

A Symposium on Emotive Meaning

SOME QUESTIONS

ABOUT EMOTIVE MEANING

"The separation of prose from poetry, if we may so paraphrase the distinction, is no mere academic activity: There is hardly a problem outside mathematics which is not complicated by its neglect, and hardly any emotional response which is not crippled by irrelevant intrusions. No revolution in human affairs would be greater than that which a wide-spread observance of this distinction would bring about." — I. A. RICHARDS, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 274.

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The exaggeration is almost justified by the importance of the topic. The problem of distinguishing between "emotive" and "scientific" or "referential" uses of language is more than a technical puzzle. If we knew the best answer we might make more progress in dealing with the venerable problems of the relations between "Heart and Mind," Religion and Science, Faith and Reason, or the other antitheses that obfuscate philosophical discourse. To have recognized that questions of *meaning* may profitably take precedence over questions of knowledge, evidence, and truth is to have made some progress already. But I am not sure that we have done much more than recognize that scientific discourse is not the sole significant mode of human communication. It is something to be in no danger of confusing Kierkegaard with Clerk Maxwell; but a theory of symbolism might be expected to yield a richer harvest.

To label "nonreferential" uses of language "emotive" gets us no further: the recognition of a difference is insufficient to establish a