

BOOK NOTICES

Donald Davidson *The Essential Davidson* (with an introduction by Ernie Lepore and Kirk Ludwig). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, 282 pp.

Donald Davidson (1917–2003) was one of the most important and influential figures in 20th century American philosophy. In recent years Clarendon Press has published and republished five volumes collecting his 85 essays and replies to critics. The papers are organized into the following five volumes: ‘Essays on Actions and Events’ (vol. 1), ‘Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation’ (vol. 2), ‘Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective’ (vol. 3), ‘Problems of Rationality’ (vol. 4), and ‘Truth, Language, and History’ (vol. 5). The most recent addition is *The Essential Davidson*, a collection of 15 texts, the classics of contemporary philosophy, especially philosophy of language.

The papers are divided into two parts, ‘Philosophy of Action and Psychology’ (7 essays) and ‘Truth, Meaning, and Interpretation’ (8 essays), and preceded by an introductory essay by Lepore and Ludwig, who have already co-authored a number of articles and two books on Davidson (cf. Lepore and Ludwig 2005, 2006). This introduction is meant to be an invitation and map that helps to place Davidson’s essays in relation to one another (p. 19). The editors also comment on Davidson’s life and intellectual background and the major themes in his philosophy.

It is impossible to single out the ‘most important’ or ‘most influential’ essay in the collection. For example, in ‘Mental Events’ (originally published in 1970), Davidson developed his theory of anomalous monism (an alternative mind-body theory) and introduced into the philosophy of mind the concept of supervenience:

Although the position I describe denies there are psychophysical laws, it is consistent with the view that mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics. Such supervenience might be taken to mean that there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respect without altering in some physical respect. (p. 111)

As far as Davidson’s contribution to language study and philosophy of language is concerned, his ‘The Logical Form of Action Sentences’ (1967) introduced the concept of event arguments and hence inspired research in event semantics, ‘Truth and Meaning’ (1967) has been seminal for philosop-

hical-linguistic research, ‘On Saying That’ (1968) is an important contribution to the debate on propositional attitudes, and ‘What Metaphors Mean’ (1978) is still worth close and critical rereading, especially after the advent of cognitive theories of metaphor. Two other chapters, ‘Radical Interpretation’ (1973) and ‘A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs’ (1986), offer philosophical insights on translation and interpretation, the latter essay provides the famous and provocative closing remark:

I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions. (p. 265)

Lepore and Ludwig observe that Davidson’s work is difficult, “in breadth, influence, and interconnection of themes” (p. 19). At the same time, however, it offers an intellectual feast, inspiring and thought-provoking. Though many – if not all – of these texts have been often anthologized, it is good to see them collected in one volume.

References

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Claudia Maienborn and Angelika Wöllstein (eds), *Event Arguments: Foundations and Applications (Linguistische Arbeiten 501)*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2005, vi + 368.

Event Arguments: Foundations and Applications brings together 13 papers first presented at a workshop on “Event arguments in syntax, semantics and discourse” organized in February 2003, in Munich, as a part of the annual meeting of the German association for linguistics (DGfS). Claudia Maienborn and Angelika Wöllstein, the editors of the volume, observe in the Introduction that: “Since entering the linguistic stage in the late sixties, Davidsonian event arguments have taken on an important role in linguistic theorizing” (p. 1). The 13 papers which follow testify to this claim.

The volume is organized into four sections: I 'Events – states – causation' (5 contributions), II 'Event nominals' (2 papers), III 'Events in composition' (3 papers), IV 'Measuring events' (3 contributions). The papers are preceded by the editors' introduction (1–7), and furnished with author index (357–360) and a detailed subject index (361–368).

