuition or insight or thought that truth depends on what exists is not consistent with every possible view. There are theories or claims or theses that violate truth’s supposed dependence on being. These violators are the cheaters. In this way, the ‘two’ motivations are sides of a single coin.

Look at it this way. If any and every theory can satisfy Truthmaker's demands—that is, if Truthmaker cannot catch any cheaters—then Truthmaker is not a substantive theory. Again, if Truthmaker is so weak that it is consistent with every view, then it is but a vacuous slogan. And if Truthmaker is vacuous, then it counts as articulating the idea that truth depends on being only if that idea itself is empty. But surely no defender of Truthmaker should say that that idea is empty. And so, in all that follows, I shall assume that Truthmaker can catch cheaters.

## **II. TSB as an alternative to Truthmaker**

*Truth Supervenes on Being* (TSB) says that any two possible worlds alike with respect to what exists and what properties are exemplified are alike with respect to what is true. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* defends something closer to TSB than to Truthmaker. And David Lewis (2001) explicitly defends TSB. And TSB appears to both accommodate what motivates Truthmaker and also enjoy significant advantages over Truthmaker.

### *Advantage One*

TSB is an account of truth's dependence on being. And TSB is substantive, since some views violate it. For example, according to Lewis (1999), both Ryle's account of dispositions and also presentism violate TSB. (More about presentism below.) Sider (2001, 40-41) agrees that these views are TSB-transgressing cheaters, adding that the same goes for the view that there are true 'brute counterfactuals.'

The primary motivation behind Truthmaker is the insight or idea or intuition that truth depends substantively on being. Since TSB articulates a substantive way for truth to depend on being, it thereby accommodates Truthmaker's primary motivation. Indeed, TSB fits with that primary motivation better than does Truthmaker itself.

TSB fits better because Truthmaker outstrips that motivation. For Truthmaker says that if it is true that Fido is brown, there must be something that, *in virtue of its mere existence*, necessitates that truth. Fido—even if he is brown—cannot pull this off. After all, because he is contingently brown, Fido's mere existence does not necessitate that truth. The concrete state of affairs, or event, of *Fido's being brown* might do the trick, but only if essentially constituted by both Fido and *being brown*.

According to Truthmaker, the truth of *that Fido is brown* requires more than a brown Fido. Truthmaker requires both the existence of the state of affairs of *Fido's being brown* and also this state's having its constituents essentially. Relatedly, Truthmaker wrongly delivers the result that those who believe in a brown Fido, but not in states of affairs, cheat when they say *that Fido is brown* is true.

TSB, on the other hand, says that Fido's existing and being brown are enough to ground the truth of *that Fido is brown*. This is because *that Fido is brown* is true in every world like ours with respect to which entities exist and which properties are exemplified. Along similar lines, according to TSB, those who say that *that Fido is brown* is true do not cheat just so long as they believe in a brown Fido. Unlike Truthmaker, TSB does not demand more than is required by truth's dependence on being or more than is needed to catch cheaters.

### *Advantage Two*

Truthmaker says that, for each truth, there is some entity or entities whose existence makes it true. Since truthmaker says that about each truth, it says this about true *negative existentials*. For example, Truthmaker implies that there is something such that, necessarily, if it exists, then it is true that hobbits do not exist. And it implies that there is something such that, necessarily, if it exists, then it is true that there are no white ravens. These implications of Truthmaker are problematic. For negative existentials do not seem to have truthmakers at all. That is, negative existentials are not true because of what *does exist*. Instead, they are true because of what *fails to exist*.

TSB does not face any such problem when it comes to negative existentials. According to TSB the truth of *that hobbits do not exist* implies only that every possible world exactly like ours with respect to what entities exist and what properties those entities have is a world in which *that hobbits do not exist* is true. Likewise for *that there are no white ravens* and every other negative existential. And so TSB does not say that that negative existentials are made true by the positive existence of anything.

