

---

## Preface

The deepest philosophical questions are not isolated; they sit at the center of our broader cultural concerns. This is certainly the case with the problem of truth. An increasing philosophical preoccupation with truth over the last hundred years is deeply intertwined with two larger issues. The first issue is pluralism. The sheer number and variety of viewpoints we encounter on any question is forcing us, on both the political and philosophical fronts, to think about how objectivity is possible. The second issue is our increasing technological sophistication at both pursuing and distorting the truth. There is little prospect that we will slow down in either respect at the beginning of this century. In a world where things move so fast that the real can be difficult to tell from the virtual, understanding truth seems more relevant than ever.

This volume is a comprehensive survey of the various attempts to solve this problem. Roughly speaking, the essays center around two questions: Does truth have an underlying nature? And if so, what sort of nature does it have? The book is therefore concerned with the question of truth itself, as opposed to the relation of truth to other issues of philosophical interest, such as knowledge, meaning, and logic. This is the first of the ways in which I've attempted to make the territory more manageable for a single volume. The second is by limiting the essays included to those written during the twentieth century.

The problem of truth is complex, and my hope is that this book will act as a map not only for undergraduate and graduate students of philosophy but also for anyone who finds himself lost in the thickets of the contemporary debate. To this end, the introductions to each part are intended to help the reader locate the most important concepts and issues

discussed by the essays of that part. Of course, like any map, this one is limited by its size and scale. There are a number of deserving essays that could not be included because of the limitations of space. I have tried to address this issue by including suggestions for further reading at the end of every introduction. The reader is strongly encouraged to consult these for a more in-depth look at the various theories.

A word about how the essays are related to each other. I have organized them by theory, but since many of the essays could fit under more than one category, there are other paths to follow through the territory than what I have laid out. I have tried to take account of this fact in the introduction to each part by discussing not only the chapters within the part but also those that appear in other parts of the book yet deal with the issues being discussed in the part in question.

Many people have helped me with this book. Thanks first go to my editorial assistant Sam Hughes, whose sharp thinking and capacity for organization were of invaluable assistance, particularly during the crucial first stages of the book's development. Several people commented on the various introductions: Bob Barnard, Paul Bloomfield, Charles Fletcher, Rex Gilliland, and Thomas Nenon in particular; while conversations with Andrew Cortens, Marion David, Eric Olson, Bill Alston, Terry Horgan, Mark Lance, and others helped me to decide what to include. My colleague William Lawhead provided helpful advice (and a sympathetic ear) and allowed me to borrow a continuous stream of books. The Masters of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, were gracious enough to provide me with the position of Visiting Scholar in the summer of 1999 and thereby allow me access to one of the world's great libraries. My students at the University of Mississippi over the last few years have tolerated my continual obsession with the nature of truth, and interactions with them have taught me much about it; I am indebted to them one and all. Thanks to Alan Thwaites and the editorial staff at the MIT Press for their expert assistance. Most important, I thank Terry, best friend, best critic, loving partner.