
Arno Hoven’s book is intended primarily as a systematization of a variety of truth-theories, especially that advanced after Kant. This variety is arranged by Hoven with the help of the typology which distinguishes ontological, relational and epistemic-pragmatic truth-theories as three basic kinds of thinking about the concept of truth. Ontological truth-theories attribute truth to being, relational – define truth as the correspondence between truth-bearers and reality, and epistemic-pragmatic – relate truth to processes of human knowledge. These very general explanations given in *Introduction* as well as in Final remarks are illustrated in the book by numerous examples of particular truth-theories.

The organization of the book is closely related to the mentioned typology of truth-theories into three rubrics. The first part (Part A) is devoted to ontological theories. The author discusses theories of Thomas of Aquin (Chapter A I), René Descartes (Chapter A II), Martin Heidegger (Chapter A III), and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Chapter A IV). Relational theories are the subject of the second part (Part B) which gives an account of theories developed by Thomas of Aquin (Chapter B I – Thomas of Aquin’s investigations of the concept of truth (2)), Bertrand Russell and George E. Moore (Chapter B II), Alfred Tarski (Chapter B III), and John L. Austin (Chapter B IV); Chapter B V shortly reviews discussions about the concept of truth in the contemporary philosophy of science (Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend). The last part (Part C) is the longest one in the whole book. In its six chapters we find the following themes: evidence theories of truth (Chapter C I – once more Descartes, Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl), Fichte’s theory of truth (Chapter C II), consensus theories of truth (Chapter C III – Charles S. Peirce, Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel), the constructivist theory of truth (Chapter C IV – the Erlangen School: Wilhelm Kamlah, Paul Lorenzen and Kuno Lorenz), pragmatic theories of truth (Chapter C V – Friedrich Nietzsche as a predecessor, William James) and coherence theories (Chapter C VI – Otto Neurath, Willard V. O. Quine, Nicholas Rescher).

The evaluation of Hoven’s book must take into account that it gives the first detailed review of several approaches to the concept of truth. Thus his book partly fills a serious gap in the hitherto available philosophical literature; the lack of a book on the history of the problem of truth should be regarded as a very “scandal” of the historiography of philosophy. Certainly, typologies are not classifications. For this reason, the problem of fundamentum typologiae is not so important as that of fundamentum divisionis. Yet criteria of typologies by no means are arbitrary and should be carefully stated and justified. Unfortunately, I find Hoven’s typology of truth-theories neither clear nor justified.

First of all the author ignores a distinction of ontological and epistemological concepts of truth which is well-rooted in philosophy since Aristotle. Thus, it is confusing to treat ontological truth-theories al pari with epistemological. A more satisfactory typology consists in distinguishing ontological and epistemological truth-theories on the first level and then proposing further items (especially, inside epistemological theories) on the second. Moreover, my impression is that Hoven regards ontological theories as a kind of epistemological. The reason for this qualification is that he only occasionally mentions (p. 28, 43-44) a very important connection of truth (in the ontological sense) with transcendentalia. The crucial thesis of the ontological theory of truth
expressed in the famous dictum *ens et verum convertuntur* is mentioned only once (p. 233, a footnote) and not discussed at all; I think that any report of the ontological theory of truth without a detailed account of *transcendentalia* is oversimplified.

Hoven reckons Descartes to “ontologists”, Peirce – to “consensualists” (he is not mentioned in the chapter of pragmatism!) and Quine – to “coherentists”. Of course, philosophers are very often not quite univocal in their theories; but historians should center their reports on the most typical features of particular philosophical theories. Descartes was more an “evidentialist” than an “ontologist” and Peirce more a pragmatist than a “consensualist”; Quine can equally be ranked as a “correspondist” as a “coherentist”; in particular Hoven overlooks that Quine accepts the correspondence definition when he defines truth and the coherence theory when he speaks of truth-criteria.

I am not sure whether Fichte deserves so much attention as a “philosopher of truth” as Hoven suggests in chapter C II. On the other hand, Leibniz, Wolff, Bradley, Ramsey, Blanshard, Joachim, Ewing, Putnam, Davidson and Dummett and many others are only mentioned shortly: though Kripke’s name occurs in the bibliography, his very important theory is completely neglected in the main body of the book as well as in the footnotes. Another weak point of Hoven’s book consists in the lack of a (at least) short summary of the main problems analyzed by the past as well as the modern truth-theories.


This list shows that the recent philosophy regards the problem of truth as one of the most important. In this company, Hoven’s book is certainly the most ambitious from the historical point of view. It is full of valuable informations and inter-