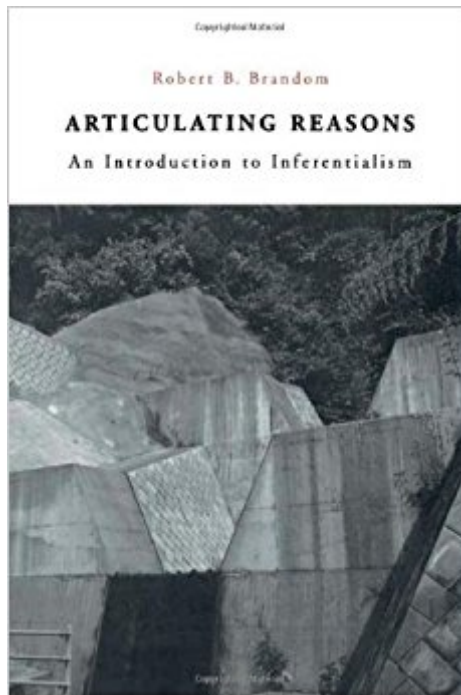




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Articulating Reasons: An Introduction To Inferentialism



Synopsis

Robert B. Brandom is one of the most original philosophers of our day, whose book *Making It Explicit* covered and extended a vast range of topics in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language--the very core of analytic philosophy. This new work provides an approachable introduction to the complex system that *Making It Explicit* mapped out. A tour of the earlier book's large ideas and relevant details, *Articulating Reasons* offers an easy entry into two of the main themes of Brandom's work: the idea that the semantic content of a sentence is determined by the norms governing inferences to and from it, and the idea that the distinctive function of logical vocabulary is to let us make our tacit inferential commitments explicit. Brandom's work, making the move from representationalism to inferentialism, constitutes a near-Copernican shift in the philosophy of language--and the most important single development in the field in recent decades. *Articulating Reasons* puts this accomplishment within reach of nonphilosophers who want to understand the state of the foundations of semantics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a meta-linguistic study of meaning, for Brandom (philosophy, Univ. of Pittsburgh) wants to know the meaning of "meaning." We normally take each other to mean things by what we say, and Brandom wants to determine in what this "taking to mean" consists. This leads him to an analysis of conceptualization and then to an inquiry into what separates concept users from non-concept users. He concludes that in making claims and in giving and asking for reasons, concept users show

mastery over the inferences that are logically entailed in the concepts. Non-concept users cannot do this. Meaning, then, appears to consist in the application and understanding of concepts and is limited to beings with a certain cognitive apparatus. This synopsis is a bit disingenuous; Brandom deals throughout with most of the central issues in contemporary analytic philosophy, and the level of discourse is highly technical. It is likely that only readers well versed in the subject will find this accessible. Leon H. Brody, U.S. Office of Personnel Management Lib., Washington, DC Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Displaying a sovereign command of the intricate discussion in the analytic philosophy of language, Brandom manages successfully to carry out a program within the philosophy of language that has already been sketched by others, without losing sight of the vision inspiring the enterprise in the important details of his investigation. Using the tools of a complex theory of language, Brandom succeeds in describing convincingly the practices in which the reason and autonomy of subjects capable of speech and action are expressed. (Jürgen Habermas)

This book is enough for you to be an Inferentialist. Rather, this book makes you an Inferentialist. Before that, you need some knowledge of symbolic logic. Only you need is to know logic, in order to be an Inferentialist by reading this book.

This short book stands in relation to the author's "Making it Explicit" as Kant's "Prolegomena" stands to his "Critique of Pure Reason." It's a solid, relatively friendly introduction to his inferentialist semantics and expressivist conception of logic (and philosophy). It will probably best serve those already versed in analytic philosophy of language and epistemology. In contrast to "Making it Explicit," there's not a lot of history in here, and few points of contact with continental philosophy. The point of this book is to render the highlights of the bigger work in a much more digestible form. If you're killing yourself trying to figure out chapters 6-8 of "Making it Explicit," give this a shot. This reviewer, for one, found the summaries in the shorter work very helpful. In fact, "Articulating Reasons" might better be thought of as a companion rather than an introduction to "Making it Explicit." Reading the former alongside the latter would be a profitable endeavor. In sum, Brandom's ideas about meaning, intentionality, practical reason, normativity and justification are some of the most exciting around. "Articulating Reasons" is probably the best way to start trying to get a grip on them. (By the way: students of epistemology won't want to miss the chapter on Goldman's

reliabilism.)

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