### *Advantage Three*

Consider a possible world  $W_1$  that includes a contingently existing object X. Presumably, there is a world  $W_2$ , differing with respect to what exists from  $W_1$  only in that  $W_2$  does not include X. One might quibble: what if some objects are essentially parts of X? Then  $W_2$  lacks them as well. What if some objects have X essentially as a part? Then they too are absent from  $W_2$ . Even the quibblers should grant that, with respect to

what exists, there is a world  $W_2$  that differs from  $W_1$  *only* in that  $W_2$  lacks some of the inhabitants of  $W_1$ .

But, as Lewis (2001) points out, truthmaker theorists cannot grant this. In  $W_2$  it is true that  $X$  does not exist. According to Truthmaker, something must exist in  $W_2$ —call it ‘ $Y$ ’—that makes it true that  $X$  does not exist.  $Y$ , since it makes it true that  $X$  does not exist, cannot possibly exist in a world with  $X$ . So while  $Y$  must exist in  $W_2$ , it cannot exist in  $W_1$ . Thus Truthmaker says that we can remove  $X$  only by replacing it with  $Y$  (or with some other truthmaker for *that  $X$  does not exist*).

Truthmaker makes it impossible simply to remove an entity. One must always replace it with something else, namely, a truthmaker for the claim that that entity does not exist. But what Truthmaker says is impossible certainly seems to be possible. All should accept the bare possibility of at least one entity that could fail to exist without thereby implying, of necessity, the existence of some otherwise non-existent entity.

Unlike Truthmaker, TSB rightly allows that two worlds can differ only by one of them lacking some of the occupants of the other. In other words—and again unlike Truthmaker—TSB rightly allows that one world can contain all the inhabitants of another world, plus some extra things besides.

So TSB appears to satisfy the driving intuition behind Truthmaker—the idea that all truth depends on being and, relatedly, that those who violate that dependence cheat. Moreover, TSB appears to be a way to accommodate Truthmaker’s motivations while avoiding Truthmaker’s worst consequences. But I shall argue that, in the end, TSB fails to deliver all of this. Insofar as TSB really is an account of truth’s dependence on being,

its advantages over Truthmaker are largely (but not entirely) illusory. That's what I shall argue today.

### III. Global versus 'Worldwide Local' Supervenience

TSB is a thesis of *global* supervenience. Lewis endorses TSB construed globally when he tells us:

For any proposition P and any worlds W and V, if P is true in W but not in V, then either something exists in one of the worlds but not in the other, or else some n-tuple of things stands in some fundamental relation in one of the worlds but not in the other. (2001, 612)

Lewis also says:

There is a most inclusive subject matter: *being*. Differences in being come in two sorts. There are differences in whether something is, and there are differences in how something is. Two worlds are alike with respect to being if they have no differences of either sort... And every proposition, no matter what lesser subject matter it may have, is entirely about being. It never has different truth values in two worlds that are just alike with respect to being. In John Bigelow's (1988:132-3) phrase 'its truth is supervenient on being'. (2003, 25-6)

And here is Sider describing how TSB bears on a negative existential:

[TSB] does not require the existence of a fact that there are no unicorns; it merely requires that since 'there are no unicorns' is true in the actual world, it must also be true in any world in which the same objects exist, those objects instantiate the same properties, and those objects stand in the same relations as they do in the actual world. (2001, 36)

So TSB's defenders take it to be a thesis of global supervenience.

But, as we shall see below, these same defenders sometimes treat TSB as if it were a thesis of a different sort. They sometimes treat TSB as if it were the claim that truth *locally supervenes on the whole of reality*. Understood in this way, TSB says that each true claim is such that, necessarily, given all that exists and all the properties (and

relations) that are exemplified, then that claim is true. Equivalently, TSB taken as a thesis of ‘worldwide local supervenience’ implies that no true claim could possibly fail to be true given all that exists and all the properties (and relations) that are exemplified.

