

Book Reviews

Krzysztof Czerniawski. *Trzy wersje epistemicznej teorii prawdy: Dummett, Putnam, Wright* [Three Versions of the Epistemic Theory of Truth: Dummett, Putnam, Wright]. Warsaw: Centre for Philosophical Research, 2014.

A few years ago, Krzysztof Czerniawski published the book *Three Versions of the Epistemic Theory of Truth: Dummett, Putnam, Wright*. It attracted my attention, as while there are many works which are concerned with the philosophical problem of truth, there are just a few comparative studies of different ideas concerning the theory of truth. The author in question focuses on the so-called *Epistemic Theory of Truth*, which assumes, according to the characterization of Wolfgang Künne, that being true depends to some extent on our judgement. It is clear that many other philosophers have understood truth in similar terms: e.g. Pierce, Brentano and Neurath. However, Czerniawski concentrates on the most recent history of the Epistemic Theory, and does not seek to take account of the philosophies of either Habermas or Gadamer, whose ideas on truth stand in a somewhat more complex relationship both to this line of development and to the analytical tradition from which it has mostly emerged. Thus, he chooses Michael Dummett, Hilary Putnam and Crispin Wright—three analytical philosophers who have significantly contributed to the development of “epistemic” approaches to the problem of truth.

The aim of book is twofold: on the one hand it is historical, as it presents the three philosophers’ ideas and discussions concerning the problem of truth as they have unfolded over the years, while on the other it is

systematizing, in that it offers various arguments, along with relevant developments and modifications, and many highly specific details, pertaining to the concept of truth and theories of meaning, assertibility and rationality—thus providing a broad perspective on the problem of truth in analytical philosophy. To put it very briefly, the principal value of the book lies in the fact that it serves to familiarize the reader on a deep level with the contemporary debate in analytical philosophy surrounding the Epistemic Theory of Truth. It would be too much to say that the author offers his own grand solution to problems in the sphere of alethiology, yet the very detailed descriptions, accompanied by extensive references to the capacious literature, as well as the pursuit of systematic comparisons between different ideas and arguments, seem to be enough to constitute a comprehensive introduction to the topic itself. Readers are invited to join in an intellectual journey—that of investigating one of the key issues in analytical philosophy today. I will now seek to present, as concisely as possible, what I take to be the main reasons for considering this book an effective introduction to the problem of truth in contemporary analytical philosophy.

As regards the philosophy of Dummett, Czerniawski first provides a short biography of the latter, which aims to contribute to a better understanding his philosophy: e.g. the fact that he was a Catholic, which can be regarded as helping to explain his maximalist approach to metaphysics (16). The author describes Dummett's intellectual journey throughout various philosophical issues—which, furthermore, is most useful when it comes to shedding light on his theory of meaning (itself an essential idea when it comes to properly understanding his arguments concerning the nature of truth). Czerniawski astutely points out Dummett's sources of inspiration in the work of other philosophers, such as Austin's anti-scientism, Wittgenstein's pragmatics-oriented approach to meaning, and, above all, Frege's theory of meaning (22). He provides many references from the various works of Dummett himself, and thus arrives at a clear and systematic presentation of the evolution of Dummett's philosophy. Czerniawski's astutely chosen selection of quotations, both from Dummett himself and from contemporary commentaries and criticisms pertaining to his ideas on truth, is more than adequate to the task in hand.

What is most valuable when it comes to analyzing Dummett's position is his exploration of the debate between realism and antirealism. Czerniawski shows, following Dummett, that these two metaphysical conceptions in fact differ at the level of the theory of meaning (51). He shows that

metaphysical questions pertaining to the nature of reality can be transformed into questions about what it means that some particular statement is true, and how we can understand true statements. He then presents, in very broad terms, Dummett's discussion with John McDowell on past statements, offering a step-by-step analysis of each argument and its response (65). In short, Czerniawski, thanks to his very careful examination of Dummett's works, precisely captures Dummett's key ideas at different stages in the development of his philosophy, introduces his discussions with other philosophers, and provides an up-to-date commentary on Dummett's alethiology. He explains many thoughts that will be quite new to those not already familiar with analytical philosophical terminology. Thus, while explaining Dummett's thought and discussions, he evokes the Acquisition Argument, the Circularity Argument, and the so-called Manifestation Argument against semantic realism—all arguments that have played a significant role in supporting or challenging his Justification Theory of Meaning and his Epistemic Theory of Truth (110).

In the first part, Czerniawski demonstrates why it is that for Dummett, logic is justified by semantics, and why semantics is in turn supported by a theory of meaning, so that the question of what justifies the theory of meaning can finally receive an answer. Hence, by virtue of this alone, the author's analysis of Dummett's philosophy may be said to furnish the reader with a broad perspective on his thought, offering an excellent introduction to Dummett's ideas regarding truth as justified assertibility.

