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Seminar in Metaphysics: Ontology and Ontological Commitment

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**Term Paper:**

**Ontological Commitment and the Necessity (?) to characterize Events as Individuals - An Investigation in the Light of current scientific Studies**

**1 Introduction**

Our everyday language enables us to express our thoughts, to communicate with other people around us, and to describe the world. However, language is pretty much as old as humankind and it always was, and still is, subject to constant changes and development. Some languages die, some come newly into being, and some just add new words, lose other ones or deal with altering definitions and meanings of single terms. Considering all these shifts, what tells us that we have the right words and the right usage of language to describe the world accurately?

In the late 17th and early 18th century scientists used the term *phlogiston* to describe a substance they thought would be involved in the combustion process. They have never seen this substance or have ever found a way to prove its existence, but it *needed* to exist, in order for scientists to make sense of the combustion process. However, in the 18th century scientists realized there is no such thing as phlogiston, in fact, it is just a chemical reaction between two substances that releases energy. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Weisberg, Michael, Needham, Paul and Hendry, Robin, "Philosophy of Chemistry", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of*

This scientific fallacy helps me introducing two things: First, the assumption that we can never know for sure if our language and ideas correspond with the true nature of the world (in case there is only one, mind-independent world), and second, it is a good example for W. V. Quine's *criterion of ontological commitment*. In short, this criterion reads as follows: "a theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory be true".<sup>2</sup>

Against this backdrop, which I will explore in more detail, I will introduce Donald Davidson, a former student of Quine, and his essay "Events and Particulars"<sup>3</sup>. In this essay he claims that we are not only ontologically committed to events, but that we are also committed to characterize events as individuals. This claim is based on terms we use in our everyday language, such as "Caesar's death", or "the storm in the hills last night". By doing so, according to Davidson, we are "committed to an ontology of events as unrepeatable particulars ('concrete individuals')".<sup>4</sup> His way of thinking results from the conviction "that thoughts and actions must be physical."<sup>5</sup> This is the basic idea of the account of *Anomalous Monism*, which was developed by Davidson himself. Quine handles events and objects as occurrences of the same category, and does not see the need for an ontological distinction between them.

I will set another, more recent essay, into this context. It is the work of Luiz Henrique de A. Dutra, a Brazilian philosopher, and the essay is titled: "How serious is our Ontological

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*Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/chemistry/>.

<sup>2</sup> Willard V. Quine, "On What There Is", published by: Philosophy Education Society Inc. *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (Sep., 1948), pp. 21-38. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20123117>. Accessed: 01/09/2013 13:16. P. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Davidson, Donald, "Events as Particulars", *Noûs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Feb., 1970), pp. 25-32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Yalowitz, Steven, "Anomalous Monism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/anomalous-monism/>.

Commitment to Events as Individuals?"<sup>6</sup> This paper directly aims at discussing Davidson's interpretation of Quine's criterion of ontological commitment and the putative consequences of characterizing events as particulars. Dutra proposes an alternative view which is based on a complementary criterion: *ontological density*. This is one term I will explain in more detail over the course of my paper. In short, however, it is a term "according to which from the point of view of a given theory, we can always distinguish between events (or phenomena) and individuals (entities) [...]".<sup>7</sup> This alternative view entails a few important consequences that conflict with convictions Davidson has.

I will argue that Davidson's account of events, and in this context, of psychology and its object of study is neither conclusive nor coextensive with reality. Besides this, I will show, that he gets deceived by the usage of common language. Further I will assess Dutra's idea of ontological density, which seems to be very intuitive and appealing, but at the same time, I will try to show, that this might be one of the weak points of his theory. Another blind spot is certainly the importance of teleology within his account.

