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# Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality

Quine and Davidson are among the leading thinkers of the twentieth century. Their influence on contemporary philosophy is second to none, and their impact is also strongly felt in disciplines such as linguistics and psychology. This is the first book devoted to both of them, but also the first to question some of their basic assumptions. Hans-Johann Glock critically scrutinizes their ideas on ontology, analyticity, apriority and necessity, truth, meaning and interpretation, thought and language, and shows that their attempts to accommodate meaning and thought within a naturalistic framework, either by impugning intensional notions as unclear and non-factual or by extracting them from physical facts, are ultimately unsuccessful. His discussion includes interesting comparisons of Quine and Davidson with other philosophers, particularly Wittgenstein. Glock also offers detailed accounts of central issues in contemporary analytic philosophy, such as whether philosophy is continuous with science, whether truth is a feature of sentences or propositions, whether meaning and reference are indeterminate, whether language requires conventions, and whether animals are capable of having beliefs and desires.

HANS-JOHANN GLOCK is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Reading. He is the author of *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (1996), which has been translated into German, French, Portuguese and Polish. He is editor of *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy* (1997), *Wittgenstein: a Critical Reader* (2001), and *Strawson and Kant* (2003), and co-editor (with Robert L. Arrington) of *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (1991), and *Wittgenstein and Quine* (1996).

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*University of Reading*

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Für Gabi

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It is the profession of philosophers to question platitudes that others accept without thinking twice. A dangerous profession, since philosophers are more easily discredited than platitudes, but a useful one. For when a good philosopher challenges a platitude, it usually turns out that the platitude was essentially right; but the philosopher has noticed trouble that one who did not think twice could not have met. In the end, the challenge is answered and the platitude survives, more often than not. But the philosopher has done the adherents of the platitude a service: he has made them think twice.

(DAVID LEWIS 1969: 1)

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In writing this book, I have incurred many debts. I am grateful for permission to use material from the following articles of mine: 'Necessity and Normativity', in H. Sluga and D. Stern (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge University Press), 198–225; 'On Safari with Wittgenstein, Quine and Davidson', in R. L. Arrington and H. J. Glock (eds.), *Wittgenstein and Quine* (London: Routledge, 1996), 144–72; 'Truth without People?', *Philosophy* 72 (1997), 85–104; 'Animals, Thoughts and Concepts', *Synthese* 123 (2000), 35–64; 'Does Ontology Exist?', *Philosophy* 77 (2002), 235–60.

As always, I owe thanks to my colleagues and graduate students at Reading for their forbearance and support. I am especially indebted to Javier Kalhat for his assistance at the final stages. Hilary Gaskin of CUP has been very patient and efficient throughout. Two anonymous readers for the Press improved the book through their fair and constructive reports. Over the years, I have learnt more than I can say from the meetings of the St John's College discussion group at Oxford. Maria Alvarez, Bob Arrington, Jonathan Dancy, Kathrin Glüer, Anthony Kenny, John Preston, Bede Rundle, Stuart Shanker, Ralph Stoecker and Peter Strawson have greatly improved my philosophical understanding through conversations and comments on material contained in this book. Peter Strawson's philosophy of language has also been a general source of inspiration to me.

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# *Abbreviations*

## Works by Quine

### Books

| | |
|---|---|
| *FLPV* | *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980; 1. edn. 1953). |
| *ML* | *Methods of Logic* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966; 1. edn. 1952). |
| *OR* | *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). |
| *PL* | *Philosophy of Logic* (Englewood Cliffs/N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970). |
| *PT* | *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992; 1. edn. 1990). |
| *Q* | *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary* (London: Penguin, 1987). |
| *RR* | *The Roots of Reference* (La Salle: Open Court, 1974). |
| *SLP* | *Selected Logic Papers* (New York: Random House, 1966). |
| *SS* | *From Stimulus to Science* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). |
| *TML* | *The Time of My Life: An Autobiography* (Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press, 1984). |
| *TT* | *Theories and Things* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981). |
| *WB* | *The Web of Belief*, with J. S. Ullian (New York: Random House, 1970). |
| *WO* | *Word and Object* (Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press, 1960). |
| *WP* | *Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976; 1. edn. 1966). |



