

BOOK REVIEWS

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Wolfgang Künnle, *Conceptions of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Pp. ix, 493.

Künne's new book *Conceptions of Truth* is a massive and detailed survey of most, if not all, views about truth that have been proposed. It is organized along different answers that can be given to various questions about truth, together with a defense of Künne's own view on the matter. It is a truly impressive achievement, full of subtle points, clever arguments, and interesting historical facts. It is written in a refreshing, honest, and sometimes funny way. Künne's book is the state-of-the-art survey of this important debate.

The first half of the book, chapters 1 to 4, consists of a discussion of the main views of truth that have been developed by philosophers. A real gem here is the long section on different versions of a correspondence theory of truth, and in general there is much to learn from these chapters, even for philosophers completely familiar with the usual options on truth.

Chapter 5 covers the relationship between truth, time, and propositions. Chapter 6 discusses two "modest" views about truth that take truth to be a property of propositions: first, Horwich's minimalism, and finally Künne's own view, the *Modest Account*.¹ A final chapter discusses and rejects epistemic conceptions of truth.

The *Modest Account* holds that truth is a property of propositions that can be explained and finitely stated. The finite statement that explains it is simply:

$$(MOD) \forall x (x \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \exists p (x = [p] \ \& \ p)). \quad (337)$$

Here '[p]' is a singular term, read "the proposition that p." (MOD) is simple and intuitive, but I don't think it can give Künne what he wants.

Künne is well aware that the quantification that occurs in (MOD) will seem suspicious, in particular '∃p', and he spends pages 356–68 to try to diffuse such suspicions. Technically such quantification is certainly unproblematic, but this only applies to the formal language in which (MOD) is formulated. Whether or not this gives Künne philosophically what he hopes for is another story.

There are two ways in which this quantification is unproblematic, but none of them work for Künne. One way is on a substitutional reading. But Künne rejects such a reading on several grounds. For one, if substitutional quantifiers are understood as mere abbreviations of infinitary disjunctions and conjunctions, then we face the Problem of Conceptual Overloading: it would seem that in order to have the concept of truth, one has to have every other concept first, all of which would occur in the disjunctions or conjunctions. Secondly, it would seem to require that every proposition is expressible in our own language, since for every one of them there has to be a substitution instance. Künne understands the quantifier '∃p' in (MOD) as an objectual quantifier that

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ranges over propositions, conceived as entities that exist independently of us and our language.

Such quantification can be technically formulated in an unproblematic way, and this is our second way in which it makes sense. On this way it can be understood as based on a simple modification of the usual first-order languages. To do this generally, allow terms including variables to be atomic formulas in the usual definition of a well-formed formula, but keep everything else the same. Then, for example, syntactically

(1) $F(a) \ \& \ t$

is well formed. Semantically, interpret an atomic formula that is a term such that it is satisfied just in case what the term denotes is in a special subset of the domain, say the subset of red things. Subtleties aside, (1) will then hold just in case 'F(a)' holds and t is red. In effect, terms can occur as sentences, but are interpreted as "t is red." Clearly, in such a language we could not hope to give a philosophically illuminating definition of *redness* along the lines of a modest account of redness:

(2) $\forall x (x \text{ is red} \leftrightarrow \exists o (x = o \ \& \ o))$,

where variable 'o' range over material objects, the kinds of things that have colors. We can say that the interpretation of such a formal language presupposes the concept of redness and thus this language, as an interpreted language, can't be used to define the concept.

(MOD) makes perfect sense on such an understanding of the variable 'p'. It is simply a special first-order variable that ranges over a subset of the domain, the propositions, whereas 'x' ranges over the whole domain. Variables 'p' that occur as atomic formulas are interpreted as "p is true," and the brackets '[']' are superfluous. But this way of understanding (MOD) presupposes the concept of truth, and it can't be used to illuminate it. Despite Künne's efforts, I don't see how such propositional quantification, as ranging over a domain of entities that goes beyond our expressive capabilities, can be used to explicate the concept of truth without presupposing it.

Künne tries to show that such propositional quantification occurs in natural language and that we have an understanding of it. For example,

(3) For some way things may be said to be, things are that way

is supposed to be a natural language equivalent of

(4) $\exists p. p.$ (368)

But (3) does not contain quantification over propositions, but over ways, and the quantifier is restricted to ways things may be said to be. Ways are close to properties, and it looks more like (3) contains quantification over properties, not propositions.