## 2 Criterion of Ontological Commitment

In his essay "On What There is" Quine obviously tries to determine what (kind of) things exist in the world, and how we can tell that they do or do not. His method is not to create a list or to assess every single thing or term. Instead he takes sentences, which we think are true, and examines the ontological assumptions that are involved, in order for the sentences to be true. If

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6 Dutra, Luiz Henrique de A., "How serious is our Ontological Commitment to Events as Individuals?", published by NEL - Epistemology and Logic Research Group. Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil (2005), pp. 43-71.

7 Ibid., p. 43.

someone says "Unicorns don't exist", it can refer to different ontological assumptions. Person X can claim such a thing, because for him the term "to exist" is applicable to things you find in a possible world, or your imagination, as well as in the "real" world. So, the definition and use of the word existence is crucial. For Person Y, however, it is not possible to phrase the sentence "Unicorns don't exist", because by using the word unicorn, he would admit that it *does* exist somehow. Person Y applies the term "to exist" only to things that can be found in the real world.

What follows here is that questions concerning the world have always to be seen in the context of a certain use of language and the accompanying ontology. Furthermore, if people or scientists want to discuss a theory, agree or disagree with each other, it is necessary that they agree on a certain use of language first. This can be described as *Ontological Relativity*. The question "What there is" can only be answered in relation to a certain theory, and what this theory presupposes, and what "language" the theory uses.

Quine manages it<sup>8</sup> to solve the problem of the not-existence, including proper names and abstract terms. On the downside it becomes obvious that there still is no direct connection to the real world. Theories cannot avoid using language. However, this shows the importance of language and Ontological Commitment that comes with it. So, the question on what there is can only be answered in relation to a single theory at a time. Therefore, the chances to develop a profound and general account of what there is, are not very good.

The phlogiston-theory-example fits perfectly into this context. In the 17th and 18th century, the best theory about the combustion process included the existence of phlogiston. Scientists using this theory were ontologically committed to the existence of phlogiston, although we know today, that phlogiston does not exist. So, although this theory was the best

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8 He does so by also using Russell's *Theory of Description*.

available at that time, we know now, that it included something that we cannot find in the world.

### 3 Are we committed to Events?

With all that being said, are we ontologically committed to *events*? According to Quine, we are, but in a very general way. Quine's ontology consists solely of physical objects and sets. He "counts as a physical object the matter occupying any portion of space-time."<sup>9</sup> And he further claims that "each particular act of thinking can be identified with a physical object."<sup>10</sup> This view, also called ontological physicalism, kind of identifies mental identities with physical objects. The same holds true for other events, such as "Caesar's death"; there is a physical difference between its being true and its not being true, a fact of the matter.<sup>11</sup>

So in short, Quine claims we are committed to events. Nevertheless, he does not see the need to ontologically distinguish between objects and events, according to him, both are *particular objects that are identical with space-time-zones*.

Donald Davidson, however, sees things a little bit differently, he claims that events are distinct from objects and that they are *particular objects that are elements of causal connections*.

### 4 Donald Davidson and his *Ontology of Events as unrepeatable Particulars*<sup>12</sup>

Donaldson starts out with the question if there are such things as changes or events at all. He provides the answer to this question as well: according to the use of our language, *there are* events. Language supplies us with "appropriate singular terms, definite and indefinite articles,

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9 Hylton, Peter, "Willard van Orman Quine", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/quine/>>.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Davidson, *Events as Particulars*, p. 25.

sortal predicates, counting, quantification, and identity-statements: all this machinery, it seems, of reference."<sup>13</sup> So, in other words, the way we use language commits us to an ontology of events as unrepeatable particulars.

