Notes on Books


This book concerns one of the most fundamental and hot problems of contemporary epistemology, philosophy of mind and semantics, namely the externalism/internalism controversy, supplemented by the question of semantic competence. Dellantonio’s study consists of the following parts (plus bibliography and index of names): Einleitung; 1. Der Inhalt propositionaler Einstellungen: Einführung in das Problem; 2. Internalismus und Externalismus; 3. Der Externalismus von Putnam and Burge; 4. Donald Davidson. Eksternalismus und propositionaler Geist; 5. Repräsentationalismus und Semantik: Der Inernalismus von Ray Jackendorf; 6. Repräsentationaler Externalismus: Die Theorien von Fodor und Dretske: Schlusfolgerungen: Geist und Bedutung.

The reviewed book outlines several approaches to the problem of meaning. The author divides them into externalistic and internalistic. Whereas the latter are based on the narrow content, the former employ the concept of the wide content. Dellantonio focuses on looking for a theory which correctly explains semantic competence, that is, grasping the meaning of linguistic items. She argues that internalism performs this job much better than internalism. Thus, Dellantonio rejects externalism and argues for internalism. According to the author, internalism is also more proper for a successful account of representation. Dellantonio’s approach follows Ray Jackendorf’s internalism, but she supplements his ideas by new accounts. In particular, Dellantonio finds Jackendorf’s view as too weak for explaining the relation between non-interpretative information and representation. Although the author clearly sees how externalism and internalism are related to the relation between mind and language, she neglects some traditional epistemological issues almost entirely. In particular, Dellantonio does not discuss the consequences of her approach.

This book proposes a new approach to the problem of being and non-being. The author declares his irritation concerning the classical idea of dividing being into real (actual) being and possible being with further distinctions of the latter into logically possible, metaphysically possible, conceivable, etc. Lalla’s solution of the traditional problem of being and its species consists in taking non-being (*Nichtsein*) as the most fundamental ontological category. However, one should be immediately warned to do not understand non-being as the negation of being. Lalla’s starting point takes non-being as closely related to intentionality.

The book has two parallel levels, historical and systematic. Lalla begins with a long introduction (40 pp.) in which he outlines and explains his position. Chapter 1 offers a field of themes concerning methodological and conceptual issues. The problem of intentionality is the subject of chapter 2. The author continues the line of Brentato, Husserl, Searle and Chisholm. This means for Lalla that the problem of intentionality exceeds the purely psychological area and enters the domain of epistemology and ontology. The next chapter is historical and concerns Gregorius Ariminensis (Gregory of Rimini). Chapter 3 returns to a systematic analysis and investigates some special questions grouped under a general heading “Divergence”, namely transreality and transcendentality, non-identity and formality, and semantics and being of being. Duns Scotus’ ontological ideas are discussed in Chapter 5. A treatment of subsistency, dissimilarity and convergence as kinds of disparity (*Disparheit*) has its place in Chapter 6. The next two chapters focus on views of Robert Reininger and Alexius Meinong. The last part (Chapter 7) briefly summarizes the whole analysis and poses some prospects for further considerations. The books ends with an extensive bibliography. Unfortunately there are no indexes. This is an essential fault, because of the considerable size of Lalla’s work.

An important aspect of Lalla’s book consists in combining approaches coming from phenomenology (in a wide sense, that is, including Brentano and Meinong) as well as analytic philosophy, although it is wondering why Gustav Bergmann is overlooked; his views seem much more interesting than theories of Reininger. However, the author uses several
concepts borrowing from logic and semantics too vaguely. This concerns identity above all. For example, the identity of non-being is closely related to identity across possible worlds. Also formality has no clear meaning and it is not always transparent whether the author has in his mind the formal in a logical or ontological sense. Although Lalla’s explanations are enough to understand that non-being has positive connotations and does not signify the objectless, the author’s terminological decision is dubious. I expect that some readers will automatically think about non-being as the negation of being. Perhaps the author should employ a more neutral label than “non-being”, for example, “being something” (Etwas). Since Lalla’s work concerns one of the deepest ontological problems and offers new insights, it is of interest for everybody interested in fundamental problems of philosophy.


