Meaningfulness without propositions

Speakers judge sentences such as (1) to be (i) meaningful, (ii) truth-apt, and (iii) sometimes true.

(1) Sherlock Holmes is clever.

These intuitions are sometimes used to adjudicate between theories of the semantic content of (1). For example, the theory that (1) expresses the *gappy proposition* ⟨_, being a philosopher⟩ is supposed to account for (i) and (ii).

David Braun has argued that (i) is something that must be accounted for and cannot be in a framework that does not assign a proposition to (1) (Braun 1993; Braun 2005). I will present a different strategy.

Speakers have the intuition that (1) is meaningful. Intuitions like this do not track possession of propositional content. They track *grammaticality* in the sense this concept is used in generative grammar.

The view has various advantages. It is compatible with a very austere form of Russellianism without requiring gappy propositions or *ficta*. It vindicates speaker intuitions of meaningfulness. And, it offers a response to problems about the semantics of proper names in fiction that connects to independently motivated ideas connecting grammaticality and meaningfulness. In particular, this proposal develops from ideas presented by Elisabeth Camp, Ofra Magidor, and Paul Pietroski (Camp 2004; Magidor 2009; Pietroski 2005).

References

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