

The Grounds for the Model-theoretic Account of the Logical Properties

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Abstract Quantificational accounts of logical truth and logical consequence aim to reduce these modal concepts to the nonmodal one of generality. A logical truth, for example, is said to be an instance of a “maximally general” statement, a statement whose terms other than variables are “logical constants.” These accounts used to be the objects of severe criticism by philosophers like Ramsey and Wittgenstein. In recent work, Etchemendy has claimed that the currently standard model-theoretic account of the logical properties is a quantificational account and that it fails for reasons similar to the ones provided by Ramsey and Wittgenstein. He claims that it would fail even if it were propped up by a sensible account of what makes a term a logical constant. In this paper I examine to what extent the model-theoretic account is a quantificational one, and I defend it against Etchemendy’s criticisms.

1 In earlier days of analytic philosophy, Frege and Russell defended an account of the logical properties (*logical truth* and *logical consequence*) that was soon severely criticized (and discredited, I would dare to say) by Wittgenstein and Ramsey.

Frege and Russell focused mainly on logical truth; they would have analyzed logical consequence in terms of logical truth. A logical truth, according to them, is either a plain truth characterized by being maximally general, or an instance thereof. This maximal generality lies in the fact that the only terms other than variables in a maximally general sentence (or *thought*, or *proposition*) are “logical constants”: *and*, *or*, *not*, *for all*, etc.

This explanation has some intuitive plausibility to it. It seems that the truth of ‘I went to the movies yesterday or I did not’ is somehow general, independent of the facts about my visits to movie theaters. And it has the virtues of conceptual *reduction*: we eliminate a difficult modality (logical truth) in favor of something we understand much better: generality. But as Wittgenstein and Ramsey pointed out, it does not work. Wittgenstein put it in a characteristically elegant manner: the generality of the logically true sentences, he said, is not *accidental* generality.

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