The term "the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 1906", for example, is a term we use to describe an event. The question is, is there another way to describe the eruption? If it is possible to rephrase this description, we might not be committed to an ontology of events as individuals. Davidson realizes this point too. However, he comes to the conclusion that the best theory still commits us to events as individuals. Here is why: It is possible to rephrase the description "the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 1906" by saying "Vesuvius erupted in AD 1906". This simple change shows that there is no need to introduce a singular term that refers to this event. However, Davidson argues that there are good reasons to maintain the singularity of events. First, it is hard to think of a satisfying theory of action if it is not possible to talk about the same event under different descriptions.<sup>14</sup> The example he gives for this is apologizing. One person apologizes by just saying "I apologize" and the circumstances allow him to do so. Another person might apologize by explaining, what he did was not intentional. In both cases it is a description of the event: apologizing. Second, "the most perspicuous forms of the identity theory of mind require that we identify mental events with certain physiological events."<sup>15</sup> In order for such theories (or their denial) to be comprehensible, events must be individuals.

Davidson claims that it is not possible to give a persuasive account of action, explanation, causality, or of the relation between the psychological and the physical without characterizing

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Davidson, 'The Individuation of Events', in Nicholas Rescher (ed.), *Essays in Honor of Carl G. Hempel*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, reprinted in Davidson 2001. Used version, online: [http://www.fitelson.org/125/Davidson\\_individuation\\_of\\_events.pdf](http://www.fitelson.org/125/Davidson_individuation_of_events.pdf). P. 296.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

events as particulars. The main reason for that is, according to Davidson, that it does not seem possible to give an intuitively convincing account of the logical form of certain sentences, and to show how the meanings of these sentences depend on their composition.<sup>16</sup> At this point, Davidson introduces his idea of identifying action verbs with action predicates, which provides a place within events for them. Given the sentence

*Sebastian strolled through the streets of Bologna at 2 a.m.*

This sentence entails, due to its logical form the sentence

*Sebastian strolled through the streets of Bologna.*

It seems to require that this syntactical fact has to be reflected in the logical form we assign to this kind of sentences. However, the usual way of formalizing instructs us to treat the first sentence as a three-pace-predicate with no option to detach the last part (at 2 a.m.). Here the formalized form of the sentence:

*x strolled through y at t*

Whereas the second, entailed sentence, only contains the unrelated predicate

*x strolled through y*

This seems a little bit odd in the first moment, and it is redundant to add the supplement of a time, since every action takes places at a certain time. However, it might only be this example that suggests so. There is no way of determining "how many places predicates of action or change involve."<sup>17</sup> Davidson's example makes this clear: The fall of the first domino caused the fall of the last by causing the fall of the second, which caused the fall of the third, which caused..., and so on. It is theoretically possible that this concatenation is infinite, or at least close

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

to being infinite. So, it does not seem possible to tell how many places are involved, which proves that the suggested solution does not work.

However, Davidson sees his chance at this point. He proposes to accept that events are individuals and shows that the just depicted problems would vanish this way. So, if we accept this suggestions and treat events as particulars, "Sebastian strolled" can be rephrased as "Sebastian took a stroll"; "strolled" becomes "a stroll" and therefore a particular event. Further, one can say: "There is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a stroll and Sebastian took  $x$ ". Since *taking* a stroll is the only way of performing a stroll, it can be ignored, and the sentence in the end is

*There is an  $x$  such that Sebastian strolled  $x$ .*

The verb "strolled" is provided with an event-place, the " $x$ ".

The initial sentence (Sebastian strolled through the streets of Bologna at 2 a.m.) can now be put as

*There is an event  $x$  such that Sebastian strolled  $x$ ,  $x$  took place in the streets of  
Bologna, and  $x$  was going on at 2 a.m.*

Against this backdrop, there is no need to worry about the entailments anymore.<sup>18</sup>

The question that arises at this point is, why are these kinds of sentences events and not facts? The stabbing of Caesar, for example. Intuitively it is hard to make a distinction between an event and a fact. And the common practice in literature is also to not distinguish between events and facts. Many philosophers, in fact, use these two terms interchangeably. Davidson, however, disagrees with this view. He defines facts as corresponding to whole sentences and events as corresponding to singular terms.<sup>19</sup> Davidson explains that in the sentence "Caesar died", the verb

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 297/298.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Dutra, "How serious is our Ontological Commitment to Events as Individuals?", p. 47.

