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REVIEWS

Arne Naess, *Communication and Argument. Elements of Applied Semantics*. Translated from the Norwegian by Alastair Hannay. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo; Allen & Unwin, London, 1966. 135 pp. NKr. 25.

The first three chapters of this attractively made book contain, in a concise form, the main ideas of the author of *Interpretation and Preciseness*. Their subject is the meaning of interpretation – and of reasonable interpretation, ‘precization’ and definition of linguistic expressions, and the well-known opposition between analytic and synthetic sentences. The author calls this part “elements of semantics”, though he does not mean by “semantics” the study of the relations between signs and their designata, but rather the study of the interpretation of utterances in natural language as used by different people in specified contexts.

The second part applies these ideas to “effective discussions” as opposed to “forms of persuasion”. Chapter four is about agreement and disagreement, including pseudo-agreement. Chapter five discusses surveys of arguments for and against a standpoint. In a *pro-et-contra* survey arguments are simply listed; in a *pro-aut-contra* survey, conflicting arguments are weighed and the weaker eliminated. The topic in chapter six is “effective discussion”. There the author lists six types of irrelevant arguments, which he calls “tendentious”.

This essay aims to be “of value to anyone interested in intellectual honesty and the free flow of information of ideas”. The author does make the distinction between cognitive and emotive meaning, but he studies only the former. He recognizes (pp. 16–7) that there is a wider sense of meaning in which “expressions can be intended to mean the same, or to perform the same role”, but “would not strictly mean the same”; yet they can be interchangeable, “regardless of differences in suggestiveness, style or sound” (p. 17)! The differences are viewed as irrational and not taken into account. The author is only interested in “a relevant or competent debate” and not in “forms of persuasion” (p. 134). For him “arguments are appeals to rationality in the light of facts”. He defines “argument” as “that element in our expressions which carries the power to convince people in a rational discussion, that is their factual content and consequences” (p. 97).

From this perspective, arguments are not relative to an audience. Even if a survey of *pro-aut-contra* arguments should comprise “the most important arguments which, according to the surveyer, or to some person or group, have been or may very likely be adduced for or against an assertion” (p. 102), their weight seems to be impersonally given.

If this were so, disagreement could only spring from unenlightenment or dishonesty. The use of what A. Naess calls “irrelevant arguments” is always

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"tendentious", and in some sense irrational. Even disagreement in politics, law, religion or philosophy should then be resolved by honest and serious discussion, especially through semantical analysis.

No doubt the techniques presented by the author are useful; there are indeed topics from which value-judgments are systematically eliminated. In most disciplines however (politics, law, philosophy, and countless others, rational disagreement is not only possible but frequent. It is true that the quality of the discussion may, even here, be improved by semantical analysis; but this provides merely a beginning for the study of argument.

Université Libre de Bruxelles

CH. PERELMAN

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FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE invites general or technical contributions, original or expository, in fields of research dealing with language and the foundations of its study. Normally only articles in English will be accepted.

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Proofs of articles typeset for publication and all correspondence relative to proofreading should be addressed to PETER WESLY, Editorial Assistant, Instituut voor Grondslagenonderzoek, Nieuwe Achtergracht 170, Amsterdam-C., The Netherlands.

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THE FOUNDATION OF LANGUAGE

The foundation of language is a subject of great importance and interest to all who are concerned with the history and development of the human mind. It is a subject which has attracted the attention of philosophers, linguists, and psychologists for many years.

In the study of the foundation of language, we are concerned with the question of how language first came into existence. This is a question which has been the subject of much speculation and conjecture.

One of the main theories of the origin of language is the "pooh" theory, which suggests that language first arose as a series of imitative sounds, such as "pooh" or "ah", which were used to express various emotions and feelings.

Another theory is the "bow-wow" theory, which suggests that language first arose as a series of imitative sounds, such as "bow-wow" or "moo", which were used to imitate the sounds of nature.

A third theory is the "yo-he-ho" theory, which suggests that language first arose as a series of rhythmic sounds, such as "yo-he-ho" or "yo-he-ho", which were used to coordinate the movements of a group of people.

It is clear that the origin of language is a subject of great complexity and interest. It is a subject which has attracted the attention of many of the greatest minds of our time.

The study of the foundation of language is a subject which is of great importance to all who are concerned with the history and development of the human mind. It is a subject which has attracted the attention of many of the greatest minds of our time.

It is the hope of the author that this book will be of some help to those who are interested in this subject.

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