Both global supervenience and ‘worldwide local supervenience’ are supervenience ‘on the whole world.’ Nevertheless, TSB as global supervenience is not equivalent to TSB as local supervenience. After all global supervenience is defined differently from worldwide local supervenience. For example, the definition of global supervenience, unlike that of worldwide local supervenience, explicitly invokes possible worlds.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis and Sider officially take TSB to be a thesis of global supervenience. But, as we shall see, they sometimes seem to treat TSB as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience, at least when dealing with presentism. Seeing that they do this, seeing that they shift from a global understanding of TSB to a worldwide local understanding in their approach to presentism, will further illustrate the difference between global and worldwide local supervenience.

Well, should we take TSB as a thesis of global supervenience or, instead, as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience? Note that I am not asking which account of

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<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as the following case shows, there may be truths that globally supervene but fail to have a worldwide local supervenience base. Suppose that the whole of reality includes but a single electron (and that electron’s features, etc.). Suppose further that this electron has no ‘nothing more’ properties; in particular, suppose it lacks the properties of *being such that nothing else exists* and *being such that there are no dogs*. Given that the electron is all that there is, a truth locally supervenes on the whole of reality if and only if that truth locally supervenes on the existence of that single electron and the features it has. Supposing still that there is nothing other than this electron and its features, the truth of *that there are no dogs* does not locally supervene on the whole of reality. This is because, possibly, that electron exists (and has its features, etc.) alongside a dog. On the other hand, *that there are no dogs* does globally supervene: all worlds exactly like the actual world in being (which we are pretending includes but a single electron) are themselves worlds in which *that there are no dogs* is true. Result: global supervenience is one thing, worldwide local supervenience another.

TSB Lewis or Sider prefer. (I think both prefer the global account.) Rather, the question I am asking is which account of TSB better articulates truth's dependence on being.

Relatedly, I am asking which account is better at catching cheaters. The answer to both is TSB taken as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience. I say this for the following three reasons.

*Reason One: TSB taken globally cannot catch presentism and, given presentism, TSB taken globally does not articulate truth's dependence on being*

TSB's defenders allege that presentism cheats (Lewis, 1999; Sider, 2001, Ch. 2). This alone suggests that TSB should be understood as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience. For, so I shall argue, only thus understood does TSB have a shot at catching presentism.

The first step in that argument is to explain how *presentism* bears on the nature of possible worlds. Presentists say that the whole of (temporal) being comprises that which exists at the present time alone. Denying that other times are analogous to other places, presentists believe that only that which exists at the present time is real. Since no dinosaurs exist at the present time, presentists say that there simply are no dinosaurs. So they say that *that there are dinosaurs* is false. But paleontologically informed presentists add that *that there are dinosaurs* was once true. Thus presentism implies that propositions can change in truth-value.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the *eternalist* says that the whole of being comprises the past, present, and future. Past times and future times are not 'now,' but they are real. This is analogous, says the eternalist, to distant places failing to be 'here,' yet being real. Since the past includes dinosaurs, the eternalist says that—although no dinosaurs are located at the present time—dinosaurs do exist. Thus the eternalist says that *that there are dinosaurs* is true.

As we shall see, this implication of presentism conflicts with a standard account of possible worlds. Most philosophers who embrace possible worlds deny that they are universes like our own. Rather, these philosophers take possible worlds to be abstract representations of some sort. Let us assume that possible worlds are abstract representations. Indeed, let us assume that they are abstract propositions.

Now consider this account of possible worlds. A possible world is a possibly true maximal proposition. A proposition *p* is *maximal* if and only if, for every proposition *q*, *p* entails *q* or, instead, *p* entails *q*'s denial. This account of possible worlds identifies a world's *being actual* with that world's *being true*. Thus it tells us that the true maximal proposition is the actual world.<sup>3</sup>

Given presentism, the true maximal proposition entails the denial of *that there are dinosaurs*. But since there were dinosaurs, presentists must say that the true maximal proposition has not always been true. This implies, given the above account of possible worlds, that the actual world has not always been actual. But that implication is not acceptable. For which world is actual does not change from moment to moment.

