

Truthmakers for Epistemicism

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When you talk about vagueness, you often talk about truth. Most stances on vagueness and attitudes towards the related paradox of the sorites say something about truth. Degreeists, for instance, suggest our truth is not 2-valued but many-valued. The connection between vagueness and truth is apparent. How about the connection to its source — what makes a truth true — also known as truthmakers? Yes, at least for Sorensen, who appeals to this connection for his version of epistemicism [3]. According to his truthmaker gap epistemicism, borderline cases are true but ungrounded sentences: They are true but have no truthmaker at all.

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This paper explores a better way of employing truthmaker for epistemicism in vagueness debate. My goal is two-fold. The first sub-goal is to suggest a truthmaker semantics that not only solves the sorites but also captures higher-order vagueness. Here come two formal notions playing significant roles: partial truthmakers and abundant truthmakers. A partial truthmaker is a piece of fact that contributes to a truth not solely but with other facts ("not enough" truthmaker, so to speak). An abundant truthmaker also contributes to a truth but other facts independent of that may do as well (i.e. "too much" truthmaker). Given these formal tools, you can analyze the paradox. The sorites arises because we mistake a certain kind of facts (such as the number of hairs) as the necessary and sufficient (i.e. non-partial and non-abundant) factor determining the truth value. You may need extra facts more than the number of hair when evaluating the baldness of the person in question. In other cases, you may determine the truth value with no need of knowing the number of hair. This framework also allows higher-order vagueness. The core idea is this. The excess of facts corresponds to the order of vagueness. The more extra facts needed to determine the truth value, the higher-order its vagueness is. Say,

one vague statement requires 3 facts to determine its truth-value, then the order of the vagueness is higher than one with 2 facts. Similarly, the more abundant truthmakers are available, the higher-order its vagueness is.

The second task is to offer a truthmaker reading of the margin for error principle, which plays a significant role in epistemicism [4]. Epistemicists often ascribe the sorites paradox to our inexact knowledge of things in question (the number of people in a stadium etc.) I highlight the matching between inexact knowledge and inexact truthmakers [1]. Interestingly, we can reach a new position of epistemicism from the idea of inexact truthmakers. Epistemicists so far have considered the lack of truthmakers. By inexact, however, theorists mean an abundance of truthmakers. The resulted picture describes a reasonable cognitive situation where too much information, although each is correct, confuses our judgment.

(講演の言語は日本語をもちいる。ただし、配布資料は英語の使用を予定。This talk will be given in the Japanese language, though handouts will be in English.)

References

- [1] Kit Fine. "Truthmaker Semantics". In: *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Ed. by Bob Hale, Crispin Wright, and Alexander Miller. 2nd ed. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2017, pp. 556–577. DOI: 10.1002/9781118972090.ch22.
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- [3] Roy Sorensen. *Vagueness and Contradiction*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- [4] Timothy Williamson. *Vagueness*. Routledge, 1994.