‘And’

Conjunction Reduction Redux

Comments welcome.

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And': Conjunction Reduction Redux shows that ‘and’ has the same syntax and semantics, that of the sentential logical connective, across the varied constructions in which it is tokened in natural language. The chapters survey the constructions that challenge this thesis. Chapter 2 is about the conjunction of DPs, as in Few Yankees and few Red Sox hugged. Chapter 3 is about the conjunction of predicate phrases—The players were batting and fielding in the bottom of the ninth inning— and Chapter 4 is about conjoined noun phrases—Few Yankees and Red Sox hugged. These constructions have since Aristotle (Lasersohn 1995) stood against the claim that the same and, same meaning and same syntax, occurs in all of them and also in The Red Sox won and the Yankees tied. The illusion of several ands is dissipated once these constructions are correctly translated into Eventish, a logical language with the canonical clause structure described below and a vocabulary for spatial orientation and navigation, Cinerama Semantics.

Eventish, a neo-Davidsonian logical language, has a clause structure distinguished by four features: supermonadicity, adverbialization, AdrPs and descriptive event anaphora. Supermonadicity enlarges verbal decomposition so that every argument relates to its own event: kill is “cause-die” in which the agent’s action is one event, the victim’s death, another. Adverbialization interposes adverbials derived from the descriptive content of every DP so that The superhero is faster than the mild-mannered reporter is understood as “The superhero when a superhero is faster than the mild-mannered reporter when a mild-mannered reporter”, eschewing the contradiction that one is faster than oneself. AdrPs replace all NPs with Address Phrases that locate what nominals denote within scenes or frames of reference, so that most infielders and outfielders is understood as “most infielders here and outfielders there”. Here and there are addresses in scenes or frames of reference that are themselves introduced by tacit description or quantification. The fourth feature, descriptive event anaphora, replaces simple event variables with silent descriptive pronouns: Brutus killed Caesar is, so to speak, “Brutus acted (in some event). That [Brutus’ action] caused this [Caesar’s death]. Caesar died (in some event).” This silent pronoun must be a plural in Cassius eagerly and Brutus reluctantly killed Caesar, referring to the two actions that conspire in Caesar’s death, the one executed eagerly and the other reluctantly.

Nothing about Eventish or Cinerama Semantics mentions and, and they are in any case revisions too fundamental to put in service just to rescue and from ambiguity. Rather, they are called upon to solve puzzles of grammar and meaning unrelated to and. The central thesis of the book falls out as a corollary, as aspects of meaning mistakenly attributed to and are discovered to reflect neighboring structures previously unseen and unacknowledged.

As Peter Lasersohn remarks (1995. Plurality, Conjunction and Events. Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy. Springer), the thesis that in Triangle ABC and Triangle DEF are identical, the and is a sentential connective has not been in vogue since this example of Aristotle’s, except in work by a Dr. Latham (1847) quoted by a Sir John Stoddart (1849). I have had to range widely to take up again
such a quixotic view against its overwhelming challenges (in a brief still shorter than *Don Quixote*). Eventish and Cinerama Semantics as a theory is a few definitions and principles, compact to state, from which follow the solutions to the classic problems in syntax and semantics and philosophy of language surveyed. The book is as long as it is because the argument is relentless, much of it in pursuit of new empirical evidence. I should like to think that a reader will enjoy the read as much for its collection of empirical insights as for any of its theoretical conclusions or arguments.

The book in 15 pp.:  
Chapter 1 of the ms. is also an overview.

The submitted ms. and attached table of contents are in four chapters. The fourth chapter is however half the book and its content and relation to the first three allow it very naturally to become the second volume of a two-volume set. It is also easy enough throughout for chapters to be promoted to parts and sections to chapters, *etc*.

The target audience is mainly semanticists, philosophers of language, and syntacticians, with an invitation (Cinerama Semantics) to cognitive scientists interested in the multi-modal integration of language and spatial orientation and navigation.

i. The mathematical and formal prerequisites are spare. My conviction, aligned with Davidsonian truth-theoretic semantics (v., e.g., Richard Larson & Gabriel Segal. 1995. *Knowledge of Meaning: An Introduction to Semantic Theory*, MIT Press), is that semantic analysis is about the design of a logical language and a regimented translation between natural and logical language, with no model-theoretic apparatus. The background semantic theory and formalism is thus free of those developments in linguistic semantics, specialized and technical, that senior philosophers of language might be unschooled in. There is not a lambda in sight. This is not to say that logical form is an easy read. With the features noted above, the logical language is novel and non-standard; and, given the extensive decomposition argued for, the logical forms of simple sentences end up long and complex. It is however, I hope, a fairly self-contained exercise for those with the patience and eyesight to puzzle through it, without priors in semantic theory or modeling. Prior practice in translation into assorted logical languages will still help of course.

ii. The linguistic prerequisites are those of linguistic argumentation and linguistic analysis applied to unfamiliar languages, leading to results in which syntax and syntactic structures are abstract. One needs a grasp of how given sets of linguistic data could be derived or not from various combinations of unspoken structures, deletions and movements. These are largely empirical arguments, presupposing very little and saying less about the syntactic theory that might deliver the entertained combination of syntactic processes.
iii. In philosophy of language, my reader needs more background than is provided to the semanticist whose gaze never wanders from linguistics but not so much as to be a philosopher proper.

Related books include Lasersohn’s 1995 book mentioned above. It does not take my view of and, and it isn’t in a semantic framework I find congenial; but, it sets a very high standard for scholarship, clarity of exposition, analytical insight and commitment to empirical discovery and explanation, which describes the author’s other work too. Yoad Winter’s 2002 book must also be mentioned, *Flexibility Principles in Boolean Semantics: The Interpretation of Coordination, Plurality and Scope in Natural Language*, Current Studies in Linguistics, MIT Press, which, in contrast, confines itself to what can be safely achieved within the precincts of Boolean semantics, thereby deferring treatment of the more challenging empirical problems and dismissing summarily approaches such as mine that do not conform to doctrine.