*Philosophy of Language: Revisiting Events Semantics*

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**Handout 3**

**Events, States, and Facts**

**1. Summary of last session: Davidsonian semantics of adverbials**

Pre-Davidsonian semantics of adverbials:

adverbials as predicate modifiers

Does not explain valid inferences with adverbials:

1. Adverbial Drop

(1) John walked slowly.

John walked.

Depends must make use of intensions of verbs:

(2) a. John ran slowly

b. John moved slowly.

Davidsonian semantics of adverbials:

Extensional alternative to intensional analysis of adverbials

2. Inference to Deverbal Nominalizations

(3) John walked slowly.

John’s walk was slow.

An issue:

Premise does not describe maximal event of walking, conclusion does.

3. Adverbial Permutation

(4) John walked slowly with a stick.

John walked with a stick slowly.

An issue:

Adverbial Permutation is not generally valid: generally either discourse-semantic or truth-conditional differences between premise and conclusion.

A solution:

Syntactic cartography?

But what would be the semantics for cartographic syntactic structures?

Neo-Davidsonian event semantics

Verbs as one-place predicates of event; alignment of event participant roles with syntax.

General questions the Davidsonian semantics od adverbials raises

Are implicit events arguments justified – can implicit arguments be freely posited or are there constraints?

Can existential quantifier over implicit arguments be independently justified, and how does it behave wrt. other quantifiers and operators?

Do all verbs have implicit event arguments,

Are all implicit (external) arguments of verbs reserved for events?

Davidson-style analysis of modifiers of adjective

Tropes as implicit arguments of adjectives.

Consequence: adjectives also as adverbials now have an additional implicit argument position.

Challenges for Davidsonain semantics of adverbials

1. The challenge of stacking of adverbials

(5) Mary danced slowly elegantly.

Solution of stacking of adverbials: adverbials, like adjectives

2. The challenge of wide scope of adverbials over quantifiers:

(6) John quickly ate all the chips.

A potential solution:

Truthmaker semantics for adverbials: adverbials apply to truthmakers of quantified sentential units - quantified ‘situations’

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**2. Event classifications (more on November 7!)**

Standard classification:

Verbs describing activities, accomplishments, achievements, states

Linguistic criteria for the distinctions

Activities and states take *for*-adverbials, but not achievements and accomplisments

(7) a. John walked / stood / was satisfied for an hour.

b. ??? John built the box / fell down for an hour.

Accomplishments take *in*-adverbials, but not so achievements:

(8) a. John built the box in an hour.

b. ??? John fell down in an hour.

States

Linguistic criterion:

Stative verbs do not permit the progressive, unlike activities and accomplishments:

(9) a. ??? Mary is owning a house.

b. ??? Mary is resembling her mother.

c. John is walking.

d. John is building a box.

(10) a. Mary is very engaged in the project.

b. ?? Mary is being very engaged in the project.

(11) a. ??? Joe is knowing French

b. Joe speaks French (dispositional)

c. Joe is speaking French. (episodic)

Verbs of bodily posture:

(12) a. John is sleeping / standing / sitting.

b. ??? John is being asleep / is being upright.

States are ‘non-dynamic’

States do not involve changes, but may be based on changes, that is, may obtain in virtue of something dynamic:

(13) a. the state of war, the state of Mary’s training

b. Joe’s very being active /engaged / attentive

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**3. Events and Facts**

**3.1. Fact descriptions**

Explicit fact-descriptions: *the fact that* S

Clausal fact descriptions:

*that* S (sometimes), clausal gerunds (‘imperfect nominals’ (Vendler)): NP’s V-*ing* (*John’s kissing Mary*)

Not every factive verb allows for explicit fact descriptions:

(14) a. John knows that it is raining

b. ?? John knows the fact that i is raining.

(15) a. John saw that it was raining.

b. ?? John saw the fact it was raining.

Language-particular differences!

**3.2. Properties distinguishing facts and events**

Predicates of location and time

(16) a. the rain / event yesterday

b. the fact yesterday

(17) a. the rain in Munich

b. the fact in Munich

(18) a. The meeting was in the room / was yesterday.

b. ??? The fact that they met was in the room / was yesterday.

