Fine on fundamental truth and terms

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Ground seminar

1. Combination and completeness

Fundamental truth (for me): a truth involving only fundamental terms

Combination If sentences $S_1, S_2, \ldots$ are fundamental truths then any true sentence S stated in the vocabulary of $S_1, S_2, \ldots$ is also a fundamental truth

Views that cannot be accommodated given Combination:

1. $\sim P$ is a fundamental truth, but $\sim\sim\sim P$ is not (logical atomism)
2. "Ted weighs 165 pounds" is a nonfundamental truth, deriving from the fundamental truth "body TB weighs 165 pounds"; "Ted has belief b" is a fundamental truth.

Could I accommodate these views by saying that although fundamental truth obeys Combination, *ungrounded* truth does not? No, because I accept:

Completeness Every nonfundamental truth is grounded in fundamental truths

Fine accepts an analogous principle:

Fine-completeness Every (factual) truth that does not hold in reality is grounded in truths that do hold in reality

Thus we each accept that a certain status halts the demand for ground. For me the halting status—fundamental truth—obeys Combination; for Fine, the halting status—holding in reality—needn't obey Combination. And it's what the halting status is that is relevant to accommodating the views.

2. The E- and D-projects

> The E-project is concerned with *saying* what can be said in the most fundamental terms, while the D-project is concerned with *describing* what can be described in the most fundamental terms. We can easily bring out the difference between the two projects with the case of disjunction. I

can say ‘p or q’ and it is not clear that this can be said except by using disjunction or the like. But suppose now that I correctly describe the world by means of the sentence ‘p or q’. Then the use of ‘or’ is dispensable, since I can alternatively describe the world by means of p or q, depending upon which is true. Thus even though ‘or’, or the like, may be indispensable for saying what we can say, it would not appear to be indispensable for describing what we can describe.

References