Review of “The Nature of Truth”

Michael F. Goodman

Humboldt State University

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Davidson, Austin, Tarski, Quine, Heidegger, Field, Foucault, Putnam, Dummett, Ramsey, Horwich, Hornsby, Rorty, et.al. This monster anthology is just the ticket for either a senior or graduate level course on Truth. There are thirty-two papers here, at least two of which (Crispin Wright’s “Minimalism, Deflationism, Pragmatism, Pluralism,” and Lynch’s own “A Functionalist Theory of Truth,”) seem to be written for this volume. The book is split up into seven sections. The table of contents is as follows:

I. Realism and the Correspondence Theory

4. “Contextual Semantics and Metaphysical Realism,” Terence Horgan

II. Coherence Theories

5. “Coherence as the Nature of Truth,” Brand Blanshard

III. Pragmatism and Verificationism

8. “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” Charles Sanders Peirce
11. “Two Philosophical Perspectives,” Hilary Putnam

IV. Phenomenological and Postmodernist Conceptions


V. Tarski’s Theory and Its Importance
Lynch did an excellent job of providing bibliographic information in this book. The bibliographies are located at the end of each section. They are detailed and straightforward.

Lynch’s introductions to the sections are in large part fairly anemic, offering just a taste of what the papers contain or argue. This may be understandable, given the enormity of the volume itself. While this may not be a major fault of the book, because the papers themselves are rightly the focus of attention, it is a plain fact that the philosophical notion of truth is a most difficult and arduous study to undertake and it would have been helpful if Lynch would have given a bit more talk about the papers themselves. So, instead of 802 pages, perhaps the book could have been 1002 pages, with truly excellent analytic expositions of the more labyrinthine of the essays, e.g., Tarski, Heidegger, Walker, Quine.

*The Nature of Truth* is almost a one of a kind book.* I know of only one other anthology on the concept of truth, which is George Pitcher’s 1964 *Truth*. Pitcher’s offering contains eight important papers (3 of which Lynch reprints). I recommend Lynch’s book without hesitation.

Michael F. Goodman
Humboldt State University
