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The Structure of Truth: The 1970 John Locke Lectures by
Donald Davidson (review)

Claudine Verheggen

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spirit of Blondel's thought is to move beyond the notion of philosophical discourse that is grounded apart from the theological (supernatural). However, he insisted that this be done philosophically, not theologically. On full display in the first of the two main essays of this work is Blondel's mature articulation of philosophy's relation to theology, and his gift for defining the supernatural and the Christian spirit in terms that allow the subjectivity, intimacy, and personalism of the nature–grace relationship between the Creator and creature to emerge, while maintaining the gratuitous nature of grace and reason's autonomy. As he puts it: “the supernatural does not consist only in the sharing of a metaphysical secret, nor in the sudden promotion of anything that we would have a taste for because it would have no connection with our innate aspirations; it consists in a transformation of our faculties, of our hopes, of our natural possibilities; and it confers on the relations between man and God an intimacy that reason could never have foreseen, desired, or procured.”

Blondel was always keen to reaffirm that philosophy itself cannot demonstrate or produce the supernatural, since philosophy is a discipline that confines its discourse to the realm of the natural. However, Blondel maintained that philosophy can and must demonstrate the necessity of both what we have and what we lack. Blondel's essay “On Assimilation” takes up this line of thought by employing the term “assimilation” as a complement to the language and grammar of “analogy.” Blondel contends that analogy is an adequate conceptual tool for drawing out the distinction between Creator and creature, but inadequate for exploring the latter's “assimilation” into the divine life of the Creator.—Robert C. Koerpel, *University of St. Thomas, Minnesota*

DAVIDSON, Donald. *The Structure of Truth: The 1970 John Locke Lectures*. Edited by Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini and Ernie Lepore. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. 120 pp. Cloth, \$35.95—This short book consists of the six Locke lectures Donald Davidson delivered at Oxford in 1970, as well as an introduction by the editors, Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini and Ernie Lepore, who helpfully summarize the contents of each lecture and connect them to pieces that were published before or after the lectures. It is perhaps no wonder that Davidson himself chose not to see the lectures in print, for much of what they contain was eventually published, if it had not already been at the time of the lectures. But this absence of interest on Davidson's part in seeing the lectures in print does not detract from their interest for anyone eager to understand how one of the great philosophical systems of the twentieth century started developing. For the lectures contain not only an already well worked out semantic program but also the seeds of his metasemantic views and their consequences for metaphysics and epistemology. Moreover, the materials he chose not to publish, pretty obviously because he came to relinquish

the views they advocate, may help the reader to understand better the views he did further develop, and why he developed them, or, alternatively, they may prompt the reader to wonder what different path he may have taken, had he not relinquished those early views.

The first lecture, tellingly called "Speaking the Truth," is, to my mind, the most thought-provoking one, for two reasons. First, it endorses a claim that Davidson would famously come to reject, namely, that literal meaning is essentially conventional. Second, it asserts a claim that Davidson always argued for, though this has not always been recognized by his commentators, namely, that meaning cannot be reduced to any nonsemantic notion. The lecture focuses on Davidson's semantic program and thus the idea that a theory of truth could serve as a theory of meaning for a language (here English), that is, a theory that "gives the meanings of all independently meaningful expressions on the basis of their structure." One remarkable thing about the lecture is that Davidson initially chooses (unlike what he had done in "Truth and Meaning," but anticipating "Radical Interpretation") to describe the relation between truth and meaning in terms of the relation between the conditions under which someone speaks the (literal) truth and what she means by her words. Thus, he initially chooses to describe the relation between meaning and truth by appealing to a kind of speech-act. Speaking the (literal) truth is a speech-act, he says, of a kind different from others, such as assertion; indeed, it is "unique" in that it is the only one we can tell has been performed just by knowing the language in which it has been performed, together of course with the way the world is. And it is the only one that is purely conventional, thus "specially suited to systematic study." Interestingly, aside from this blatant claim about meaning being conventional, and, to some extent, because of that claim, the lecture contains many of the claims for which Davidson subsequently further argued. Most notably, Davidson emphasizes the ideas that literal meaning is autonomous, that is, independent of illocutionary force and ulterior purposes (nonlinguistic intentions), and that illocutionary forces are not "wholly definable in terms of conventional procedures." What is also striking about the lecture is that there is no serious attempt to elucidate the nature of meaning in a foundational way. His main goal, Davidson says, is not to provide a "general" theory of meaning but to see how to construct, for a particular language, a theory that would enable us to understand all the linguistic acts, potential and real, performed by the speakers of that language. Thus, at this stage, Davidson's interests are more semantical than metasemantical. This makes it unsurprising that he takes the conventional aspect of literal meaning for granted. But then it is also unsurprising that this is precisely the aspect he will abandon, once he starts wondering, more generally, what it is for words to mean what they do, and thus once he starts reflecting on radical interpretation.

Lecture II has two main goals: that of defending the claim, contra extant theories, that a Tarskian theory of truth is best suited to serve as a theory of meaning for a particular language, and that of drawing the ontological

consequences of adopting a theory of that kind. Importantly, an adequate theory must be finitely axiomatized, and it must respect Tarski's Convention T, that is, it must entail all T-sentences, sentences that specify, for any sentence of the language under study, the conditions under which its utterance is true. In lectures III, IV, and V, Davidson proceeds to show how a Tarskian theory, again contra extant theories, can satisfy Convention T and, in particular, accommodate *prima facie* recalcitrant sentences of a language, such as sentences with quoted expressions, sentences attributing attitudes, and sentences with adverbial modifiers. Davidson devotes one lecture to each of these three themes.

Lecture VI anticipates much of what was to come later in Davidson's career. Here Davidson starts to investigate how we could build a theory of meaning for a language different from that with which we build the theory. Here, thus, he starts reflecting on radical interpretation (still calling it radical translation), focusing on the question how we can tell that the theory of truth we have built is correct, for "to answer this question . . . is to explain . . . how communication by language is possible," and thus "to give an account of meaning," that is, a foundational account. Many of the familiar moves that one must engage in while doing radical interpretation are present, including, centrally, using "acceptance of a sentence" as the evidential base for the theory, where this concept is at once "explicitly intensional" (since it involves the notion of a linguistic response or attitude) and not question-begging (since it does not involve what is meant by an utterance), and including, equally centrally, charity, that is, the policy of making the speaker or speakers for whom the theory is built "as knowing and consistent as possible." Many of the consequences of this foundational theory of meaning for other areas of philosophy are also sketched, including, most strikingly, the seeds of Davidson's arguments against the very idea of a conceptual scheme, as well as his argument against skepticism about the external world. It would take another three decades, including, not incidentally, the extension of Davidson's ideas about radical interpretation to those about triangulation, for the entire philosophical system to be fully worked out.—Claudine Verheggen, *York University*

FINE, Gail. *Essays in Ancient Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. x + 417 pp. Cloth, \$105.00—This volume of thought-provoking essays collects some of Fine's latest work on knowledge and opinion in Plato, as well as including somewhat earlier essays on ancient skepticism and knowledge in Aristotle. The pieces on Plato fill out her earlier books: *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* (2003) and *The Possibility of Inquiry: Meno's Paradox from Socrates to Sextus* (2014). Here she demonstrates once more her ability to expound and celebrate what she finds in the Platonic corpus while comparing the ideas there with those in