Predicates of causation (vs. of causal explanation)

(19) a. The rain caused flooding.

b. ?? The fact that it rained caused the fact that the square was flooded.

(20) a. John’s jump broke the table / made the table break.

b. The fact that John jumped ??? broke the table / ok made the table break.

Predicates of (direct) perception

(21) a. John observed Bill’s jump.

b. ??? John observed the fact that Bill jumped.

Predicates of speed, movement, shape, manner, intensity, manifestation

(22) a. John’s speech was slow / strange / loud.

b. ??? The fact that John spoke was slow / strange / loud.

(23) a. John’s jump was high.

b. ??? The fact that John jumped was high.

(24) a. John’s laughter was intense.

b. ??? The fact that John laughed was intense.

Verbs of description

(25) a. Mary described John laughter / John’s jump.

b. ?? John described the fact that John laughed / the fact that John jumped.

A puzzle about verbs of description

(26) a. John described the object: he said it was a book.

b. ??? John described the book: he said it was a book.

**3.3. Conceptions of facts (i.e., non-worldly facts)**

Two views of facts

1. Facts as non-worldly (Strawson1950)

Facts as the obtaining of conditions of objets.

2. Facts as worldly, as part of the world (Austin1979)

Facts as actual situations, actual situations = events?

Facts as true propositions

Most recent defence: A. Betti *Against Facts*, CUP, 2015

Facts are propositions that happen to be true.

Facts are not needed as a separate category in the ontology.

Problems:

Propositions exhibits opacity (involve mode of presentation), but not so facts.

Propositions and facts have different properties:

E.g. truth:

(27) a. The true proposition that S is true.

b. ??? The fact that S is true.

(28) a. Joe proved / believed the true proposition that 2+2=4.

b. ??? Joe proved / believed the fact that 2+2=4.

Facts as ‘propositions qua being true’

(29) a. John qua being a teacher is nice / makes little money / is highly respected.

b. John qua being a business man is ruthless / makes lots of money / is despised.

Problem:

(30) a. John noticed a fact.

b. ??? John noticed a proposition qua being true.

The Kimean conception of events

(31) Kim’s theory of events / facts

For individuals d, d’, properties P, P’, and times t, t’,

[1] [d, P, t] exists iff P holds of d at t.

[2] [d, P, t] = [d', P', t'] iff d = d', P = P', t = t'.

The nature of the proposal

Object introduced by abstraction (or by implicit definition)

The so introduced object has just those properties that come with the method of introduction:

Thus, properties of existence at a time and identity conditions, but nothing else.

Besides acting as objects of mental attitudes, as any object can!

Kim’s definition of events is best considered a definition of (simple) facts.

Result: facts have no properties of concreteness, location, manifestation, shape, extension etc.

But also facts have no parts.

Potentially problematic:

Predicates of part structure are applicable to the denotation of factive clauses

(32) a. Part of the event took place yesterday.

b. John knows in part that the collection was sold.

Facts as modal objects

Moltmann *Objects and Attitudes*, Chap. 7 (OUP, to appear):

Characteristic properties of modal objects:

* have satisfaction conditions (a content)
* have situations as satisfiers (realizers)

Facts modal objects whose satisfiers are actual objects.

Part relation for facts

A set of actual situations *X* is a part of a fact *m* if any situation in *X* is part of a satisfier of *m* and every satisfier of *m* contains a situation in *X* as part.

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**4. The notion of an abstract state**

**4.1. Terminology and examples**

Kimian and Davidsonian states (Maienborn 2007)

Abstract and concrete states (Moltmann 2013)

Abstract state verbs

*Know, own, owe, weigh, resemble, be*

Concrete state verbs

*Sit, stand, lie, sleep*

**4.2. The Stative Adverb Gap**

Most adverbial modifiers are unacceptable with abstract state verbs

Location modifiers:

(33) a. ??? John weighs 100 kilos in Germany.

b. ??? John owns the plane in Germany.

c. ??? John knows French in Munich.

