

PRESUPPOSITION AND ENTAILMENT

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1 In a recent paper¹ Mitchell Ginsberg has argued that in light of certain facts about presupposition the traditional conception of entailment should be modified. It has traditionally been maintained that the following principle holds for entailment:

(I) *If A entails B, then if B is false then A is false.*

But, as Ginsberg points out, it seems pre-analytically clear that, for example, the statement:

(1) Vita, whose husband is a lawyer, is an artist,

entails the statement:

(2) Vita is an artist.

And if (2) is false, it may be the case that (1) is *not* false, since (1) may be truthvalueless due to the falsity of the presupposition that Vita's husband is a lawyer. In general,

“if . . . a given A entails some B such that A has a presupposition P which B does not have, then it will be possible for A to be without truth value (be neither true nor false), for example when P is false, while B might be either true or false.”²

Ginsberg suggests that (I) be replaced by the principle:

(II) *If A entails B, then if B is false then A is not true.*

If this is done, then we can say, for example, that (1) does entail (2), since if (2) is false, (1) will be either false or truthvalueless. As a bonus, Ginsberg argues, we would also be able to accept the principle:

(III) *If A presupposes B, then A entails B,*

a principle which conflicts with the generally accepted principle:

(IV) *If A presupposes B, then if B is false, then A is neither true nor false.*

For example, since (1) presupposes

(3) Vita's husband is a lawyer,

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