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truthmaker As ARISTOTLE points out in the *Categories* (14*b*, 15-22), a thing can, just by existing, make a claim true. For example, *that Fido exists* is true; and Fido the dog, just by existing, makes this true. Quite a few philosophers say that *every* true claim is relevantly like *that Fido exists*. That is, WILLIAM P. ALSTON (1996, p. 52), DAVID ARMSTRONG (1997; 2004), KIT FINE (1982, p. 69), E. J. LOWE (1998, p. 245), C. B. MARTIN (see Armstrong, 1989), and others have said that, for each true claim, there is something or other that, simply by existing, makes that claim true.

Let *Truthmaker* be the thesis that, for each true claim, there is something or other that—just by existing—makes that claim true. Truthmaker theorists do not typically propose a full account of what it is to 'make' a claim true. But most agree that *necessitating* must be, at the very least, part of any such account (Armstrong, 2004, pp. 6-7; Fine, 1982, p. 69; Molnar, 2000, p. 84; Fox, 1987, p. 189; Smith, 1999, p. 276). So let us assume that *x* makes *p* true only if, necessarily, if *x* exists, then *p* is true. And if *x* does make *p* true, then *x* is *p*'s 'truthmaker'.

Why endorse Truthmaker? One fairly common answer is that Truthmaker is identical with the correspondence THEORY OF TRUTH (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 128-131; 2004, pp. 16-17; Bigelow, 1988, p. 122; Molnar, 2000, p. 85). I think that this answer is mistaken (Merricks, 2007, pp. 14-16). And, more importantly, any version of the correspondence theory that even *prima facie* seems to be equivalent to Truthmaker will be no less controversial than Truthmaker itself. So let us turn to another reason to endorse Truthmaker, a reason that begins with the idea that a philosophical theory goes astray when it endorses 'ungrounded' truths.

Consider, for example, GILBERT RYLE's account of DISPOSITIONS. According to Ryle (1949, p. 43), glass *G*'s being fragile is nothing other than the following dispositional conditional's being true: if G were struck, then G would shatter. Note that, according to Ryle, nothing *makes* that conditional true; nothing *grounds* it; it *just is* true. Many think that Truthmaker nicely articulates a problem with Ryle's account: that account is committed to true subjunctive conditionals that lack truthmakers, but every truth must have a truthmaker (Armstrong, 2004, pp. 2-3; Martin, 1994).

More generally, Truthmaker articulates what many find objectionable about a variety of philosophical theories. Indeed, Theodore Sider goes so far as to say that 'catching cheaters'—that is, undermining theories committed to ungrounded truths—is the whole point of Truthmaker (2001, p. 40). In addition to Ryle's theory of dispositions, Truthmaker has purported to 'catch' presentism in the philosophy of TIME (Armstrong, 2004, Ch 11; Sider, 2001, pp. 35-42; Tooley, 1997, pp. 234-40), Molinism in the philosophy of religion (Adams, 1977), and non-reductive theories of MODALITY (Sider, 2001, pp. 40-41), among others.

On the one hand, Truthmaker's ability to articulate what seems, to various philosophers, to be wrong with such theories gives those philosophers a reason to endorse Truthmaker. On the other hand, if Truthmaker rules out a philosophical theory, then defenders of that theory thereby have a reason to reject Truthmaker.

And one need not endorse a controversial theory such as Ryle's account of dispositions to have doubts about Truthmaker. One need only endorse contingent predications. For example, *that Fido is brown* is true. Because Fido is contingently brown, Fido does not, by his mere existence, necessitate that truth. So Fido—even if he is brown—cannot be that truth's

truthmaker. At first glance, it seems that nothing, by its mere existence, necessitates that truth; and if nothing necessitates that truth, then that truth is a counterexample to Truthmaker.

Truthmaker theorists could reply that there is a state of affairs (or event or Russellian fact) of Fido's exemplifying *being brown*, which has its constituents essentially (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 116-19). Such a state would necessitate, by its mere existence, *that Fido is brown*, and so might be that truth's truthmaker. Of course, some have doubts about states of affairs, and about every other sort of entity that might do the truthmaking work here; they should therefore have doubts about Truthmaker.

And consider negative existentials. For example, *that hobbits do not exist* is true. Moreover, there does not seem to be some *x* such that *x*, by its mere existence, necessitates the truth of *that hobbits do not exist*. So, contrary to Truthmaker, that truth seems to lack a truthmaker. Of course, truthmaker theorists could posit a (controversial) truthmaker. For example, they could say that *that hobbits do not exist* is made true by the state of affairs of the universe's exemplifying *containing no hobbits*. But I doubt that there really is any such state of affairs. Moreover, and *contra* Truthmaker, it does not seem that the truth of *that hobbits do not exist* requires there to be a state of affairs of the universe's exemplifying some special property. Instead, it seems to require only that there be no hobbits.

In light of this, some might amend Truthmaker to say that all truths *except negative existentials* have truthmakers (cf. Mulligan, Simons, and Smith, 1984, p. 315; Smith, 1999, p. 285). There are a number of reasons that truthmaker theorists should not ratchet back Truthmaker in this way (see Merricks, 2007, Ch 3). Here I note just one. The only reason thus to ratchet back Truthmaker is that true negative existentials do not seem to have truthmakers. This sets a damaging precedent, at least if Truthmaker is intended to catch cheaters. For alleged

cheaters can likewise say, when faced with their own apparently truthmakerless truths, that Truthmaker must be ratcheted back to exempt those truths as well. One's final and fully ratcheted back version of Truthmaker would then reflect one's sundry philosophical commitments. Such a version of Truthmaker would be nothing like a philosophically neutral litmus test that theories must pass, lest they cheat.

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