At the beginning of the second part of the book, Czerniawski presents three stages in the development of the philosophy of Hilary Putnam, supplementing his historical account of the evolution of Putnam's ideas with the latter's autobiographical comments taken from his work *My Intellectual Autobiography*. He accepts the standard division of Putnam's philosophy into three stages, and dedicates one subsection to each stage. Thus, he starts with an analysis of Putnam's article *Do True Assertions Correspond to Reality?*, in which the American philosopher argued for the correspondence theory of truth and tried to build his own version of it. Czerniawski presents the Putnamian critique of Tarski's Semantic Theory of Truth, which Putnam accuses of being circular and detached from reality, where in Putnam's view this renders it a purely linguistic—i.e. non-semantic—affair. He then lucidly presents the axis of the dispute between Putnam and Tarski, supplementing this with comments made by such contemporary specialists on Tarski's theory of truth as Jan Woleński and Adam Nowaczyk (139). Putnam formulates his argument against Tarski's theory in terms of the claim that it does not present any theory

of meaning, but does nevertheless involve some sort of implicit theory of meaning. Tarski—according to Putnam—removed semantics from his Semantic Theory of Truth, so that it does not refer to any meanings. However, Czerniawski invokes Woleński's response here, according to which Tarski's theory does not need any theory of meaning for Convention T and statements translating from an object-language to a meta-language to be correct.

Tarski was aware of the difficulties involved in constructing a theory of meaning, and for this reason did not seek to explicitly present any such thing. The implicit conception of meaning that he relied on was only an addition to his theory of truth. Meanwhile, Putnam's critique, as Czerniawski points out, refers to Tarski's implicit theory of meaning, not his theory of truth. To show this, he quotes Woleński's example, in which some counterintuitive statements show up as true just because truth (for Tarski) corresponds to a complete model of reality and not to the meanings that particular statements can have (152). Czerniawski refers to Woleński's distinction (originally made by Pitcher) between strong and weak notions of correspondence, and this is crucial for a proper understanding of Tarski's theory, as well as for responding to Putnam's argument. Tarski assumes a weak correspondence between language and reality: that is to say, he claims that words and statements do not refer to particular facts or objects, but to reality modeled as a whole. This part of the book possesses additional value thanks to its detailed analysis of Putnam's critique of Tarski's theory of truth, conducted with reference to present debates on this topic—something which affords the reader a broad perspective on the problem, introducing him or her to the current state of specialized discussions of this topic.

Further to this, Czerniawski outlines Putnam's model-theoretic argument and its role in the polemics associated with metaphysical realism. Taking various quotations from Putnam's articles as a basis, he explores how metaphysical realism is affected by problems of conceptual relativity, and how internal realism avoids these (180). Czerniawski, following Putnam, demonstrates exactly why it is that thinking about *epistemically ideal conditions* should be replaced with a focus on "sufficiently good epistemic conditions." However, what is far more valuable is the fact that he succeeds in showing how Putnam's thoughts on truth and realism have themselves changed over the decades. Czerniawski not only demonstrates his enormous knowledge of Putnam's works, but also presents an engaging intellectual history, whose subject matter is how Putnam's own ideas came to be shaped by particular arguments put forward by various other

philosophers. Thus, he presents us with the American thinker's discussions with Quine and Rorty on truth and interpretation, with the influence of the Wittgensteinian notion of language games upon internal realism, and with his criticisms directed at Tarski's semantic theory of truth.

Czerniawski sets up an effective comparison between Putnam's and Dummett's theories of truth, one that involves showing that for Putnam it is impossible to prepare "a list of conditions for justifying statements," as conditions of justification are subject to change just as all human knowledge is, and some statements considered true today will one day be false, so that the same can surely happen to our procedures for justifying beliefs, too. Czerniawski, following Putnam, therefore concludes that we cannot formalize conditions for justifying statements—much as we cannot formalize human rationality *per se*.

Furthermore, Czerniawski shows us Putnam's route from internal realism (understood in verificationist terms) to commonsensical realism—the point where he ends his long intellectual journey back to realism. The author really does capture here the intricate details of Putnam's conception of realism and its relations to metaphysical realism, as well as the more finely graded differences between variants of the realist stance. He also manages to present clearly some criticisms of this conception, alongside some responses to these.

To cut a long story short, Czerniawski recounts how Putnam started out on his journey as an adherent of the correspondence theory of truth, but did not accept Tarski's Semantic Theory of Truth. The American philosopher pointed out that it follows from the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem that Tarski's theory suffers from a problem of multiple possible interpretations. In advancing his criticism, he also relied on the so called "model-theoretic argument," which states that it is impossible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between some language-element and some specific part of reality. Putnam then turned to verificationism, claiming that interpretation is performed "internally" in one's mind, rather than via actual truth-conditions: "language usage performs interpretation." He subsequently reached the decision that reality and language are given to us proximately, where this turned him in the direction of commonsensical realism. In the meantime, it is fair to say that he also came under the influence of a variety of philosophers and philosophical arguments (e.g. Quine's case for ontological nominalism).