Presentism is inconsistent with this standard account of possible worlds. There are two reactions to this inconsistency that I want to dismiss at the outset. The first is that possible worlds are a snare and a delusion and therefore it is unimportant that presentism does not fit with a standard account of worlds. I reply that to dismiss worlds is thereby to dismiss global TSB itself. For global TSB is defined in terms of possible worlds. To give global TSB a fighting chance, let us assume that good sense can be made of possible worlds.

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<sup>3</sup> This is roughly Plantinga's account from *The Nature of Necessity*.

Again, presentism is inconsistent with a standard account of possible worlds. The second reaction I want to dismiss is that of rejecting presentism in light of this inconsistency. For this reaction, no less than the previous, undermines the global TSB-based objection to presentism. That objection says that, assuming presentism for *reductio*, there are truths that do not globally supervene on being. That objection simply fails if, assuming presentism for *reductio*, we can make no sense of possible worlds or global supervenience.

Presentism is inconsistent with a standard account of possible worlds. I have dismissed two reactions to that inconsistency. The best reaction is to come up with a presentist-friendly variation on that standard account. Specifically, the presentist should define a ‘possible world’ as a possibly true proposition that is maximal *with respect to propositions that do not change their truth-value*. Then—if presentism is true—the actual world does not entail *that there are dinosaurs* nor does it entail *it is not the case that there are dinosaurs*. Instead, it entails *that dinosaurs exist at time t, that it is false that dinosaurs exist at t\**, and so on. (Cf. Plantinga, 1985, 90-91; 1987, 192)<sup>4</sup>

If presentism is true, the actual world does not entail *it is not the case that there are dinosaurs*. Nor does it entail *that Merricks exists*. After all, the actual world was actual (true) a thousand years ago, but *that Merricks exists* was not. This means that *that Merricks exists* is not ‘true in’ the actual world. For a claim p’s being ‘true in a world w’

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<sup>4</sup> I shall use this account of abstract worlds in what follows. But nothing turns on the decision here to take worlds as propositions as opposed to some other abstract representation. For if presentism is true and worlds represent how *everything* is, then which world is actual—that is, which world represents accurately—will change from moment to moment. Therefore the presentist should take worlds to represent how those things are that do not change. So any account of worlds as abstract representations—and of the actual world as the accurate abstract representation—must be relevantly like the account suggested in the text. Any such account will underwrite the arguments of this section.

just is p's being such that, necessarily, if w were actual (that is, true), then p would be true.

*That Merricks exists* is true. It even has a truthmaker: me. But, if presentism is true, it is not true in the actual world. Since it is not true in the actual world, obviously it is not true in all worlds like the actual world with respect to what exists and what properties are exemplified. As a result, if presentism is true, *that Merricks exists* fails to globally supervene on what exists and what properties are exemplified. So, given presentism, some truths—even some truths that have truthmakers—fail to globally supervene on being. But global TSB demands that all truths globally supervene on being.

The point here is not merely that presentism and global TSB are inconsistent. The point here is, instead, that if we take presentism for *reductio*, then global TSB clearly fails to articulate the idea that truth depends on being. For surely I do not cheat if I believe *that Merricks exists*. Surely, given my existence, that truth depends on being. But, assuming presentism, that truth does not satisfy global TSB, not even if it has a truthmaker. This shows that, given presentism, global TSB does not articulate truth's dependence on being.

So if we take presentism for *reductio*, we should conclude that violating global TSB is *not* a way of violating truth's dependence on being. So the global TSB charge against presentism fails. For that charge just is that, if presentism were true, then there would be truths that violate truth's dependence on being *in virtue of* violating global TSB.

A violation of global TSB by presentism is no reason to think that presentism cheats by violating truth's dependence on being. But there is a catch-the-cheaters-style

objection to presentism in the neighborhood of global TSB. *That the Trojans were conquered* does not locally supervene on all the objects that exist at the present time and on all the properties those objects presently exemplify. But, according to presentism, those objects and properties are *all* the objects and properties. So, given presentism, *that the Trojans were conquered* does not locally supervene on all the objects that exist and all the properties that are exemplified. But, so this objection goes, all truths should thus supervene. So presentism is false.