(34) a. John was walking in Munich.

b. John slept in the house.

Manner modifiers:

(35) a. ??? John weighs 100 kilos with difficulty.

b. ??? John owns the horse with effort.

(36) a. John was walking in an unusual way.

b. John stood at the table with difficulty.

Instrumentals, comitatives:

(37) a. ?? John knows French with Mary.

b. ?? John owns the house with a pencil.

c. John slept with a pillow.

Naked infinitival complements:

(38) a. ??? John saw Bill weigh 100 kilos.

b. ??? John saw Bill own the house.

c. Mary saw John seep on the floor.

An ontological account of the Stative Adverb Gap

Abstract state verbs take abstract states as implicit (Davidsonian) arguments.

**4.3. Kim’s (1976) account of events as an account of abstract states**

(47) Kim’s account of events

For individuals d, d’, properties P, P’ and times t, t’:

[1] [d, P, t] exists iff P holds of d at t.

[2] [d, P, t] = [d', P', t’] iff d = d' and P = P'.

(48) The semantics of event nominalizations

For a time t, [*John’s walk*]t = ιe[e = [John, [*walk*], t]]

A common objection to the Kimean account: not every part of an event description is constitutive of the event.

Kim’s response: event-characterising and event constitutive modifiers:

(49) a. John’s slow walk

b. ιe[e = [John, [*walk*], t] & slow([John, [*walk*], t])]

c. [John, [*slowly walk*], t]

(50) a. John’s slow walk was John’s walk.

b. The fact that John walked slowly is the fact that John walked.

(51) Kim’s account of abstract states

For individuals d, d’ and properties P, P’:

[1] [d, P] exists at a time t iff P holds of d at t.

[2] [d, P] = [d', P'] iff d = d' and P = P'.

Result

Abstract states have no spatial location, manifestation, extension, shape etc.

**4.4. Nominalizations of stative verbs**

Stative verbs may permit two types of nominalizations

Abstract state nominalizations

(39) a. ??? John’s resembling Bill is striking / unusual.

b. ??? John knowing French is profound / superficial.

Trope nominalizations

(40) a. John’s resemblance to Bill is striking / unusual.

b. John knowledge of French is profound / superficial.

Spatial modifiers do not show a difference between abstract states and tropes:

Reason: tropes by nature do not allow for spatial modifiers:

(41) a. ??? John’s wisdom / nervousness / happiness was in France.

b. ??? the cake’s deliciousness on the table

But abstract states do not have parts nor can they be measured, unlike tropes:

(42) a. Part of John and Bill’s resemblance is due to their genes.

b. ??? Part of John and Bill’s resembling each other is due to their genes.

(43) a. Part of John’s knowledge of French is due to his year as an exchange student.

b. ??? Part of John’s knowing French is due to his year as an exchange student.

(44) a. There is more resemblance to Bill than resemblance to Mary.

b. ??? There is more resembling Bill than resembling Mary

(45) a. ??? part of John’s being wise / nervous / intelligent

b. part of John’s wisdom / nervousness / intelligence

(46) a. ??? There is more being wise in this book.

b. There is more wisdom in this book.

The Davidsonian argument of *be*

*Be* takes abstract states as implicit arguments.

*Being happy*: abstract state (of being a bearer of a mode)

*Happiness*: mode (trope) or kind of mode (trope)

(36) a. Mary is happy

b. [*be happy*] = {<e, x> |∃t(e = s(‘BEING BEARER OF’, x, t) & happy(x, t))}

Likewise for *have.*

Accounting for the two nominalizations

*Resemble*: underlyingly: *be similar to* (or *have* RESEMBL (abstract nominal root))

*Know*  = underlyingly: *have* KNOWL (abstract nominal root)

*Resemble*: nominalize either *be* or *similar* (or either *have* or RESEMBL)

*Know*: nominalize either *have* or *KNOWL*

That is, a nominalization can refer either to the (implicit) argument of *be / have* (abstract state) or to the (implicit) argument of *similar* / *RESEMBL* or *KNOWL*

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