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Künne also aims to show that there are “two modes of introducing a property into an atomic statement” (366), and he wants to employ them to show how properties as well as propositions can be the values of two different kinds of variables, as is required for his reading of (MOD). He illustrates it with

(5) Ben is impatient, and that is a bad quality in a teacher,

where ‘is impatient’ signifies the property of being impatient, and ‘that’ designates it (366). But I don’t think this is evidence for such a relationship between predicates and properties. It instead shows something about what anaphoric pronouns are able to pick up. Consider

(6) Sue is married, but he is not a nice guy;

‘is married’ does not signify the husband, but in proper circumstances it can be used to introduce him into discourse and make him available for anaphoric reference.

But (MOD) does make sense on an understanding of the quantifier along substitutional lines, and such an understanding does not presuppose the concept of truth. Künne’s rejection of the substitutional reading because of the conceptual overloading objection seems to me to be mistaken, since we should not understand such quantified statements as abbreviations of infinitary conjunctions and disjunctions. The latter simply make the truth conditions explicit. And the meaning of such quantifiers can be understood independently of their truth conditions by their inferential role.²

The second main reason to reject a more or less substitutional reading of ‘ $\exists p$ ’ in (MOD) seems to me to show the true price of an account of truth along the lines of the Modest Account. Such an account will have to reject a conception of propositions as language-independent entities and hold rather that quantification over propositions is merely a generalization over the instances in our own language, allowing for context sensitivity. If we have such a conception of quantification over propositions, we can make sense of (MOD) and we can define truth in terms of such quantification. But this will not explain a less familiar thing in terms of a more familiar thing. It will instead show in a precise way what expressive power we get from having a truth predicate, and that this expressive power is equivalent to being able to form certain simple infinitary conjunctions and disjunctions. This allows for the conclusion that a truth predicate is merely a logical predicate, one that provides us with an expressive power that we can also get by purely logical means. If this is so, we can be modest about truth, but we will have to be modest about propositions as well.³

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Notes

¹ The only piece of the literature that I missed in Künne’s bibliography is Matthew McGrath, “Weak Deflationism,” *Mind* 106 (1997): 69–98, which proposes another mini-

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malist view of truth as a property of propositions.

² See Thomas Hofweber "A Puzzle about Ontology" *Noûs* 39 (2005): 256–83.

³ Such a view of quantification over propositions is developed in Thomas Hofweber, "Inexpressible Properties and Propositions" in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, vol. 2, ed. Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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Berys Gaut and Paisley Livingston, eds. *The Creation of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. vii, 295.

All but one of these essays are concerned with creativity—a problem about the nature of certain human capacities—rather than with problems of temporal becoming. The creative process is close to being a mystery rather than a problem; there is some plausibility in the Fodor-inspired claim that we don't even know what a theory of this process would be like. No one here tackles the mystery; many deal instead in conceptual geography, placing creativity in relation to its neighbors and its constituent parts. Berys Gaut argues that imagination is well suited to be the vehicle for creativity. David Novitz, in what may be the last paper he completed before his very untimely death, insists that creativity requires a valuable outcome—you can't be creatively evil. (I'll discuss another of Novitz's suggestions later.) Stein Haugom Olsen contrasts accounts of art in terms of creativity with those in terms of mere making. Noël Carroll argues that tradition is no barrier to creativity—indeed, it is necessary for it. Jerry Levinson argues, against Elster, that creativity in art is not maximization of aesthetic value within constraints, and urges us to see violation of constraint as, on occasions, more creative than Elster's system allows.

Another approach is through the audience's reaction to and understanding of the creative process. Paul Guyer reports that Kant made a decisive break with earlier thinking in emphasizing the challenge that art poses for an audience, requiring their active engagement rather than their passive reception. Ted Cohen develops the Kantian theme, arguing that appreciation, as well as production, requires creativity.

The arts vary in the extent to which creativity can be thought of as present in the work itself. A painting or a drawing embodies the creative act that produced it in a way that an instance, even the autographic one, of a novel does not. Patrick Maynard argues that the marks on a drawing are properly seen as manifesting the creative acts that produced them. This is a difficult but rich and rewarding paper; the editors might have asked for more signposts. Paisley Livingstone considers some of the less obvious signs of the creative process and their relevance for interpretation. An extreme case is the painted-out figure revealed by X-ray examination. Livingstone is right, I think, to insist that such things have a potential aesthetic relevance. In "Minimal Art,"¹ Wollheim