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Review of H.F. Eggeling, A
Dictionary of Modern German Prose
Usage

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enough and to spare. But it was the imagination of experience, not of transcendence, and this primary distinction is not to be blurred.

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A Dictionary of Modern German Prose Usage.

By H. F. EGGELING. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961. Pp. xii + 418.

"The purpose of this volume . . . is to provide teachers and students of German, and others whose calling demands a sound knowledge of standard German prose, with a reliable guide in the many cases of difficulty which that language presents" (p. v). As this statement suggests, the book offers a kind of Fowler for the English-speaking user of German and invites comparison with normative works of the same sort available in the German-speaking countries, such as Wustmann's *Sprachdummheiten* and the orthographic, stylistic, and grammatical volumes of the Duden series. Despite the prescriptive orientation, the book is made useful for more scholarly purposes by its wealth of citations from authors ranging from MHG times (for occasional historical discussions) to the present. Almost half of the authors listed in the Appendix (which is not an exhaustive list) were born between 1851 and 1900. Quotations are identified only by the author's name, a limitation obviously necessary in a work of this size and scope.

The main body of the work consists of a series of articles which are ordered alphabetically by headings that are (somewhat capriciously) now German, now English. Most of the articles deal with the habits of individual words, giving information as to orthographic conventions (e.g., *deutsch*), morphological irregularities or fluctuations (e.g., *hängen*), syntactic problems (e.g., the idiomatic collocations of prepositions and verbs, such as *sinnen* with *über* or *auf*). The author also draws stylistic distinctions in these areas as well as in matters of lexical choice (e.g., *Roß* vs. *Pferd*). Copious cross-references allow the author to deal with parallel problems in one place, and there are a number of articles on

general topics such as "word order," "nouns of measure," "*Monatsnamen*." Synonymy is treated both in the sorts of articles referred to above and, in many instances, by discussing an English word that can be rendered by several different German words (e.g., "place"). As is apparent, Eggeling has attempted to cover a very large territory indeed.

The author displays a rather conservative orientation (as is proper in a book of this type), but he is generous in providing counterexamples for many of his prescriptions. The "Prose Usage" of the title must be taken literally. In spite of Molière, prose is as far removed from speech as is verse, and the book has little to say about the modern spoken idiom. As for "modern," the adjective will fit better if we qualify it by "literary" or "formal" and think of it as applying to the period from, say, 1800 on. Linguistically, the author is very conservative, if not quaint, as in the use of such terms as "Saxon genitive" (used in German pedagogy to refer to the English possessive case, but by Eggeling for the pre-posed genitive in German). His innocence of the various linguistic advances (or heresies) of our century is pristine.

As in any book of this range, it would be possible for the reviewer to quibble with details. Historical information is not always relevant (cf. *Ablaut*, p. 4). The discussion of the "subjunctive mood" is confusing in its failure to distinguish sharply between the tense system of the subjunctive and that of the indicative: there is no *tense* difference between *sei* and *wäre*. *Sondern* is not "used to introduce a proposition which *contradicts* a preceding *neg[ative]* statement or idea" but rather one which contradicts the positive statement underlying the negation, s.v. *aber* (conjunction). A more serious criticism is that the author gives no precise documentation for the authorities he cites (as opposed to the examples from leading authors). Thus, it is impossible to discover from the book whether a statement on a particular usage is made by Konrad Duden himself in one of his several works or in one of the later volumes of *Der große Duden*, each existing in several quite different editions.

The value of the book lies in its handiness (compared to larger more specialized works) and in its wealth of factual detail. It will furnish a useful tool for the writer of German and can be recommended to advanced students as well as to non-specialists desiring a reference work on many points of German usage.

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