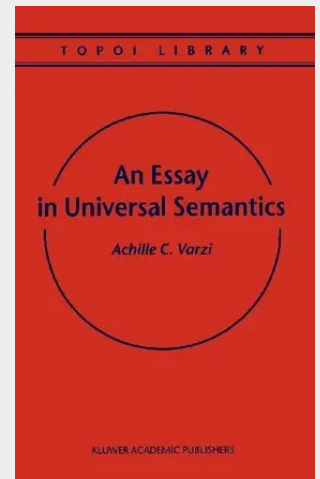


An Essay in Universal Semantics

Like the journal *TOPOI*, the *TOPOI Library* is based on the assumption that philosophy is a lively, provocative, delightful activity, which constantly challenges our inherited habits, painstakingly elaborates on how things could be different, in other stories, in counterfactual situations, in alternative possible worlds. Whatever its ideology, whether with the intent of uncovering a truer structure of reality or of shooting our anxiety, of exposing myths or of following them through, the outcome of philosophical activity is always the destabilizing, unsettling generation of doubts, of objections, of criticisms. It follows that this activity is intrinsically a dialogue, that philosophy is first and foremost philosophical discussion, that it requires bringing out conflicting points of view, paying careful, sympathetic attention to their structure, and using this dialectic to articulate one's approach, to make it richer, more thoughtful, more open to variation and play. And it follows that the spirit which one brings to this activity must be one of tolerance, of always suspecting one's own blindness and consequently looking with unbiased eye in every corner, without fearing to pass a (fallible) judgment on what is there but also without failing to show interest and respect.

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