This book can be considered as a concise guide in the history of common sense as a philosophical category and its applications in various fields. The monograph consists of the following segments: Introduction; 1. Common sense in Reid, Austin, Searle, Moore, and Wittgenstein; 2. Common sense in Hume; 3. Common sense in Kant; 4. Common sense and folk psychology; 5. Common Sense and Proverbs; 6. Common knowledge in game theory; Concluding remarks and outlook; Bibliography; Index (personal as well as of subjects; this is a remarkable feature of the reviewed book, because many books published by Peter Lang have no indexes or very restricted ones).

The historical information is fairly useful. However, if the author devoted a special chapter to Kant, it is surprising that she overlooked, except parenthetical remarks, Aristotle, the Schoolmen or Brentano. Another historical problem which seems interesting is whether there was any relation between the development of common law in England and the rise of the concept of common sense in British philosophy, because, *prima facie*, “common” in “common law” and “common” in “common sense” seem closely related. Chapters 4 – 6 are systematic and show how common sense is related to folk psychology, ordinary wisdom as expressed by proverbs, and game theory, including decision theory. The last application seems particularly interesting, because it can be argued that common sense fills a gap between risk and uncertainty in decision making. On the other hand, there is no mention of such topics as
commonsensical reasoning, reasoning about knowledge, non-monotonic logic, commonsensical physics, etc. Bertrand Russell once said that since common sense leads to physics, and physics shows that common sense is false, then if common sense is true, it is false, then false. This reasoning shows the main epistemological problem of common sense, namely its cognitive credibility. Unfortunately, this question is not very much discussed in Ledwig’s study.


Friedrich Albert Lange became the ordinarius in philosophy in Mahrburg in 1872. He died 3 years later. Lange, employing a custom that the ordinarius could point out his successor, designed Hermann Cohen. Usually, Cohen is considered as the founder of the Mahrburg branch of Neokantianism. However, the role of Lange should be not neglected. He was a distinguished philosopher, active in theoretical psychology (a physiological Lange’s-James’ theory of feelings), logic (an anticipation of some features of formalism) and history of philosophy (a very influential *History of Materialism*, translated in many languages, including Polish).

The book Mayhofer and Vanecek reminds Lange’s life, political views, academic achievements and influence. Lange’s biography is outlined in Chapter 1. The next chapter concerns Lange as a psychologist. Chapter 3 is devoted to his philosophical view. Finally, Lange’s influence is discussed in Chapter 4. All topics in the book are situated in a broad historical context. For example, the part in which Lange’s psychology is presented contains many very interesting historical details and comparisons concerning the concept of soul in antiquity, the Middle Ages, modern philosophy in the 16th and 17th century, French materialism, Kant and German idealism. Meyerhofer and Volecek also describe the controversy over methods of psychology in Herbart, Carus, Fries, Beneke, Müller, Lotze, Helmhotz and Fechner. In fact, this chapter provides a brief history of German psychology in the 19th century. Special attention is given to Lange’s role in the separation of psychology and philosophy, but also Lange’s own experimental works are summarized. It is perhaps surprising that William James is not mentioned in this place at all. The chapter about Lange as a philosopher also focuses on methodological questions, metaphilosophical in order to employ a fashionable
contemporary jargon. In particular, Lange’s contributions to the understanding of transcendental deduction and critical method. Lange’s approach to materialism is the second main topic to which this chapter is addressed. The last chapter shows how Lange was influential in philosophy. His importance for Neokantianism is obvious. However, he also prepared Cohen’s socialism and Eduard Bernstein’s revisionism.

In general, this book is a very valuable study in the history of philosophy, written in the style of the history of ideas.

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