

## BOOK - REVIEW

*Philosophy of Meaning and Representation*, by R. C. Pradhan, D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1996. pp. 203, Price. Rs. 225.

In the book *Philosophy of Meaning and Representation*, Dr Pradhan's attempt is to build up an autonomous theory of meaning. For him, representationality is one of the underlying features of language use. Moreover, his primary concern is to bridge up the dualism that has been sustained in semantics so far as the understanding of the reality is concerned. Hence, this book discusses the most important problems and issues related to language, truth, meaning and the reality by defending the autonomy of linguistic representation of the world. The analysis of linguistic representation reveals the structure of language, meaning, and truth that co-exist within a semantic space, and what he calls the *semantic field* which paves the way of understanding the reality.

From the very beginning till the end of his discussions on the notion of linguistic representation, it is clear that it is in no way connected with mental representations. He discards the mentalistic approach to semantics. Mental representation, according to him, is different and is purely functional in its character which needs the help of linguistic representation for its understanding. Linguistic representation is not only different from but also independent of mental representation.

The author takes the speaker as the *linguistic being* whose participation or the being-in-the-world is authentic for explicating the very structure of the language game performed in a form of life. As a result of which the notion of truth is manifested with a better accessibility. Moreover, the nature of meaning reveals only through the analysis of the grammar. Meaning and representation are not two separate entities, rather, both are intrinsic to each other. Further, the author characterizes the nature of linguistic representation by stating that

representation plays two important roles. On the one hand, it shows the directedness or *aboutness* towards the world or the structural relationship with the world. On the other, it talks about its own structure and function. Thus, Dr. Pradhan strongly feels the legitimacy of advocating the autonomy of semantics.

In order to propound such a comprehensive theory of meaning the author undertakes a close examination of the accounts of both classical theory of meaning advocated by Frege and early Wittgenstein and the post-Fregean semantics developed by later Wittgenstein, Donald Davidson, W. V. Quine and Dummett, where he finds that *representation* has a strong presence in their discussion of the theory of semantics. Frege maintains the linguistic dichotomy of sense and reference in his semantical framework by giving an ontological status to 'sense'. But in the discussion of linguistic representation Dr. Pradhan does not treat the notion of sense as something metaphysical. Rather it objectifies meaning and ensures the representation of the world. In his initial discussion, the author has also taken the study of 'sense' thoroughly in the early Wittgenstein and later Wittgenstein. In early Wittgenstein the sense has no independent existence; rather it is embedded in the very structure of proposition itself. It is the logic of language which unfolds the structure of language, meaning as well as the structure of the world it represents. Hence, according to the author, there is nothing contingent about the meaning of the representation of language. Whereas in his later philosophy, Wittgenstein treats the 'sense' that is being apprehended through contextualizing and systematizing its use, i.e., following a rule of the language game. The author, however, believes in the holistic network which constitutes the *linguistic space*. The content of the representation is realized within the circle of the language-game. Answering to the non-representationalist model of language and meaning, Dr. Pradhan clearly justifies his position by adhering to classical theory of meaning in a very strict sense by stating that representationality of language is per-theoretical in its nature.

Dr. Pradhan takes up in his study Davidson and Dummett who advocate a representational theory of meaning. According to them, truth is primary for the understanding of meaning of the representation and interpretation. Davidson's conceptual scheme puts emphasis on the immanent aspect of truth-based semantics which has closer affinity towards the conceptual holism of W.V. Quine.

Davidson treats truth as an independent concept which is meaningful without depending upon other ontological entities, like objects and facts. Thus the intelligibility of linguistic representation is grounded in truth conditions of a sentence. Though Dummett rejects such a holism, he maintains a parallelism between truth and language use by a specific group of participants. Hence, for him, truth is confined to certain conditions which do not rule out the empirisistic or verificationistic conception of assertability of truth. Bringing out a balance in holism, the author talks about the unchanging nature of truth which is beyond mere *solidarity*, mutual trust and reciprocity of the community. It is not context bound rather language bound, because it can be transparent within the representational theory of meaning. The very act of representation discloses meaning along with the other links and activities that are underlying the semantic field. In the author's opinion sense includes the emergence of conventional force, intention and context. By stating this the author rejects the anti-realistic conception of meaning of those who advocate that meaning can be explained without taking truth-conditions into account.

In the concluding chapter the author rejects the naturalistic semantics advocated by Quine. Naturalistic semantics, according to Quine, tries to eliminate the metaphysical notion of sense and emphasizes the skeptical attitude about the determination of meaning and reference. Thus, for Quine, naturalistic semantics is based upon the logic as well as science of human behaviour. The author appreciates naturalistic thesis so far as the rejection of mentalistic conception of meaning is concerned. At the same time he says that while rejecting the importance of transcendentalism of first philosophy, naturalists themselves fall into the trap of skepticism. It is precisely so because naturalistic semantics cannot be skeptical about the existence of semantic facts of the language. And the very notion of reduction of meaning to psycho-physical facts leads to the denial of semantic facts. Thus it implies the collapse of their theory. Secondly, so far as sense of the sentence is concerned, the author proposes some sort of a non-naturalism in order to bridge the gap between the linguistic expression and the act of understanding the linguistic activity. The author says that meaning of the linguistic representation can be explained without committing ourselves to any sort of metaphysics if and only if the linguistic expression follows the basic laws of articulation and representation, that is, the representation must be designed by following proper grammar.

No doubt, the author's effort undertaken for setting up the theory of autonomy of meaning deserves a serious attention. It also needs to be emphasized that the author's claim about the primacy of linguistic representation over the mental representation needs consideration so far as truth and meaning are concerned. However, it can also be pointed out that articulation of the mental representation and understanding of it is possible through the language. But one can well think of states of mind such as belief, intention, hope, desire, etc. which are not expressed in language. Even though language has the potency of representing them, still what is important is their being pre-linguistic mental states. Thus, it is up to the reader to judge whether the mental representations can be wholly taken care of by linguistic representation.

-- Ranjan Kumar Panda