I John Dietrich, Curtis Reese, Charles F. Potter among the humanists and the Humanist Manifesto. I would have spent more time on Foster's Nietzsche scholarship and his debates with Clarence Darrow. It may be nit picking to ask where Frank C. Doan, Francis Greenwood Peabody, Clarence Skinner, Frederick M. Eliot, and Kenneth Patton are. But these are like faulting Reinhold Seeberg's Dogmengeschichte for not including or giving prominence to one's favorite writers from a dissertation footnote. This volume is long enough already!

The two completed volumes constitute the richest and most thorough history of American liberal theology to date and when the trilogy is completed it will be the benchmark of studies of American liberal Theology.

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For the reader in search of a way into the contemporary philosophical debate about the nature and function of truth, Gerald Vision's Veritas: The Correspondence Theory and Its Critics is probably not the best place to start. Vision's work is directed at scholars who already know their way around in the field and the issues are engaged at a level of abstraction and sophistication that make it difficult for anyone but the specialist to follow. Vision provides a useful overview of the issues in his opening chapter, but in the main sections of the book if one is not familiar with contemporary writers like Crispin Wright and Paul Horwich it will be very difficult to follow the course of argument. Better introductions to the field are available, perhaps none better than Richard Kirkham's Theories of Truth (1992).

Philosophers have been thinking very hard for a very long time about the precise nature of truth and it is only to be expected that their discussions will have become complicated and subtle. But at the same time, there is no issue of potentially greater philosophical concern to all people than truth itself, no issue which might have so direct and important a bearing on the project of living a human life. If philosophers allow their debates to become
too technical and esoteric, they may well fail in their responsibility to keep philosophy relevant to the concerns of everyday life. There is a dual challenge in reading Vision's book: tracking the arguments that he develops on the way to presenting his own version of the correspondence theory of truth while trying to remember what on earth these arguments have to do with the practical affairs of daily life. As one struggles through the argumentative minutiae one is tempted to think that this highly technical exercise in analytic philosophy has finally slipped its moorings to common life, that we are looking in on a sort of glass-bead game that can be played by, and is of interest to only a small tribe of specialists who talk to one another in a language only they can comprehend. It is a daunting challenge, and the allure of the temptation grows.

It is a temptation to be resisted. Vision's objective is to construct a version of the correspondence theory of truth which is responsive to both our everyday intuitions about truth and to the most probing concerns of philosophers who think carefully about these things. Vision emphasizes the intuitive appeal of correspondence as a way of understanding truth. Our judgments and beliefs, the sentences we use between ourselves in the exchanges of daily life, our scientific theories about the way the natural order is structured: surely all of these must be answerable to the way the world really is, and truth must surely consist in some kind of relation between what we think and say on the one hand and the world which presents itself to our experience on the other. The trick is to say just what that relationship consists in, and, as Vision amply conveys, it has proven a very difficult trick to pull off.

The largest part of Vision's book is devoted to answering the objections of philosophers who have taken issue with the correspondence theory. There are the "pluralists" who argue that there are different kinds of truth which pertain to different areas of discourse: the propositions "The interior angles of a triangle sum to 180°", "Ulcers are caused by bacteria," and "Three strikes and you're out" are all true, but it is no one conception of truth which allows us to maintain that this is so. There are the "nihilists" like Frege and Davidson who argue that truth is so fundamental a feature of our experience and interactions as to defy any attempt to define or
otherwise clarify it. And then there are the "deflationists" who argue that there is nothing more to the notion of truth than what is captured by such seemingly platitudinous formulas as "\(<p>\) is true if and only if \(p\)" where "\(p\)" is simply a sentence of the sort to which it is appropriate to assign a truth value. Vision's polemic is directed primarily against the deflationists because it is their theory which has gained the upper hand in the recent literature and because, on Vision's account, it represents the most important challenge to the correspondence theory. Many pages are devoted to such technical issues as whether truth is a concept, a predicate or a property and what difference this would make, and whether the traditional statements of the correspondence theory amount to anything more than empty platitudes. Vision tries to steer clear of the larger issues in epistemology and metaphysics (e.g., the realist/antirealist debate) that have internal connections to the question of truth, and largely succeeds in this. This reviewer came through the critical phase of the book with the feeling that Vision had indeed prevailed in his contest with the deflationists, but quite certain as well that his opponents will have much to say in response.

Vision's own reconstruction of the correspondence theory is built upon a "datum" that he regards as so obvious and incontrovertible as to defy any attempt to gainsay. "The descriptive connection of a sentence to a (type of) state of affairs is as clear and secure a datum as we are likely to get." One of the oddest features of this book is that Vision can go on for pages and pages about why the formula "'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white" is so deeply problematic and yet think that his own "datum" is so obvious and incontrovertible as to make further examination of the claim almost unimaginable, certainly unnecessary. Beware philosophers who come bearing intuitively obvious first truths. Whether Vision's reconstruction of the correspondence theory will prevail among the competing varieties of correspondence, or alternate theories is far less certain than that his own proposals will provide copious grist for further disputation.

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