"died" is to be seen as a *two-place predication*. This means, "died" has a place for Caesar and a place "for a variable that ranges over events."<sup>20</sup> The first part corresponds to the singular term "Caesar's death", and the entire sentence is an existential one. So, according to Davidson, this proves that there are no objections against treating singular terms (Caesar's death) as particular events.

An additional reason to treat events as individuals, according to Davidson, is to have a suitable theory of action. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, this is not possible if we cannot talk about the same action under different descriptions. He solves this problem by referring to Quine and his well known slogan "No entity without identity". The question to ask then is: What do we need in order to identify events? Or in other words, what fills the blank in the following:

"If  $x$  and  $y$  are events, then  $x = y$  if and only if \_\_\_\_."<sup>21</sup>

Davidson considers different answers, and rules all but one of them out. I will not go into more detail and explain why he rules those theories out. However, I will talk about his choice. He finishes the definition as follows:

If  $x$  and  $y$  are events, then  $x = y$  if and only if *they have exactly the same causes and the same effects.*

He admits that this is not the only possible way of identifying events:

But this should not be taken to mean that the only way of establishing, or supporting, a claim that two events are identical is by giving causal evidence. [...] What I do want to propose is that the causal nexus provides for events a 'comprehensive and continuously usable framework' for the identification and description of events analogous in many

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<sup>20</sup> Dutra, "How serious is our Ontological Commitment to Events as Individuals?", p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

ways to the space-time coordinate system for material objects.<sup>22</sup>

In short this means that this way of identifying events is to prefer simply because it does the same job as the space-time-coordinate criterion does in order to identify material bodies.<sup>23</sup>

### 5 Davidson's Anomalous Monism

"Anomalous Monism is a theory about the scientific status of psychology, the physical status of mental events, and the relation between these issues developed by Donald Davidson."<sup>24</sup> According to Davidson, psychology is committed to explaining individual events. This means, every event has to be explained individually, and therefore psychology does not state or follow strict laws. Davidson argues that mental events (and actions) are identical with physical events.<sup>25</sup> The impression that mental events are something mental arises from how they are described. Although Davidson denies any laws connecting the mental to the physical, he advocates a monism of substance, which means, or at least not excludes, that mental states are supervenient or dependent on physical events. In other words: mental states can cause actions; for example, someone raises his arm *because he wants* to grab a book from the shelf. Mental states can also be dependent on actions; for example, a child touches the hot stove, which causes the child to feel pain and to remember/realize that the stove is hot.

So Davidson basically forms three assumptions. First, mental events interact causally with physical events, which means they can cause each other. Second, events that can cause each

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22 Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (2005). Pp. 179/180.

23 Cf. Dutra, "How serious is our Ontological Commitment to Events as Individuals?", p. 51.

24 Yalowitz, Steven, "Anomalous Monism", Stanford Encyclopedia.

25 Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, pp. 209ff; 248ff.

other, fall under a strict law or principle. And third, there is no such a law for mental events.<sup>26</sup> These three assumptions seem to exclude each other (1 and 2 seem to exclude 3, 2 and 3 seem to exclude 1, and 1 and 3 seem to exclude 2). However, Davidson is convinced that all of them are true and tried to find a way to combine them. This endeavor is what he calls anomalous monism.

Overall, the anomalous monism is another important reason for Davidson to insist that events are individuals. However, more details will follow in the next chapter of this paper, since I will talk about Luiz Henrique de A. Dutra's essay *How serious is our ontological commitment to Events as Individuals?*, which is a direct answer and critique to Davidson's *Events as Particulars*.

