

Book Review

Gupta, A. and N. Belnap, *The Revision Theory of Truth*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993.

1 Introduction Gupta and Belnap's new book on the Liar and related paradoxes, *The Revision Theory of Truth*, is a tour de force of technical expertise and philosophical profundity. It is indispensable for all who are interested in the current state of philosophical work on these ancient puzzles. Combining mathematical elegance with pellucid prose, the authors summarize important progress made in recent years (by Kripke, Woodruff, McGee and the authors, among others) in the use of the mathematical theory of fixed points in studying the paradoxes and contribute to further progress in this field by proposing a novel approach and by powerfully illuminating related problems of philosophical methodology. They offer penetrating criticisms of the major families of existing approaches to the Liar, and they develop a novel approach, claiming that truth is a *circular* concept, by which they mean that the semantic significance of truth can be wholly captured by means of a circular definition, consisting of the class of trivial biconditionals identified originally by Alfred Tarski. In my opinion, there are compelling reasons for rejecting this approach, reasons rooted deeply in the philosophical tradition, but my thinking about these matters has been profoundly affected by reading this superb book.

A considerable part of the book is devoted to describing and criticizing alternative theories of semantic paradox, especially the inconsistency view of Tarski and Chihara [5] and the fixed-point approach (based on the seminal paper by Kripke [11]), but the authors have clearly given higher priority to presenting their own novel approach, which consists of the conjecture that (1) the intension of truth is wholly determined by the Tarski biconditionals, and that (2) these biconditionals constitute a circular definition of the concept of truth. The authors put forward the startling claim that, contrary to the whole philosophical tradition, circularity in definition is not necessarily a defect. They develop several viable semantic and proof theories for circularly defined expressions and demonstrate that the introduction of such circular definitions can (much as can inductive definitions) extend the expressiveness of a language. They apply this theory to a number of philosophical problems unrelated to semantic paradox, including the apparently intertwined identity conditions for place

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