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AN ALTERNATIVE TO BRIAN SKYRMS' APPROACH TO THE LIAR

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1 In a recent paper[1] Brian Skyrms has formulated an approach to the Liar paradox for a trivalent language which has the following characteristics:

a) substitution of identicals is valid in general only in the weak sense that it never leads directly from truth to falsehood;[2]
b) "The result of concatenating 'is true' with a quotation-mark name of a sentence is itself either true or false";[3]
c) the language has a "mildly global" truth predicate.[4]

The semantics of Skyrms' language proceeds by first assigning to each sentence of the language a "level" with respect to each model. On the basis of this level-assignment, the atomic sentences are assigned one of three truth values in that model. Molecules are then evaluated by a super-valuation.[5]

Skyrms points out that his model theory is a "conservative one; it makes many more sentences neuter in a model than need be."[6] He also observes that in some cases this conservatism is a defect. He says:[7]

> On the other hand, consider the case in which "$a = Q(\sim Ta)$" and "$b = Q(\sim Ta)$" are both true. My model theory makes not only "Ta" but "Tb" neuter in this case. But here there is no reason why we cannot take "Tb" at face value without risk, in which case it is false. In such cases, it seems to me that the conservatism of the model theory is unfounded.

The intuition expressed in this passage may be put like this. Where T is a truth predicate and a and b are two distinct names with the same denotation, then we shall say that $\ulcorner Ta \urcorner$ and $\ulcorner Tb \urcorner$ are different truth ascriptions *of the same sort*.[8] Skyrms' observation, then, is that truth ascriptions of the same sort need not always have the same truth-value. In some cases, there is no reason not to make the one bivalent (in the example, false) and the other neuter.

Skyrms' approach already incorporates this feature to some extent. Where a is a quotation-functor name, for instance, $\ulcorner Ta \urcorner$ will always be

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