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**Other items**

| | |
|---|---|
| CBG | 'Comments', in Barrett and Gibson (eds.), 1990. |
| EEW | 'On Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World', *Erkenntnis* 9 (1975), 313–28. |
| ER | 'Events and Reification', in LePore and McLaughlin (eds.), 1985, 162–71. |
| FM | 'Facts of the Matter', in R. W. Shahan and C. Swoyer (eds.), *Essays on the Philosophy of W. V. Quine* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1979), 155–69. |
| IPO | 'In Praise of Observation Sentences', *Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1993), 107–16. |
| ITA | 'Indeterminacy of Translation Again', *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987), 5–10. |
| LAP | 'Let Me Accentuate the Positive', in A. Malachowski (ed.), *Reading Rorty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 117–19. |
| LoC | 'Lectures on Carnap (Harvard University, November 1934)', in Creath (ed.), 1990, 47–103. |
| MR | 'Methodological Reflections on Current Linguistic Theory', in G. Harman and D. Davidson (eds.), *Semantics of Natural Language* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 442–54. |
| MVD | 'Mind and Verbal Dispositions', in Guttenplan (ed.), 1975, 83–95. |
| N | 'Naturalism – or Living Within One's Means', *Dialectica* 49 (1995), 251–61. |
| NNK | 'The Nature of Natural Knowledge', in Guttenplan (ed.), 1975, 67–81. |
| PLSP | 'W. V. Quine: Perspectives on Logic, Science and Philosophy: Interview with B. Edminster and M. O'Shea', *Harvard Review of Philosophy* 4 (1994), 47–57. |
| PPE | 'The Pragmatists' Place in Empiricism', in R. J. Mulvaney and P. J. Zeltner (eds.), *Pragmatism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 23–39. |
| PPLT | 'Philosophical Progress in Language Theory', *Metaphilosophy* 1 (1970), 1–19. |
| PTF | 'Progress on Two Fronts', *Journal of Philosophy* 43 (1996), 159–63. |
| RDH | 'Replies', in Davidson and Hintikka (eds.), 1969. |
| RHS | 'Replies to Critics', in Hahn and Schilpp (eds.), 1986. |
| RI | 'Responses', *Inquiry* 37 (1994), 495–505. |
| RIT | 'On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation', *Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), 178–83. |
| RLS | 'Reactions', in Leonardi and Santambrogio (eds.), 1995, 345–61. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| SAO | 'Semantics and Abstract Objects', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 80 (1951), 90–6. |
| SN | 'Structure and Nature', *Journal of Philosophy* 89 (1992), 5–9. |
| TI | 'Three Indeterminacies', in R. Barrett and R. Gibson (eds.), 1990, 1–16. |
| WPO | 'Whither Physical Objects', in R. S. Cohen et al. (eds.), *Essays in Memory of Imre Lakatos* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1976), 497–504. |
| WWD | 'Where Do We Disagree?', in Hahn (ed.), 1999, 73–9. |

**Works by Davidson**

**Books**

| | |
|---|---|
| *EAE* | *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford University Press, 1980). |
| *ITI* | *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1984). |
| *SIO* | *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford University Press, 2001). |

**Other items**

| | |
|---|---|
| COT | 'The Conditions of Thought', in J. Brandl and W. L. Gombocz (eds.), *The Mind of Donald Davidson. Grazer Philosophische Studien* 36 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), 193–200. |
| CT | 'The Centrality of Truth', in J. Peregrin (ed.), *Truth and its Nature (if any)* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 105–15. |
| DD | 'Davidson, Donald', in Guttenplan (ed.), 1994, 231–6. |
| EX | *Expressing Evaluations*, The Lindley Lecture (monograph), University of Kansas Press, 1984. |
| FDT | 'The Folly of Trying to Define Truth', *Journal of Philosophy* 93 (1996), 263–78. |
| IA | 'Intellectual Autobiography', in Hahn (ed.), 1999, 3–79. |
| LL | 'Locating Literary Language', in R. W. Dasenbrock (ed.), *Literary Theory after Davidson* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 295–308. |
| MTE | 'Meaning, Truth and Evidence', in Barrett and Gibson (eds.), 1990, 68–79. |
| NDE | 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs', in LePore (ed.), 1986, 433–46. |
| PAV | 'Post-Analytic Visions', in G. Borradori (ed.), *The American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 40–54. |
| PCT | 'Pursuit of the Concept of Truth', in Leonardi and Santambrogio (eds.), 1995, 7–21. |

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| | |
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| PEA | 'Problems in the Explanation of Action', in P. Pettit, R. Sylvan and J. Norman (eds.), *Metaphysics and Morality: Essays in Honour of J. J. C. Smart* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 35–49. |
| QVT | 'What is Quine's View of Truth?', *Inquiry* 37 (1994), 437–40. |
| RD | 'Replies', in Stoecker (ed.), 1993. |
| RH | 'Replies to Critics', in Hahn (ed.), 1999. |
| RI | 'Representation and Interpretation', in M. Said et al. (eds.), *Modelling the Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 13–26. |
| RQE | 'Reply to Quine on Events', in Lepore and McLaughlin (eds.), 1985, 172–6. |
| SAL | 'The Social Aspect of Language', in B. McGuinness and G. Oliveri (eds.), *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 1–16. |
| SCT | 'The Structure and Content of Truth', *Journal of Philosophy* 87 (1990), 279–328. |
| STL | 'Seeing Through Language', in Preston (ed.), 1997, 15–27. |
| UT | 'Towards a Unified Theory of Meaning and Action', *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 11 (1980), 1–12. |

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