

Book Review

Yael Cohen. *Semantic Truth Theories*. Translated by Mark Steiner and Naomi Goldblum. The Magnus Press, Jerusalem, 1994.

Yael Cohen addresses several topics: presupposition, the Raven Paradox, negation, and truth. There is a unifying theme: Cohen's goal is to develop an interpreted formal language in which it can be claimed that certain sentences are truth valueless; she also hoped to deepen our understanding of connections between truth, presupposition, and relevance. On the formal side, Cohen begins with Kripke's idea that the truth predicate need not be completely defined—the model allows that some sentences can be neither true nor false. She then seeks to improve on Kripke's model by adding an “exclusive” negation which is used to provide (some of the expressibility) that “neither true nor false” provides. As she puts it:

An interpreted language in Kripke's sense which contains its own truth predicate is not the same as a natural language including its truth predicate, if only because: (a) the fixed point is defined in a set theoretic metalanguage rather than the language itself; and (b) there are assertions about the object-language that cannot be interpreted in the interpreted object-language. Thus, for example, a sentence such as (1):

(1) is false.

is not true in the object-language, in the sense that there is no fixed point with respect to which it is true, yet the interpretation given to the truth predicate and to the negation operator prevents us from saying this in the interpreted language.

As Kripke says, “The ghost of the Tarski hierarchy is still with us.” (p. 44)

Hence Cohen's goal is to provide *within* the object language a way of saying that sentences are neither true nor false. Cases she has in mind are not just paradoxical and related sentences that are self-referential and contain ‘true’ and/or ‘false’; but also sentences that have been said to be neither true nor false because they have—in a given context—a false presupposition (e.g., ‘All of John's children are asleep’ when said in a context where the person referred to by ‘John’ has no children). To this end Cohen includes in her formal system two negations.

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