## 6 Dutra and the criterion of Ontological Density

Luiz Henrique de A. Dutra's essay *How serious is our ontological commitment to Events as Individuals?* directly refers to Davidson's essay *Events as Particulars*. Dutra disagrees with Davidson and claims that "based on [...] ontological density, according to which from the point of view of a given theory, we can always distinguish between events (or phenomena) and individuals (entities) among the overall occurrences described by the theory."<sup>27</sup> This view, at the same time, gives psychology its scientific character (back?) and defines it as a "science dealing lawfully with general human events."<sup>28</sup>

In order to show that there is something wrong with Davidson's claim, Dutra introduces a very vivid example, which reads as follows: There are two billiard balls on a table. The first ball

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26 Ibid.

27 Dutra, "How serious is our Ontological Commitment to Events as Individuals?", p. 43.

28 Ibid.

is resting and the second ball is moving towards the first ball, causing a collision.<sup>29</sup> According to Davidson, there would be at least two individuals, the balls, and one physical event, the collision, involved. As explained earlier, this event has to be characterized as an individual (again, according to Davidson). So the question Dutra asks is, are we really committed to claiming that there are *three individuals* involved in this example?

Dutra's answer is negative: we are not committed to saying there are three individuals. In order to show that, he introduces an criterion that is supposed to complement (not replace) Quine's criterion of ontological commitment — *the criterion of ontological density*. To be able to understand this criterion, it is necessary to understand the terminology Dutra proposes. He distinguishes between "certain occurrences (or happenings or episodes)."<sup>30</sup> The first sort of occurrences is events (or phenomena), such as the collision of the two balls in the before mentioned example; this kind can also be referred to as a *fact*. The second kind of occurrences is entities (or things), such as the two balls themselves. Relations, furthermore, are events/phenomena that involve entities/things, whereas "individuals are put in relation in virtue of their properties."<sup>31</sup>

Using this terminology, according to Dutra, we are still committed to the existence of occurrences, but we do not have to characterize them as individuals. Dutra acknowledges that this is not what we usually do in our every day talk — talk about occurrences, but he also has a solution for this problem. According to him this is only a problem because the use of the term "exist" is ambiguous. Dutra proposes, in line with his criterion of ontological density, that the verb "to exist" applied to entities does not have the same meaning as applied to events.

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29 The actual example is richer in detail, but my description should do the job as well. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 44.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 51/52.

The question one might ask is, based on what criterion is it possible to refer to the two balls as entities and to the collision between them as event? And this is, where Dutra's criterion comes into play:

Occurrences of type 1 (entities, things, individuals) are ontologically denser than occurrences of type 2 (events, phenomena, relations). The difference between the two types is that we can assign properties to occurrences of type 1, but not to occurrences of type 2.<sup>32</sup>

The criterion of ontological density is relative. The distinction between occurrences of type 1 and occurrences of type 2 is always relative to a given theory. So, one kind of occurrences can only be more or less denser than the other kind of occurrences *within* the same theory or set of theories. The denser occurrences are the ones that can be given properties, and the less denser occurrences are the ones depending on the properties of the denser ones. So, according to this view, individuals and events both exist, but since individuals are denser than events, they do not exist in the same way.

With all this being said, Dutra argues for the thesis that psychology and its subjects have a lawful character. His claims about psychology's character are based on certain teleological behaviorist doctrines (Herrnstein, Rachlin, Stout) and also on elements Dutra adds himself, such as "the lawful character of teleological explanations of action."<sup>33</sup> Dutra claims that human actions can be described lawfully and teleologically with the aid of a psychological theory. But what is the role that mental or psychological entities (human beings) play in social events? Dutra gives another example to show his point. Given the French Revolution as an social event, how is it possible to connect concrete human actions to it? It is possible if the agents, such as

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32 Ibid. p.53.

33 Ibid., p. 63.

Robbespierre or Louis XIV, are described as classes of patterns of behavior, without losing their status as social agents. So, they have to be seen as parts of the absolute monarchy and/or the opposition to the regime etc. At this point it becomes clear that their behavior, given in this social context, can be described as teleological, and the big end purpose is the French Revolution.

