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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Grammar in Philosophy by Bede Rundle

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requires the existence of an infinite number of standard quantities to constitute a measurement scale for that quantity.

I would like to mention the engaging introduction to this book in which Gottlieb states parts of his general philosophical credo. I quote one sentence from the introduction (p. 4): "The world calls the shots: it is as it is independently of how we think about it, and of what kinds of languages we devise to describe it." The attitude expressed by this statement is a healthy one, opposed to the current doctrine of Logical Protagoreanism ("Man is the maker of all worlds").

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GRAMMAR IN PHILOSOPHY. By BEDE RUNDLE. New York, The Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1980. Pp. xiii, 491.

This book treats most of the major issues in current philosophy of language from the point of view of ordinary language philosophy. The author claims that few if any philosophical hypotheses are neither trivial nor nonsense, and holds that the resolution of philosophical problems need go only marginally beyond the meticulous clarification of ordinary usage. The author opposes taking philosophical theses to be similar to theoretical propositions in the sciences and inveighs against "pragmatic" approaches to questions of existence. As the primary task of philosophy, he champions "analysis" of the ordinary language in which philosophical questions arise. This credo—briefly stated and not thoroughly elaborated—is practiced in a series of discussions of singular reference, the indefinite article, plurality, mass terms, subject and predicate, negation, existence, oblique contexts, modality, identity, ontological commitment, abstract nouns, propositions, numbers, infinity, propositional attitudes, facts, states of affairs, truth, meaning, use, tone, intentions, force, synonymy, analyticity, indeterminacy of translation, verification and more. The book covers a lot of ground.

There is little "filler." Issues are presented with scant development of background, so that someone not already thoroughly acquainted with them will find it difficult to understand what is at stake. The argumentation is usually close and quite detailed—sometimes so detailed, indeed convoluted, that the reader may be lost in minutiae. On the other hand,

the author has a remarkable sense for the nuances of English. Often one feels treated to the findings of a talented lexicographer.

The best developed and most original part of the book is the discussion, in Chapters 7 and 8, of nominalizations, facts, and truth. The author defends a view of truth very like Strawson's "redundancy" theory, with qualifications that strengthen the theory against certain obvious objections. (The view is also in some respects similar to the "anaphoric" account developed by Belnap, Camp, and Grover. The author fails, however, to mention their approach.) Propositional attitude verbs are held to be intransitive (a view I find very implausible), and the lack of uniformity of usage and idiom among the different propositional attitude verbs is cast in strikingly bold relief. On these bases the author opposes "reifying" facts, propositions, states of affairs. I shall not discuss the plausibility of this view. I recommend, however, the author's treatment of the nuances of English usage that is relevant to philosophical accounts of nominalization as one of the best and most detailed I have encountered.

The level of discussion in much of the rest of the book is less high. This is partly a natural product of the attempt to cover so many topics. But it is also a result of drawbacks special to the book. A great deal of the work is a running (negative) commentary on Quine's views. But Quine's name rarely appears. For example, the author manages to devote sections to analyticity and to the indeterminacy of translation without mentioning Quine. Quine is mentioned only on a peripheral point in the section on ontological commitment. Numerous less dramatic omissions involving other authors could be cited. This practice evinces not merely an idiosyncratic way with footnotes. It is symptomatic of a careless approach to opposing positions. Often, quite complicated and thoroughly buttressed philosophical views are trivialized and then dispatched in an off-hand manner.

For example, Chomsky's view that deep structure has psychological relevance is dismissed with the following:

We can *give* a sense to the notion of unconscious mental events or states by appealing either to behavior or to neural happenings. The former is hardly a suitable location for deep structure, so the only hope would seem to lie with the latter, though again the kinds of consideration which those who invoke deep structure are bent on explaining continue to be elusive, questions of meaning being questions of the connections of words with the world, not of intercranial connections (22).