This objection sidesteps presentism's bearing on modal metaphysics. For this objection is not in terms of global supervenience, but in terms of worldwide local supervenience. Moreover, I think that this is the TSB-style objection to presentism actually raised by, for example, Lewis and Sider. Thus Lewis objects:

[Presentism] says that although there is nothing outside the present, yet there are past-tensed and future-tensed truths that do not supervene on the present, and hence do not supervene on being (1999, 207).

And Sider says:

...what is true supervenes on what objects exist, what properties those objects have, and what relations they stand in...For the presentist, all states of affairs are *currently* existing states of affairs, and the properties and relations of objects are confined to those of *currently* existing objects. But surely the truth of the past is not fixed by such facts about the present. (2001, 36-37)

The most straightforward way to read Lewis and Sider is as objecting that presentism violates worldwide local TSB. Note, in particular, that their objections ignore presentism's bearing on the nature of possible worlds and so on the formulation of global supervenience. And the correct presentist formulation of global supervenience does indeed seem irrelevant to the objection they are raising. For that objection doesn't seem to invoke worlds at all. This is why I said earlier that Lewis and Sider sometimes seem to

treat TSB as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience, at least when dealing with presentism.

Many of presentism's opponents take it to be a paradigmatic cheater. But, as we have seen, TSB has a shot at 'catching' presentism only if TSB is a thesis of worldwide local supervenience. So we should take TSB as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience. And we should set global TSB aside.

We saw above that, given presentism, global TSB fails to articulate the idea that truth depends on being. But whether global TSB successfully articulates the idea that truth depends on being is a purely conceptual matter. And so whether global TSB thus succeeds should not vary with this or that feature of the cosmos, including the nature of time. Since global TSB fails to articulate that idea given presentism, we can conclude global TSB simply fails to articulate that idea. Again, we should set global TSB aside.

*Reason Two: TSB taken globally does not articulate truth's dependence on being and is not a principled way to catch cheaters*

I shall now argue that global TSB fails to articulate truth's dependence on being and so fails to catch cheaters. But, unlike the reasoning above, that argument will not trade on presentism in any way. This new argument begins with a triviality. It is trivial that worlds alike with respect to *what exists* are alike with respect to *truths about what exists*. For example, it is trivial that no unicorns exist if and only if *that no unicorns exist* is true. And so it is trivial that, for example, worlds like ours with respect to the existence of unicorns are like ours with respect to the truth of *that no unicorns exist*.

This triviality exhausts what global TSB says about the truth of *that no unicorns exist*. Again, when it comes to that truth, global TSB says *only* that worlds alike with respect to what exists (and with respect to the features of those existing entities) are alike with respect to the truth of *that no unicorns exist*. The same goes for what TSB says about the truth of any negative existential.

All that global TSB says about negative existential truths is trivial. I shall now argue that global TSB's triviality in this regard is problematic. I begin by criticizing part of Lewis's reply to an objection by truthmaker theorist C.B. Martin. Here is Lewis:

Martin has noted that when I say that a negative existential truth is true for lack of falsemakers, my statement that there are no falsemakers is itself a negative existential (Martin, 1996, p. 61). Sometimes, in fact, as in the case of the proposition that there are no unicorns, it is the very same negative existential. So the proposition that there are no unicorns is true just because there are no unicorns! What sort of explanation is that?—No explanation at all, I agree. But who says a Truthmaker Principle, whether weakened or not, must yield informative explanations? I say to Martin: *Tu quoque!* His original, full-strength Truthmaker Principle says that a positive existential, for instance the proposition that there is a cat, is true because it has a truthmaker. The statement that it has a truthmaker is itself a positive existential. In fact, it is the very same positive existential. The proposition that there is a cat is true just because there is a cat. What sort of explanation is that?—No explanation at all, and none the worse for that. (2001, 611-612)

When it comes to explaining truth, according to Lewis, what Truthmaker says about *that there is a cat* is on a par with what TSB says about *that there are no unicorns*.

