

Idealism and the Identity of Truth

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Hofweber's Idealism

Ineffability

What's the relationship between facts and thoughts?

- Realist answer: The forms of our thoughts are shaped to fit the forms of the facts
- Idealist answer: The forms of the facts are shaped to fit the forms of our thoughts.

We might define structurally ineffable facts as facts whose forms we cannot represent in thought.

Two Readings of Natural Language Quantification

- External Reading: 'There is something such that $F(it)$ ' is true iff something in the domain satisfies the condition expressed by $F(...)$
- Internal Reading: 'There is something such that $F(it)$ ' is equivalent to the big (perhaps infinite) disjunction of all the instances of $F(x)$ in our language (denoted as $\bigvee_x F(x)$).

i.e. Existential claims

Consider the following inference:

- (1) A believes that snow is white.
- (2) B believes that snow is white.
- (3) Therefore, there is something which A and B both believe.

Hofweber suggests that we can account for its validity if we consider the internal reading of (3) even though the external reading of (3) must be abandoned if we reject the standard view.

Are those who reject the standard view responsible for explaining the validity of this inference (for they must simply reject this inference as invalid)?

Hofweber generalises this point by stating that all quantification over propositions must be given the internal reading.

Hofweber's Argument

Idealism implies that it is in principle impossible for there to be structurally ineffable facts. Realism implies the opposite: it is in principle possible for there to be structurally ineffable facts.

Hofweber rejects the standard view: 'that-' clauses are singular terms, which refers to propositions.

Now consider the statement *There is a structurally ineffable fact*. The internal-reading paraphrase of this statement is \bigvee_p (Our forms

of thought cannot represent that p). But each disjunct is an English sentence and thus is representable by our forms of thought. So the statement is false and idealism is true.

Trueman's Reply

Trueman suggests that (3) should be read as $\exists p(A \text{ and } B \text{ believe that } p)$. Given this reading, the statement about the ineffable facts can be paraphrased as *There is a way for the world to be, such that our forms of thought cannot represent that the world is that way*. But there seems nothing wrong about claiming this.

The (Alleged) Advantage of the Higher-Order Reading

English Ineffability: Some fact cannot be expressed in present-day English.

The higher-order reading is clearly preferable than the internal reading to account for the truth of English Ineffability.

The Prenective View

In *[A] believes that [snow is white]*: ' x believes that p ' is called a prenective.

Rather than Prior's version of the prenective view in which the prenective is ' x believes that p ', Trueman's version states that the prenective is ' x believes p '. The difference is that Trueman's version treats 'that snow is white' as a syntactic unit (specifically, a sentence), whereas Prior's version doesn't treat 'that snow is white' as a syntactic unit.

The prenective view offers an account of the attitude reports without committing to the standard view. 'That'-clauses don't stand for objects but specify the contents of beliefs.

The Identity Theory of Truth

The prenective view leads to a direct realism of about belief.

(T) x has a true belief $\iff \exists p(x \text{ believes that } p, \text{ and } p)$

Consider the following two questions we might ask about someone's belief:

- (i) What does x believe?
- (ii) How must the world be for x 's belief to be true?

If we read (T) in accordance with the Standard View, then we will give these questions different answers: we will answer (i) by referring to a proposition with a singular term, 'that p '; we will answer (ii)

A Possible Question: But what is the standard view indeed? (At least) according to Trueman's paraphrase, the standard view is that 'that'-clauses (i) are singular terms and (ii) refer to propositions. (i) and (ii) appear to be the same in a first-order setting but different in a higher-order setting since propositions are not (first-order) objects in a higher-order setting (although 'refer' in (ii) might be an inappropriate word in this case'). In Trueman's words, the standard view might be paraphrased as '*That'-clauses don't refer to ways for the world to be.*

Reply: Trueman's idea, however, is that 'that'-clauses don't refer at all. By 'singular terms', he means everything that refers. What is quantified is not 'something' (like a proposition), but rather 'nothing'. These clauses only *say* certain ways for the world to be.

But this seems to be strange given that higher-order semantics take p (things of type t which being quantified) as members of a set. But it appears that members of sets must be 'something'.

by expressing a way for the world to be with a whole a sentence, 'p'. This is the difference between referring to the proposition that Sharon is funny, and actually saying that Sharon is funny. But if we read (T) in accordance with the Prenective View, then we will give (i) and (ii) exactly the same answer. On the Prenective View, 'that p' is not a term referring to a proposition. There is no semantic difference between 'that p' and 'p': they both simply express ways for the world to be.