

## Re: Tautologies and Empirical Truth

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On Thu, 28 Oct 2004 01:50:18 GMT, patty <[pattyNO@SPAMicyberspace.net](mailto:pattyNO@SPAMicyberspace.net)>  
in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:

>Lester Zick wrote:

>> *Tautologies and Empirical Truth*

>> -----

>>

>> *In a frank discussion with Wolf Kirchmeir yesterday concerning whether  
>> tautologies constitute empirical evidence he took occasion to remind  
>> me quite candidly that tautologies are always true. And the moral he  
>> drew from this was that tautological truths can't be empirical because  
>> empirical observations are always problematic and tautologies are not.*

>>

>> *Then I got to pondering. It seemed a shame to have something that was  
>> always true and not be able to draw some useful information from it.  
>> Here was this beacon of universal truth, and we had no use for it. I  
>> understood that philosophers and scientists consider tautologies  
>> useless despite their universal truth. However, I decided that the  
>> final chapter on usefulness of the tautology had yet to be written.*

>>

>> *Let's suppose we have a tautology, any tautology. And we recognize the  
>> universal truth of that tautology. What conclusions can we draw from  
>> this?*

>>

>> *If a tautology is universally true, alternatives to the tautology  
>> cannot be true and must be universally false. And, further, this  
>> must be true of all tautologies.*

>>

>> *Consequently, everything including empirical evidence represents a  
>> tautology or it cannot be true and must be false.*

>>

>> *Thus any empirical observation which is problematic must represent  
>> part of a tautology. For example, three inches and not three inches or  
>> blue and not blue. These are empirical observations and form parts of  
>> tautologies or they cannot be problematic and must be false.*

>>

>> *In point of fact each part of a tautology is an empirical observation,  
>> and this is what we mean by an empirical observation despite the*

>> *conventional interpretation of empirical observations as inherently  
>> problematic.*

>>

>> *Further each part of the tautology is subject to evaluation either in  
>> terms of problematic correctness or in terms of self contradiction. If  
>> either part of a tautology is self contradictory, it must be false and  
>> the other part must be universally true whether empirical in  
>> conventional problematic terms or not.*

>>

>> *In other words, even though tautologies in themselves are not  
>> problematic and cannot represent empirical observations, the reverse  
>> is not true and empirical observations can and do represent parts of  
>> tautologies.*

>>

>

>*Well for some interpretation of your words, i think you are skirting  
>dangerously close to rediscovering a bit of wisdom from an eminent 20th  
>century philosopher.*

>

>*This is the way i see it ...*

>

>*A truth is stated from some web of belief. Outside of that web it may,  
>or may not be true. The question is whether some agent in the web must  
>sense something outside of the web to determine a truth. For example a  
>person in the web of literate English speakers would say it true that a  
>bachelor is unmarried and male. No one in that web needs to check  
>outside of that web to be quite confident that truth applies in all  
>cases – no matter what.*

>

>*But outside of that web (literate English speakers) this may not be the  
>case. Let me set a scene. There was an attractive widow and her young  
>daughter named Bernice. The widow was seeking a new husband. Frequently  
>in the presence of Bernice she would ask a man, "Are you a bachelor?"  
>and if he answered yes, she would gladly accept his advances; otherwise  
>she would sternly rebuff him. Now occasionally Bernice would mingle  
>with these same men in the market and on occasion she would be  
>introduced to their wives. Now you can see that from Bernice's web of  
>belief a bachelor may be married or not, you must ask him to find out.*

Yeah, that'll really do a lot of good.

>*So we see, that whether a truth is analytic or synthetic is totally  
>dependent on your web of belief. Or in your words "even though  
>tautologies in themselves are not contingent and cannot represent  
>empirical observations, the reverse is not true and empirical  
>observations can and do represent parts of a web of belief." ... but i  
>have substituted "contingent" for your "problematic" and "web of belief"  
>for your use of "tautology".*

patty, you really need to take that web of belief back to the church  
where you bought it and get a refund. It doesn't matter where ideas

sci.cognitive: Re: Tautologies and Empirical Truth

originate. It matters where they wind up through demonstration.

Problematic means contingent.

Regards – Lester