But Lewis is wrong. Truthmaker says each cat is a bit of the world that makes *that there is a cat* true. In this way, each cat explains the truth of *that there is a cat*. This is significantly more than what global TSB says about *that there are no unicorns*. For global TSB does not offer any part of being to explain that truth.

Global TSB says only that *that there are no unicorns* is true because there are no unicorns. As far as TSB is concerned, this absence of unicorns is not something that

exists. Nor is it an entity's having a property. This absence is no part of being at all.

Global TSB allows that there is literally nothing to explain the truth of *that there are no unicorns*.

So I object to Lewis's reply to Martin. But there is more at stake here than that reply. Global TSB allows that literally nothing necessitates or grounds the truth of negative existentials. This shows that TSB fails to accommodate its principal motivation. That is, this shows that global TSB fails to articulate the idea or insight or intuition that truth—all truth—depends on being.

Cheaters fail to respect truth's dependence on being. Thus we can further demonstrate that TSB fails its principal motivation by showing that it is not able to catch cheaters. This further demonstration begins by considering the charge that counterfactuals of freedom are ungrounded. Some philosophers of religion say that God knows truths—and therefore that there are truths—of the following sort:

(2) If Curley had been offered a \$35,000 bribe, he would have freely taken it.

Many object that truths like this are not grounded. They object, that is, that nothing *makes* these truths true. To that objection, Alvin Plantinga has replied that if you want grounding for (2), perhaps, in a weak sense, you can have it. Here is Plantinga:

For what grounds the truth of the counterfactual, we may say, is just that in fact Curley is such that if he had been offered a \$35,000 bribe, he would have freely taken it. (Plantinga, 1985, 374)

Plantinga's 'answer' to the grounding question is but a triviality: if the relevant counterfactual is true, then it is true because Curley would have freely accepted the

bribe.<sup>5</sup> Plantinga could even embellish his answer with the claim that worlds alike with respect to what Curly would do are alike with respect to his freely accepting the bribe.

Plantinga's answer is not much of an answer, as he himself says. Why, even a cheater could offer that answer. TSB is supposed to catch cheaters. So TSB should have the resources to object to the sort of 'grounding' that even a cheater could offer. But global TSB does not. This is because, *with respect to dependence on being*, what global TSB says about negative existentials is exactly like what Plantinga says about counterfactuals of freedom. So any global TSBer who objects to Plantinga here invokes an unprincipled double standard.

Global TSBers might reply that a negative existential *denies* the existence of something. So there does not seem to *be* something (or some way things *are*) that a negative existential is about. Thus, they might argue, TSB rightly releases negative existentials from the requirement that existing things (or those things being a certain way) ground their truth—while rightly refusing to release any other truths. Thus, these TSBers conclude, TSB's treating negative existentials differently from the rest is principled and what we should expect from the correct account of truth's dependence on being.

This argument is just special pleading. But for special pleading, the reasoning behind this argument would release counterfactuals of freedom from the demand for grounding in what there is and how it is. For *counterfactuals* of freedom are not about any *actual* action (or feature) of an entity. So there does not seem to *be* something (or some way things *are*) that a counterfactual is about. In this way, the reasoning behind the

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<sup>5</sup> I read Plantinga as denying that a truth must substantively depend on being. My reading is supported by Plantinga's remark: 'It seems to me much clearer that at least some counterfactuals of freedom are possibly true than that the truth of propositions must, in general, be grounded...' (1985, 374).

preceding paragraph's defense of TSB suggests that the truth of counterfactuals need not supervene on the actual features of entities.

To return to the main line of argument, TSB taken as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience tells us that some actual thing has a property that absolutely guarantees the truth of *that there are no unicorns*. Perhaps this will involve the property is *being such that there are no unicorns*. Or it could involve *being such that there is nothing more in the universe* had by the sum of all entities. Or it could be some other 'nothing more' or 'totaling' property that does crucial work here.