In the opening paper Manfred Bierwisch discusses 'The event structure of CAUSE and BECOME' (11–44). He compares different ways in which event arguments are structurally anchored in three approaches: Davidsonian, neo-Davidsonian (developed especially by James Higginbotham and Terence Parsons), and Reichenbachian, and convincingly demonstrates that the last one provides the more appropriate analysis for compositionally complex verbs (such as inchoatives and causatives). Next, Stefan Engelberg elaborates on 'Stativity, supervenience, and sentential subjects' (45–68). He concentrates on a class of verbs that do not fit easily into the Davidsonian scheme, namely the dispositional verbs (such as German *hufen* 'help', *gefährden* 'endanger', *erleichtern* 'facilitate'). Such verbs may have an eventive or stative reading depending on whether the subject is nominal or sentential. Trying to account for their readings Engelberg introduces the philosophical concept of supervenience (as developed by Donald Davidson and Jaegwon Kim).

The next paper in the first section is Anita Mittwoch's 'Do states have Davidsonian arguments? Some empirical considerations' (69–87). Mittwoch examines empirical arguments adduced against extending the event-arguments to states, and she concludes that in many cases distributional differences between stative and dynamic predicates are a matter of degree rather than an absolute partition.

Kay-Eduardo González-Vilbazo and Eva-Maria Remberger discuss '*Ser* and *estar*: The syntax of stage level and individual level predicates in Spanish' (89–112). The authors present a minimalist account of the Spanish copula verbs coupled with semantic considerations and the stage level / individual level distinction. In the last article in the first section Horst Lohnstein concentrates on 'Sentence connection as quantificational structure' (113–135). He hypothesizes that a wide range of clausal connectives (such as *while*, *if*, *when*, *because*, etc.) can be analyzed as a parameterized variant of the semantic form of the conditional.

Both contributions in section II discuss the argument structure of deverbal nominalizations. Artemis Alexiadou is concerned with 'Gerund types, the present participle and patterns of derivation' (139–152). The paper, employing the framework of Distributed Morphology, analyzes the distinct syntactico-semantic contexts in which the English *-ing* morpheme is found. On the other hand, Ingrid Kaufman provides a more lexicalist approach to 'Referential argument of nouns and verbs' (153–173). Under this approach argument structure is determined at the level of lexical-semantic structure. Kaufman's analysis is based on a corpus study of German nominalized infinitives.

In section III, Angelika Kratzer argues in 'Building resultatives' (177–212) that adjectival resultatives in German and English are in fact marginal cases of serialization. This process is possible because in those languages (but not in Romance) adjectival roots can enter syntactic derivations without inflection. Daniel Hole attempts at 'Reconciling "possessor" datives and "beneficiary" datives – Towards a unified voice account of dative building in German' (213–242). Hole's paper implements a neo-Davidsonian approach to voice in the spirit of modifications proposed by Kratzer. Hole postulates the existence of the compositional process of Variable Identification, which augments an event description by an additional thematic argument bound by an already existing argument.

In the last paper of this section, Werner Abraham discusses 'Event arguments and modal verbs' (243–274). He is concerned with the deontic and epistemic readings of modal verbs in the Germanic languages, and explains the differences by assuming that control phenomena are involved in the deontic reading, whereas raising is involved in the epistemic reading. This syntactic analysis is further supplemented with findings from event semantics.

The three studies in section IV examine some of the ways in which event arguments can be involved in measuring expressions. Patrick Candal and David Nicolas discuss 'Types of degrees and types of event structures' (277–299). They investigate how certain types of predicates should be connected with certain types of degree scales, and, furthermore, how this can affect the events they describe. They propose a new characterization of (a)telicity in terms of mapping between degrees and events. Regine Eckardt focuses on 'Too poor to mention: Subminimal events and negative polarity items' (301–330). She proposes an event-based pragmatic approach to licensing of negative polarity items, and demonstrates that her approach can predict the distribution of negative polarity items in questions and assertions. In the last contribution Kimiko Nakanishi examines 'Semantic properties of split topicalization in German' (331–356). The paper shows that there is a parallelism ('algebraic parallelism') between different domains of measurement (nominal and verbal).

Event Arguments: Foundations and Applications is an important volume of studies which supply further evidence for the presence of event arguments in linguistic structure. They clearly demonstrate that Donald Davidson's influence on contemporary linguistic research remains very strong.

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