

New Waves in Metaethics

Edited by MICHAEL BRADY

Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. v + 300 pp. £60.00 cloth, £20.99 paper

New Waves in Truth

Edited by CORY D. WRIGHT and NIKOLAJ J.L.L. PEDERSEN

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These two volumes are part of a recent, continuing series of books, *New Waves in Philosophy*, edited by Vincent F. Hendricks and Duncan Pritchard. The books in this series promise to offer work by young philosophers, with the hope of presenting the current state of the art research in their respective fields. The authors whose essays are published in these two volumes are for the most part established scholars. Several have established themselves sufficiently in their careers to have research positions with a good amount of job security. Of the fifteen authors published in *New Waves in Metaethics*, two are Assistant Professors, five are Associate Professors, two are full Professors, four are Lecturers, one is a Senior Lecturer, and one is a philosophy B.A. graduate working outside of academia. Of the twenty contributors to *New Waves in Truth*, six are Assistant Professors, ten are Associate Professors, one is a Lecturer, one is a Senior Lecturer, and two are Researchers.

That some of the scholars are fairly well known and well regarded in their fields is reflected in essays that elaborate on the author's own previously published work or present the next stage in ongoing debates with other authors. To pick a few examples of this, David Enoch's 'Shmagency Revisited,' in *New Waves in Metaethics*, addresses criticisms of his earlier 'Agency, Shmagency: Why Normativity Won't Come From What is Constitutive of Action.' Enoch critically addresses critiques of his work by David Velleman as well as more recent work by Christine Korsgaard in light of what he calls the 'shmagency challenge.' This challenge raises a problem for theories that try to ground a response to moral scepticism in the conditions that are constitutive of agency. As Enoch points out in this paper and in his previous work, a moral sceptic might reject these purported conditions on agency, holding that while she herself might not be an 'agent' by constitutive lights, she can still go on being a morally skeptical 'shmagent.'

In *New Waves in Truth*, Mark Schroeder draws on his account of expressivist semantics from his book *Being For* to spell out 'How to Be an Expressivist About Truth.' Drawing on this expressivist semantics for truth, Schroeder addresses issues raised by the liar paradox. Familiarity with Schroeder's earlier work will benefit those who read this essay. Schroeder is also a contributor to *New Waves in Metaethics*, wherein he criticizes responses by Enoch and James Lenman to Cian Dorr's wishful thinking problem for expressivism.

The essays by scholars who are at the earliest stages of their careers are some of the most novel and interesting essays in these volumes. Kevin Scharp's essay 'Falsity,' in *New Waves in Truth*, pieces apart three distinct definitions of falsity in the literature: to state that a sentence is false may be either to say that the sentence is not true, or to say that its negation is true, or to assert the negation of the sentence. Scharp, drawing on the resources of three-valued logic, raises problems for each of these widely accepted

conceptions of falsity, ultimately presenting a new conception of falsity that breaks with the existing conceptions.

In *New Waves in Metaethics*, Julia Markovits criticizes the reasons internalism of Bernard Williams in her essay 'Internal Reasons and the Motivating Intuition.' She does not merely criticize Williams: Markovits goes on to present an intriguing new internalist account. On Markovits's internalism, unlike Williams's, reasons do not necessarily require an underlying motivational grounding. Nonetheless reasons do have a connection to an agent's ends for Markovits, as reasons justify certain kinds of action based on these ends. Deftly, Markovits presents a number of counterexamples to Williams's conception of reasons and then shows how her account can better handle the same cases.

The mix of novelty and familiar debates in the *New Waves* volumes extends to the selection of topics. Many of these topics are older waves that are quite familiar to philosophers. In *New Waves in Metaethics*, familiar –isms and theories such as realism, expressivism, constructivism, fictionalism, particularism, and the error theory are discussed. Of the eighteen essays in *New Waves in Truth*, five contain some variation on the term 'deflationary' in the title and several of the rest consider deflationary theories of truth. The authors of the essays in this book also draw on familiar theories of truth such as the correspondence theory, coherence theory, and pluralism. Somewhat surprisingly, pragmatism receives little attention in *New Waves in Truth*.

Each book contains a useful introduction by the editor(s). The introductions offer summaries of all of the essays in the volume, along with commentary on how the essays relate to each other according to broad themes. *New Waves in Truth*, unlike *New Waves in Metaethics*, is divided into sections: on deflationism, truth ascriptions, truth value gaps, the value of truth, correspondence truth and alethic realism, and kinds of truth and truth-apt discourse.

At times, it is remarkable how the concerns of one set of essays in a volume will be completely unrelated to the concerns of others: the essays on moral reasons in *New Waves in Metaethics* almost form their own mini-book, raising concerns that do not bear directly on issues such as whether there are moral properties or whether moral statements are capable of being true or false. Formal work on three-valued logic in *New Waves in Truth* stands apart from more informal work on the nature and value of truth.

These two volumes will be of special interest to scholars who are doing research on metaethics or truth. Several of the essays in each volume are indispensable for ongoing debates on central topics in these fields. For philosophers who are not focused on these fields of study, the collections offer a really wide-ranging group of essays that will make clear how, despite falling under the rubrics of metaethics or the study of truth, there is a variety of work going on in these fields.

Fritz J. McDonald
Oakland University
Philosophy, 340 O'Dowd Hall, Rochester, Michigan 48309-4401, USA
mcdonal4@oakland.edu

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