But however exactly the details are worked out, worldwide local TSB (unlike global TSB) goes beyond the triviality that *that there are no unicorns* is true because there are no unicorns. This allows worldwide local TSB (unlike global TSB) to say that all truth depends on being. For this reason, worldwide local TSB (unlike global TSB) can catch cheaters in a principled way. Relatedly, worldwide local TSB (unlike global TSB) does no special pleading on behalf of negative existentials. Defenders of TSB should take it as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience, rather than of global supervenience.

*Reason Three: TSB is supposed to articulate truth's dependence on the world, not its dependence on 'possible worlds'*

Assume that possible worlds are maximal abstract propositions and that a world's *being actual* is nothing other than its *being true*.<sup>6</sup> For all p, p is 'true in' a possible world w just in case, necessarily, if w is actual (that is, true), then p is true. And so to be true in all possible worlds of a certain sort K just is to be true if any world of sort K were true.

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<sup>6</sup> This 'third reason' can be easily modified to show that global TSB taken in terms of a *presentist-friendly* account of possible worlds fails to articulate truth's dependence on being.

Therefore, for p to be true in every K-world just is for p to be *entailed by* each of those K-worlds.

Let the K-worlds be those worlds like the actual world with respect to what exists and what properties are exemplified. That is, no matter which K-world were actual (true), all and only the things that actually exist would exist and all and only the properties that are actually exemplified would be exemplified. Then the claim that each and every truth globally supervenes on what exists and what properties are exemplified is just another way of saying the following. Each truth is entailed by every proposition that is a K-world.<sup>7</sup> Global TSB is a claim about *entailment*.

Global TSB is a claim about which abstract propositions entail each and every truth. This shows that global TSB does not articulate the idea that truth depends on being. For the idea that every truth *depends on being* is not the idea that every truth *is entailed by propositions of a certain sort*. Again, TSB is not the right sort of claim to accommodate its principal motivation, that of articulating the substantive way that truth depends on what there is and what it is like.

This objection to global TSB does not require worlds to be propositions. It requires only that worlds be abstract representations of some sort or other. For the idea that each truth depends on being is not the idea that each truth is implied by (or included in or somehow itself represented by) an abstract representation of some particular sort. Those who look to the ontology of possible worlds as a way to sidestep this objection must abandon the idea that worlds are abstract representations altogether. They must, instead, follow Lewis and say that possible worlds are concrete universes.

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<sup>7</sup> If no two possible worlds can be exactly alike with respect to what is 'true in them,' then global TSB implies that there is only one K-world.

I do not say that global TSB is totally irrelevant to truth's dependence on being. For suppose both that presentism is false and that there are the appropriate totality properties or negative properties. Then a truth globally supervenes if and only if it locally supervenes on everything that exists and all the properties that are exemplified. Thus it is arguable that global TSB—the claim each truth is entailed by every K-world—is a *direct result* of truth's dependence on being. But even if global TSB is a result of that dependence, we ought to move beyond global TSB and articulate that dependence itself. For it is the dependence of truth on being, rather than one of its sundry results, that TSB was supposed to articulate.

Truth's dependence on being arguably results in global TSB. In defending this, I glossed that dependence as each and every truth's locally supervening on all the objects that exist and all the properties and relations that they exemplify. This gloss is nothing other than worldwide local TSB. And so worldwide local TSB seems the best way to take the dependence of truth on being, especially if we want that dependence to lead directly to global TSB. Thus we have our third and final reason that the TSBer should take worldwide local TSB, rather than global TSB, to articulate truth's dependence on being.

I know of nowhere in the literature where global supervenience is distinguished from worldwide local supervenience. But the distinction is important. For example, worldwide local TSB straightforwardly gives rise to the charge that presentism cheats; global TSB does not. Moreover, worldwide local TSB says that negative existentials must be substantively grounded in being; global TSB does not. And worldwide local TSB is fundamentally a claim about the relation between truths and the world's objects and properties; global TSB is fundamentally a claim about entailment or some other relation

between an abstract representation and a truth-bearer. Most importantly, only as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience does TSB have a shot at articulating truth's dependence on being.