Quite apart from other weaknesses and (potential) strengths in this passage, it is deplorable that no mention is made of Chomsky's claim that

linguistic theory helps explain intuitive judgments of grammaticality. (And it is left completely unclear what is meant by “locating” deep structure in “behavior.”) Quine’s indeterminacy thesis is rejected on comparably thin grounds. The discussion of the ontology of discourse about numbers, in which the author criticizes Platonism and maintains that numbers are “notational objects” (roughly, equivalence classes of numerals), contains no mention of the reals. Attempts to systematize intuitions about validity and other semantical notions within a formal semantical theory are criticized piecemeal (though with the apparent intention of rejecting them wholesale) without careful discussion of their motives and intended idealizations.

The piecemeal character of these criticisms has a counterpart in the failure to articulate a competing method. The author appears to think that “definitions” of grammatical categories are worthwhile (pp. 11–12) and seems to assume that traditional categories, such as that of a grammatical subject, are unquestionably appropriate (pp. 8–10) in analyzing language. But the aim of such analysis is not characterized except with the vague phrase “an understanding of the behavior of a given term” (p. 12). The discussion of theories of logical inference makes the point that paraphrases of different surface sentences in terms of a single logical form fail to “explain” actual practice because one must still give rules connecting the different surface sentences and motivate any claim that a person’s reasoning actually takes such a route (p. 28). To be sure. But these are hardly objections in principle (even if one grants that the point of such appeals to logical form is to play a role in explaining psychological processes, as distinguished from providing a norm for deductive practice to which usage approximates). An approach to the logical form of natural language that appeals to paraphrases into first order formal logic may be seen as an incomplete initial hypothesis that challenges one to do better. The author’s own deflationary suggestions about how such explanations of actual inferential practice should go (pp. 28–29) seem to the reviewer to be unpromisingly vague and unsystematic, even judged against the author’s own envisaged “comprehensive taxonomy” relevant to logical inferences.

The author is often at odds with attempts to represent (some) semantically relevant features of certain sentences in terms of deductive inferences, on the grounds that appropriateness, not truth, is the relevant evaluative category. Unaccountably, there is no mention of the relevance of Gricean implicatures—conventional or conversational—or the large literature on presupposition.

For all its philosophical drawbacks, the book under review is a contribution to the understanding of the actual usage of philosophically important terms. In this respect, it makes many worthwhile, original points. Even one

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at odds with the author's philosophical claims may find these points of use and interest. The book's index is sufficiently detailed to make it thus serviceable as a reference source.

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CRITIQUES OF CONFUCIUS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA. By KAM LOUIE. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1980. Pp. x, 186.

Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China is a survey of the tides of evaluation and criticism of the person of Confucius in Communist China. It includes a one-chapter survey of comments about Confucius from late Ching and Republican China. The main theme of the book is the flow of Marxist-Maoist-oriented criticism of Confucius. These criticisms are simultaneously a reflection of the political climate and a vehicle for waging political battles. The central topics are the cultural revolution and its aftermath—the Anti-Confucian movement. The final chapter is an appropriately brief discussion of the short-lived “New Hundred Flowers” liberalization. It focuses mainly on the alleged crimes of the “Gang of Four.”

The study does not illuminate Confucianism as a philosophical system. The author has selected only discussions of Confucius himself. The issue which seems to interest the author is whether or not the individual, Confucius, should be respected or worshipped. Even these discussions of Confucius's class, his consciousness, his motivations, and his political activity do not seem intended to explain either Confucianism as an ideology or the Marxist view of that ideology. They appear, rather, to be dummy topics for indirect political battling among political factions within the intelligentsia of Communist China.

The book, as a result, is primarily interesting as a chronicle of intellectual skirmishes against the background of political struggle in China. A remarkable amount of the political strife was channeled into this kind of evaluation and criticism of an ancient philosophical personality. Imagine intellectualized political debates being waged in terms of how highly we ought to regard Plato as a political actor. Recent “evangelical” politics come close. China's debates strongly suggest that the issue (as seen by the author and most of the intellectuals he surveys) is still Confucius as a semi-divine personality, and therefore, Confucianism as a religion.

One can learn almost nothing about the content of Confucian thought