Keith Simmons, *Universality and the Liar An Essay on Truth and the Diagonal Argument*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1993. XII + 229 pp.


Reviewed by

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This book has several interconnected objectives. Firstly, it offers a new solution of the Liar paradox. Secondly, it examines good and bad diagonal arguments. Thirdly, it reminds us of manyold and new solutions of the Liar. Fourthly, it investigates the problem of the universality of our language. These topics are discussed in the following chapters: 1. The Liar paradox; 2. The diagonal argument; 3. The diagonal argument and the Liar, I; 4. The diagonal argument and the Liar, II; 5. A medieval solution to the Liar; 6. The singularity solution to the Liar; 7. A formal account of singularity; 8. Aplications and further singularities; 9. Semantic universality.

Chapter 1 gives a taxonomy of various versions of the Liar as well as proposals for its solution. In particular, Simmons lists solutions via non-standard logics or by introducing hierarchies of types and languages. This chapter also contains a general account of diagonalization and semantic universality. Simmons makes a distinction between *universality* (if something can be said, it can be expressed in a language selected as universal, for example, in natural language), and *semantic universality* (a language is semantically universal if it can say everything about its own semantics). Simmons argues that natural language is semantically universal rather than universal, because probably not every concept is expressible in it.

Chapter 2 offers an analysis of diagonal arguments. The main difference between good and bad diagonal arguments is in their relation to paradoxes: the latter lead to logical paradoxes, but the former do not. In particular, bad diagonal arguments appeal to totalities which are not well-defined; the set of all sets and the set of all sets which are not own elements are examples of such totalities. Chapters 3 and 4 apply the concept of a good diagonal argument to various modern solutions of