#### **IV. TSB's Advantages Reconsidered**

##### *Advantage One*

Even given its new 'worldwide local supervenience' form, TSB is distinct from Truthmaker. Proof: TSB retains its first advantage. Truthmaker says that, for each and every truth, there is something or other whose mere existence necessitates that truth. Suppose, for example, that *that Fido is brown* is true. Then Truthmaker insists on something like the state of affairs of *Fido's being brown*, which state must have both Fido and *being brown* as essential constituents.

TSB insists on nothing like this. When it comes to the truth of *that Fido is brown*, TSB requires no more than that Fido exists and has (contingently or otherwise) the property of *being brown*. For then that truth locally supervenes what entities exist and all the non-suspicious properties those entities have.

##### *Advantage Two*

Truthmaker requires that a true negative existential be made true by the positive existence of something. But that seems wrong. Taken as a thesis of global supervenience, TSB has none of Truthmaker's awkward commitments regarding negative existentials.

But this is because global TSB has no (non-trivial) commitments at all regarding negative existentials.

We have seen that TSB should be recast as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience. Thus recast it says something substantive about negative existentials. TSB says that a negative existential is made true by the positive existence of some entity (or entities) and the having some property (or properties). This is no more plausible than Truthmaker's claim that a negative existential is made true by the positive existence of some entity.

### *Advantage Three*

Truthmaker implies that one cannot simply 'remove' an entity from a possible world. Whenever one removes one entity, one must 'add' another, namely, the truthmaker for the claim that the aforementioned entity does not exist. But, in objection to Truthmaker, it certainly seems that two possible worlds might differ only in that one has fewer entities than the other. As we saw above, TSB taken globally allows that worlds so differ, and thus enjoys an advantage over Truthmaker.

World  $W_1$  includes  $X$ . It seems that there should be another world that differs from  $W_1$  only in that that world does not include  $X$  (and  $X$ 's parts, etc.). But TSB—taken as a thesis of worldwide local supervenience—implies that there is no such world. For let  $W_2$  be a world in which  $X$  does not exist. So, in  $W_2$ , it is true that  $X$  does not exist. According to TSB, either something exists or something has a property in  $W_2$ , the existence or having of which necessitates *that  $X$  does not exist*. That something cannot exist in  $W_1$  and that property cannot be exemplified in  $W_1$  because *that  $X$  does not exist* is

false in  $W_1$ . Thus, given TSB, it cannot be that the *only* difference between  $W_1$  and  $W_2$  is that X (and X's parts, etc.) exists in one but not in the other.

According to TSB, we can remove X only by replacing it either with a new object or the exemplification of a new property. The claim that removing an entity results in (for example) the exemplification of a new property is no better than the claim that removing an entity results in (for example) the existence of a new state of affairs. And so TSB forfeits its third advantage over Truthmaker.

## V. TSB and Truthmaker

TSB says that every truth has a worldwide local supervenience base. Thus TSB says that every truth has positive ontological implications. TSB's vision of the world is thus very much like that of Truthmaker, which says that every truth is about the positive existence of this and that. Truthmaker and TSB are variations on the same misguided theme.

TSB says that every truth locally supervenes on things having properties. If whenever a thing has a property there is a corresponding state of affairs of that thing's having that property, then a local supervenience base always implies a truthmaker. With this in mind, suppose that if x is F, then there is the state of *x's being F*. (And suppose that if x stands in R to y, then there is the state of *x's standing in R to y*; and so on.) And suppose that a state has its constituents essentially. Then there is no substantial difference between Truthmaker and TSB. Any difference between Truthmaker and TSB turns on the

rarefied question of the existence and essences of states of affairs. But for their implications regarding this esoteric question, Truthmaker and TSB are exactly alike.

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