

Preface

Deflationism is a doctrine about the role of the concept of truth in philosophy as a whole. This makes the doctrine relevant to analytic philosophers from all subdisciplines of philosophy.

Deflationism about truth comes in many varieties. These are usually articulated against the background of formal, axiomatic theories of truth. Yet in the philosophical literature, these background theories are often not made completely explicit. This is unfortunate because many philosophical debates concerning deflationism are intimately related to formal aspects of these axiomatic truth theories.

Axiomatic truth theories also come in a wide variety. They have been thoroughly analyzed over the years in a particular branch of mathematical logic called proof theory. But the logical literature on axiomatic theories of truth is rather specialized. It leads a scattered existence in the logical and philosophical journals. Yet the essential results of the analysis of axiomatic truth theories can be explained in elementary terms and thus made accessible to the average analytical philosopher. To do this is one of the aims of the present monograph.

It should then be left to philosophers to determine, on philosophical grounds, which of the axiomatic theories of truth are the more attractive ones, and whether they can be interpreted in a deflationist way. Eventually, this should enable philosophers of all subdisciplines of philosophy to determine which role the concept of truth plays in their field. With this book, I hope to make a small contribution to that enterprise.

In sum, this book tries to bridge the gap between the philosophical and logical literature about the concept of truth. It is about getting philosophers and logicians who are interested in the concept of truth to talk to instead of past each other. Some sections in this book are based on material that I have published as articles, with or without co-authors. In particular, section 7.3 is based on [Horsten 2010], section 9.5 is based on [Halbach & Horsten 2006], and section 10.2 is based on [Horsten 2009].

I wish to express my gratitude to many of my colleagues and students. In writing this book, I have drawn extensively from work that Volker Halbach and I have carried out in recent years, and from my recollections of discussions that we have had about this book's subject matter. I owe Volker an enormous debt: It was an honor and a privilege to collaborate with him on axiomatic theories of truth and deflationism. Nevertheless, I assume full responsibility for the material in this book. In particular, I do not claim that Volker agrees with the position of inferential deflationism that I elaborate on and defend toward the end of this book. The other members of the Luxemburger Zirkel, Hannes Leitgeb and Philip Welch, have concentrated more on semantical theories of truth. I am much indebted to them, too, for many discussions on aspects of truth and deflationism, and for providing such a wonderful environment for thinking about truth. In addition, I am grateful to Jeff Ketland, Michael Sheard, Igor Douven, Martin Fischer, and Karl-Georg Niebergall for stimulating discussions on this book's subject matter. Henri Galinon, Jon Sneyers, Rafal Urbaniak, Lieven Decock, Øystein Linnebo, and Anthony Everett carefully read through earlier versions of the manuscript. Thanks also to anonymous referees for providing useful comments and suggestions, and to Philip Laughlin and Marc Lowenthal of MIT Press for their efficiency and encouragement.

To conclude, I am much indebted to my students in Leuven and in Bristol, to whom I have had the privilege to teach on the subjects covered in this book.

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