Dutra now claims that other people, if they were put in the same situation (same social circumstances) would act very similarly, simply because human behavior is strongly influenced and modeled by social circumstances and institutions. Consequently it is safe to say that "the social determines the mental not less than the physical."<sup>34</sup> However, this does not mean that it is never possible to make a free or rational decision at all, it just means, the circumstances that allow such a decision, are socially and physically determined (for example an election in a peaceful, democratic system).

If human action can be given this teleological explanation, where does it rest its lawful character? To the extent that a social theory describes a social system suitably and shows the articulation between its different contexts and institutions, if there are regularities disclosed, they point to social (or sociological) laws.<sup>35</sup>

Dutra emphasizes, however, that this does not mean that there cannot be any lawful regulations that are only psychological, not influenced by social regularities, it only means that one part can be explained with the aid of teleology. For these solely psychological cases, he refers to Davidson's view, and grants that that view actually works in these cases. This is because actions in these kinds of situations are rational and triggered by beliefs, volitions, etc. However, actions are still not "individuals but events that involve human individuals."<sup>36</sup>

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34 Ibid., p. 67.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., p. 68.

## 7 Summary so far

Before I try to assess Davidson's and Dutra's views, I want to give a short overview about the main points and the main differences between them.

Both views are based on Quine's criterion of ontological commitment and both views agree that we are committed to the existence of events. The decisive difference, however, lies in the way they handle events. Davidson's argues that we are committed to characterize events as individuals, whereas Dutra is convinced that there is no need to handle them as individuals. These two different claims also have consequences regarding the status of psychology. Since Davidson sees events as individuals, which includes mental events as well, he does not ascribe psychology a scientific, lawful character. This is because there is no way of generalizing, or stating laws, if every event is an individual phenomenon. Dutra, on the other hand, defends the status of psychology and argues that, whenever human actions take place in a certain social context, there can be lawful regularities observed. If this is not the case, and human actions take place under "free" circumstances without any social context in the mentioned way, Dutra admits that Davidson's account works, however, events still do not have to be seen as individuals, just events that involve individuals human beings.

## 8 Critique

Davidson's idea of characterizing events as individuals obviously did not completely survive Dutra's critique. However, Davidson should be giving credit for trying to include the everyday language and to make sense out of it within his theory. He, indeed, is right, everyday one hears, reads and says things that make it sound like events would be individuals, such as "the

storm last night", "the terror attack in Syria", "Caesar's death", etc. On the other hand, only because most of the people act as if something was right or true, it unfortunately does not make it really true. A simple example is the idea that the earth is a disc, or that the sun is moving around the earth. There exist hundreds of these common beliefs that are simply wrong. The dangerous aspect is, that the world does not stop spinning because of such wrong beliefs, or in our case, a wrong use of language. It does not have immediate, fatal consequences which often leads to the assumption that they are right or that we have to adjust our theories about the world. It seems like, this is what Davidson fell for. Nevertheless, his claim, that psychology is basically not a science and that it does not have a lawful character, is just too strong. However, it seems to be an important theory about the relation between mental and physical events and properties that survived until today. The only problem Davidson's view has to deal with is the idea of *epiphenomenalism*. In short, this theory claims that physical events in the brain cause mental events, but mental events are not able to cause physical events. Davidson's anomalous monism, however, holds the view "that (i) each mental event is identical with a physical event, but (ii) there are no psychophysical laws"<sup>37</sup>, and one of his conditions is the *Interaction Principle*, claiming that "some mental events causally interact with some physical events."<sup>38</sup> So, the epiphenomenalism is an opposite view. Since the space in this essay is limited, I do not want to go into more detail. One important thing to mention, though, is the fact that many philosophers refuse epiphenomenalism and there are many arguments against it. This does not necessarily mean that it is wrong and Davidson's view is right, but epiphenomenalism seems to be on the downgrade.

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37 Robinson, William, "Epiphenomenalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/epiphenomenalism/>>.

