

A FURTHER NOTE ON A PROOF BY SOMMERS

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In an earlier paper⁽¹⁾ I claimed (contra F. Sommers⁽²⁾) that «There seems to be no sound reason against taking ‘some A is A’ to be a logical truth.» Sommers’ argument against the logical truth of ‘some A is A’ was this:

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|----------------------------|---------|
| 1. some A and B is A and B | premise |
| 2. some A and B is B | from 1 |
| 3. some A is B | from 2 |

Since 3 is derived from 1 and since 3 is clearly not a logical truth, 1 cannot be a logical truth. Now 1 is an instance of ‘some A is A’. So ‘some A is A’ is not a logical truth.

I attacked this proof by showing that 3 does not follow from 2. For example, what is round and square is round, but no square is round. Unfortunately, I went on to suggest that since Sommers’ argument will not work there is no reason to deny the status of logical truth to any sentence of the form ‘some A is A’. This is surely wrong. Indeed, consider the following:

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|----------------------------|---------|
| 1. some A and B is A and B | premise |
| 2. some A and B is B | from 1 |
| 3.1 some B is A and B | from 2 |

While 3 does not follow from 2, 3.1 does (by simple conversion). Since 3.1 is not a logical truth, neither 2 nor 1 are logical truths. But 1 is an instance of ‘some A is A’. So ‘some A is A’ is *not* a logical truth. Such sentences may (with Leibniz and Sommers) be used as the suppressed premises of weakened inferences, but (contra Lukasiewicz) they are not axiomatic.

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NOTES

- (¹) «Notes on the new syllogistic», *Logique et Analyse*, 85-86 (1979).
(²) «Distribution matters», *Mind*, 84 (1975).