In this second part of his book, Czerniawski presents, in a highly detailed manner, the intellectual journey of Putnam from the correspondence theory of truth and criticisms of it (especially as regards Tarski's

theory of truth), through internal realism and the role first of epistemically ideal, and then of epistemically adequate conditions, to his final arrival back at commonsensical realism and the disquotational theory of truth. The author has undertaken the demanding task of describing, analyzing and systematizing the thought of a philosopher who has himself traveled a considerable distance, and has handled this task very well. Czerniawski not only shows his wide knowledge of Putnam's works, but also demonstrates an ability to invoke various quotations whose particular value lies in the fact that they allow the reader to gain a broader view of this turbulent landscape than would otherwise be available.

The third part of the book is devoted to Crispin Wright's Epistemic Theory of Truth. His contribution to the philosophical problem of truth is also significant, due to his development of anti-realism, his appeal to two arguments from normativity, his discussion with Putnam and, finally, the concepts of "superassertibility" and alethic pluralism. Czerniawski draws a map of realism, idealism, skepticism, and antirealism, and shows very clearly where the borderlines between them fall. Where Wright is concerned, he outlines what amounts to a normative theory of meaning and a normative theory of truth. Czerniawski shows clearly how various analytical philosophers differ as regards such concepts as language, Convention T, conceptual relativity, the language-reality relation, and disquotational and deflationary theories of truth.

What seems particularly valuable here is the account given of Wright's discussions with Putnam, Dummett and Paul Horwich, in which the author provides step-by-step analysis of each argument, as well as the principal responses to it. In this way, the author shows how Wright challenged Dummett's theory of meaning based initially on verification and subsequently upon justification, while elsewhere demonstrating how the concept of superassertibility can be deployed to resolve the problems facing Putnam's version of realism.

Czerniawski invokes Wright's argument against maximalist realism, pointing out that the only statements that are indeed true *realistically* are the theorems of logic and mathematics: their truthfulness is fixed independently of our testimonies, and they are fundamentally grounded in reality itself, not in perception. Putnam put forward an example showing that even in the empirical world there are situations where truth exceeds testimony (namely, the well-known example of Lizzie Borden). Therefore Wright—as Czerniawski mentions—limits his Epistemic Theory of Truth to just ethics and aesthetics, leaving room for realistic theories where different areas of human cognition are concerned, even though he himself

does not embrace a commitment to realism (257). Thus, Wright accepts certain realist intuitions, but cannot affirm realism with all of its metaphysical assumptions, and in this regard we can view him as being at most a minimalist realist (258). Czerniawski guides the reader insightfully through the exchanges between Wright and Putnam to finally show how they play so-called “burden tennis”: that is to say, they are unable to agree about who should feel the burden of obligation to provide a warrant for their position—the realist or the anti-realist (263).

Czerniawski’s book deserves attention, as it not only offers a broad introduction to the problem of truth in contemporary analytical philosophy, but also amounts to a highly systematic piece of work in that field—one that gives a detailed insight into the evolution of different philosophical ideas relating to the Epistemic Theory of Truth. Czerniawski has managed to describe Dummett’s, Putnam’s and Wright’s philosophies in a lively and engaging way, and has shown how their theories came to be shaped by various arguments and influences. The book can thus be recommended as an excellent choice for those not so familiar with this specific issue in analytical philosophy who nevertheless wish to broaden their knowledge about recent developments pertaining to the Epistemic Theory of Truth.

JAKUB PRUŚ

Urszula Zbrzeźniak. *Genealogia i emancypacja. Studia nad współczesną filozofią polityki* [Genealogy and Emancipation: Studies on Contemporary Political Philosophy]. Warsaw: The University of Warsaw Press, 2018.

Urszula Zbrzeźniak’s *Genealogy and Emancipation: The Studies in Contemporary Political Philosophy* is a plaidoyer for a diverse and possible world, in which the hermeneutics of emancipation and liberation happens within the horizon of the tension between liberation and domination. The task of philosophy is to undertake an interpretative challenge that involves an understanding of a human being as *homo interpretativus*. Dasein has to face a political way of being in the world, clarifying the lan-

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© ⓘ FORUM PHILOSOPHICUM 23 (2018) no. 1, 139–143 SUBM. 18 November 2018 ACC. 26 November 2018
 ISSN 1426-1898 E-ISSN 2353-7043 Doi:10.5840/forumphil20182316