DEPTH

Ted Sider
Metaphysical Structure

Is question X about "the world out there", or really just about us?

1. Hidden expressivism

Suppose you're an expressivist, but a sophisticated one. E.g. you'll say:

- Moral sentences can be true ("'Killing is wrong' is true" boils down to "Killing is wrong")

- There are moral facts ("it's a fact that it's wrong to kill" boils down to "Killing is wrong")

- There are moral properties ("killing has the property of being wrong" boils down to "Killing is wrong"

In what does your antirealism consist?

2. Shallow questions

I'm interested in a different way that questions can fail to be "worldly". The following questions are not "substantive":

- Is Robinson Crusoe a bachelor?

- Is a water glass a cup?

- Is a protrusion from the floor of a deep ocean, whose tip is a tiny island, is a mountain (Hawthorne, 2006, vii.)

- Is "some nonsense made of sour green apple liqueur", served in a V-shaped glass, a martini? (Bennett, 2009)

Intuitively, these questions are in some sense, shallow, nonsubstantive, nonobjective, conventional, merely verbal—unlike the question of whether electrons repel one another, which is deep, substantive, objective, nonconventional, about the world rather than about language.

3. Misdiagnoses of the shallowness

- Mind-dependent?

- About words or concepts?

- Has no (determinate) answer?

4. Shallowness and naturalness

My approach to substantivity: The question of whether the protrusion is a mountain is nonsubstantive (in at least one useful sense of 'nonsubstantive' because i) there are multiple semantic candidates for the crucial term (e.g., 'mountain'); ii) each opposing view comes out true on some candidate; iii) none of the candidates are fundamental

Intuitively: if one candidate is the *correct* candidate, that is only because it fits our linguistic community's use of the crucial term better than the other candidates. Given what *we* mean by the term, there may be an answer to the question, but we could just as easily have meant something else.

Nonsubstantive question   *Substantive question*

$$Q \quad \left.\begin{array}{l} p_1 \\ p_2 \\ p_3 \\ p_4 \\ p_5 \end{array}\right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{equally} \\ \text{joint-carving} \\ \text{candidates} \end{array} \qquad Q \quad \left.\begin{array}{l} p_1 \\ p_2 \\ \boldsymbol{p} \\ p_4 \\ p_5 \end{array}\right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{Unequally} \\ \text{joint-carving} \\ \text{candidates} \end{array}$$

5. Conventionality

Metaphysically shallow + an arbitrary conceptual choice.

We arbitrarily chose one of various (equally joint-carving) semantic values, all of which "play the same linguistic role". This sort of conventionality is distinct from both the banal conventionality of all language, and also the sort of conventionality in statements *about* conventions.

6. Subjectivity

Metaphysically shallow + the chosen semantic candidate reflects something important about us (e.g., our values)

Simple Expressivism By uttering 'x is beautiful', a speaker communicates no proposition, but rather gives expression to a certain positive aesthetic attitude, A, to x

Simple Indexicalism By uttering 'x is beautiful', a speaker, S, communicates the proposition that **S bears attitude A to x**

Realist Projectivism By uttering 'x is beautiful', a speaker, S, communicates the proposition that **x is P**, where P is a certain physical property that is the linguistic meaning of the predicate 'is beautiful' in S's language; P is the linguistic meaning of 'is beautiful' because it reflects the aesthetic standards of S's linguistic community

7. Metaphysical vs. conceptual depth

Conceptual (horizontal) depth: despite metaphysical shallowness, the term in question is important to us, and is deeply embedded in our conceptual scheme; adjusting to an alternate candidate would require many other simultaneous changes.

8. Relativity of substantivity

References

Bennett, Karen (2009). "Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology." In David Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hawthorne, John (2006). *Metaphysical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.