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

the Liar, in particular to those offered by Kripke, Herberzger, Gupta, McGee, Feferman, and Rescher and Brandon. Simmons points out various inadequacies hidden in these approaches.

Chapter 5 offers a reconstruction of a medieval solution to the Liar which is derivable from works of Ockham, Burley (also spelled Burleigh), and Pseudo-Scotus. This example is chosen by Simmons for its similarity with his own proposal based on the idea of singularity. This proposal is informally characterized in chapter 6. Simmons rejects Tarski's solution because it leads to a counterintuitive plurality of truth-predicates: '[...] there is in English, a single, context-sensitive truth predicate. And a given use of 'true' applies to all truths, except to certain singularities — sentences to which the given use does not apply truly or falsely' (p. X). Simmons points out that his proposal is also motivated by Gödel's incidental remark that paradoxical sentences are like zero in arithmetic: we should not ascribe logical values to them, just as we cannot divide by zero. Formal details of the singularity proposal are collected in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 9 returns to universality. Simmons argues that the singularity proposal justifies Tarski's claim that natural language is semantically universal.

I find the critical parts of the book excellent. I particular, the arguments against truth-value gap theorists are very instructive. The chapter on the Ockham-Burley-Pseudo-Sherwood solution is also an impressive example of good history of logic — looking at old ideas through modern glasses.

The positive solution proposed by Simmons is less impressive. He seems to believe that there is an absolute solution to the Liar. However, Tarski's diagnosis of the paradox shows that our possibilities are considerably limited. We can either change our logic or do something with the concept of truth or introduce a hierarchy of languages. Every solution has some costs, because in logic, as everywhere, nothing is without a charge. Solutions that involve changing logic or modifying the concept of truth lead to technical complications. The singularity solution confirms this point perfectly. Tarski's hierarchical solution introduces a relativization to a language which is very often evaluated as artificial. However, the artificiality is a matter of taste. For example, this reviewer considers introducing singularities as something more artificial than dividing languages into levels. Finally, it is not true that hierarchical solutions lead to the plurality of truth-predicates. Simmons deos not see, that, under Tarski's account, languages are fully translatable into their metalanguages. Thus, the hierarchy of languages is cumulative, and "higher" truth-predicates fully capture "lower" ones. This guarantees the unity of truth-predicates from different levels. Incidentally, a relativi-

zation of truth-predicates to languages represents well Simmons' basic contention that truth-predicates are context-sensitive.

This book attests to a growing interests in the Liar paradox. It is interesting to note that recently there have appeared two other very interesting books related to the Liar: A. Gupta and N. Belnap, *The Revision Theory of Truth* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1993, and E. Brendel, *Wahrheit über der Lügner* (Berlin, Gruyter, 1992).


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C. J. F. Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992. xi + 213 pp.


Reviewed by

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Are we to believe that broad philosophical questions such as 'What is being?' or 'What is identity?' or 'What is truth?' have no answers outside of considerations of how logic works in language? This seems to be what C. J. F. Williams argues in his book *Being, Identity, and Truth.* We are to think of 'being'as no more than a name for the job done by the existential quantifier and the words which act as its proxies in English. 'Identity' is only a name for what happens when the variable bound by such a quantifier is repeated, and 'truth' is merely a name for what happens in certain contexts when this variable stands for a proposition. The reader of Williams' book will find not bold and profound answers to big questions, but big questions reinterpreted and answered as less ambitious ones about logic and language.

*Being, Identity, and Truth* is a summary of the arguments for the main results in Williams' trilogy *What Is Truth?* (Wil76), *What Is Existence?* (Wil81), and *What Is Identity?* (Wil89). In his preface, Williams explains that he wrote the book in response to critics of his earlier works who felt that he demanded of his readers too great a facility with the technical notions and notation of modern logic. The book under review not only avoids logical symbolism altogether, but also