38 Yalowitz, Steven, "Anomalous Monism", *Stanford Encyclopedia*.

Dutra also, more or less, accepts Davidson's view, but has some ideas to improve it. One weak sport of Davidson's view seems to be that it is just not consistent with our (alleged) reality. By this, I mean, there are laws in psychology, it is, indeed, possible to predict and explain human actions. In Davidson's defense, many of these discoveries were just recently made, whereas Davidson's essays were written 33-34 years ago. Psychology split up into many branches, such as cognitive psychology, personality psychology, neuropsychology, and many more. And there are a few branches that deal with individuals and particular cases. However, the scientific psychology deals with general and lawful events. This, again, does not mean that Davidson is completely wrong, it only means, his account needs a supplement. Dutra seems to have realized this, and solves the problem by de-individualization of (mental) events. Overall, this seems to work by introducing his *criterion of ontological density*. And although he whitewashes psychology as a scientific discipline, his methods might not seem convincing to everyone. There are several problems I see. First, he claims that the verb "to exist" has different meanings, depending on if it is applied to entities or to events. On the one hand, this makes sense, because there are many things people would might call more or less real than others, for example, a dream is less real, than what is happening while being awake, or a character in a book is not as real as an actual person. However, Dutra does not give good reasons to follow this ordinary use of language. He introduces it without any justification, besides the aspect that it fits into his theory. But is it really like this? Can some things or occurrences be more real than others? Thinking of a color, for example, a flower might be less red than another, but that does not change the fact that both flowers are red. Or thinking about things that happened in our past. Three months ago I started my new job, I know that for sure, I have physical evidence, however, it does

not feel as real as writing this paper right now. So, the question is, are there really different degrees of existence or is it just a feeling or an intuition to make life easier to understand? A second point is his motivation to avoid reifications. He aims on minimizing the amount of things that exist in the world. This is a noble undertaking, *if* this kind of things really do not exist. "Caesar's death", for example, seen as an individual event would mean, it exists. And again, I see Dutra's point, and it helps him to reach his goal of complementing Davidson's account, but again, he does not give any justification. If those events as individuals really do not exist, this would be the right thing to do. But how does Dutra know? Maybe they do exist, and with his claim, he is just denying their existence, and it is really questionable if this leads to an useful theory describing and explaining the world. A third weak point is the role of teleology within his account. Dutra claims that psychology is able to find regularities regarding human actions within a teleological behavioristic framework. This means, if different people were put into the same social circumstances and they were somehow given the same goal (which they really need to have in mind), it would be possible to extract rules of human behavior out of these kinds of situations. What is difficult about this claim is two things that kind of go together First: What about all the situations that do not happen withing such circumstances? Is it advisable to claim, that all other situations just cannot be observed and explained in a scientific way? And second, how is it always possible to determine whether someone is to be seen as part of a social context and what his goals are, if he has any specific at all.

So, overall, Davidson has developed a very strong account with his idea of anomalous monism, however, it does not seem to be complete, since it *is* possible to state laws and regularities concerning mental events. Dutra tries to help Davidson out and does so in a very

very convincing and easy understandable way. However, he is in need of justification for at least three of his claims or (pre-)conditions. It might be noteworthy, that Dutra's essay was written relatively recent, in 2005. So, there might be a few attempts already to supply Dutra with more arguments he can base his thesis on, but more likely, there, still, will many follow. The bottom line is, it is a very good theory that, nevertheless, needs some improvement and it is worth to grant Dutra a little bit more time in order to complete his theory.

Overall this might be a topic that cannot solely be solved by philosophy. Psychology is not necessarily a new branch of science however, it is developing really fast and splitting up in subcategories and branches. It is a very vivid and flourishing science that is trying, among other things, to get to the ground of the way humans think, how our brains work, how we perceive our environment, and how all these things go and work together. So, philosophy should not caring, however, maybe it only needs to be a little bit patient in this case, in order to phrase new theories or rephrase old ones. After all, we might be talking about theories with a "phlogiston-character" right now.

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