Context as other minds: The pragmatics of sociality, cognition and communication. By T. Givón. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005. Pp. xii, 283.

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This is, as it were, an updated version of Givón (1989). In what follows, I first present what I take to be the gist of each chapter in G's new book.

Ch. 1 introduces such precursors as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Peirce, and Wittgenstein, frequently mentioned also in the subsequent discussion.

Ch. 2: The mental representation of individual tokens of experience as members of generic categories (= types) is the foundation upon which biological organisms structure their adaptive behavior. One's mental categories determine how one responds to one's physical, mental and social environment. One responds to a new token of experience x by means of 'reasoning by feature association', which has the following form: 'If members of category A have the features a, b, c, and d, and if x has a, b, and c, then x also has d (and is a member of category A)'. The prototypicality of x depends on how many features it has. This type of reasoning has roughly the same status as abductive or analogical reasoning. The most profound adaptive strategy of a social species is the ability of its members to construct mental representations held by other members and thus to know other minds.

Ch. 3: One's physical, mental, and social environment is cognitively represented by means of a lexicon which constitutes the mental map of these environments. The semantic/conceptual lexicon is identical with permanent semantic *memory*. It is represented in the mind/brain as a network of nodes and connections activated during language processing. Metaphor, qua subtype of analogy, is an activation process that goes from literal to non-literal, and not a mapping from source to target. This interpretation is supported by experimental evidence and by diachronic evidence issuing from grammaticalization studies.

Ch. 4 (= 'the core of the book'): The act of communication contains the lexicon, the current text, and the current speech situation. Interpreted now as the three principal types of context, they are cognitively represented as semantic memory, episodic memory, and working memory. Grammatical structures serve such discourse-pragmatic functions as referential coherence and event coherence. These are interpreted as manipulation (in production) or anticipation (in comprehension) of the interlocutor's mental representations of the context. Both the neurological basis and the evolutionary precursors of the mental representations at issue are presented in outline. — The program of Ch. 4 is fleshed out in the three following Chs., where the material is reproduced, often verbatim, from G's previous publications, in particular Givón (2001).

Ch. 5: Referential coherence, expressed in 'NP grammar', is given the following psychological interpretation. Each clause, as part of a clause-chain, has a topical referent. Cataphoric grounding means that the current referent is deactivated and a new one is activated in episodic memory. Anaphoric grounding means that the current referent is identified with an antecedent one, i.e. that a connection is established between two nodes. The corresponding 'grammar-cued

mental operations' are presented (144) as a tree of binary choices (cf. also Givón 1990: 916, 1995: 382, 2002: 233). This model awaits experimental validation.

Ch. 6: Two 'megamodalities' are distinguished, namely epistemic and deontic. The epistemic modality is divided into 'fact' and 'non-fact' (also called 'megamodalities'). 'Fact' subsumes presupposition and realis-assertion, while 'non-fact' subsumes irrealis assertion and NEG-assertion (but, apparently, also interrogative, labelled 'epistemic'). Deontic modality subsumes obligation, volition, and any kind of affect. Event coherence, expressed in 'VP grammar' or 'verbal clause', is about (mental representations of) temporal/aspectual/modal continuity and about consonant grounding of referents. The aspect of 'other minds' is also invoked in a different sense: The epistemic modalities are defined in terms of what kind of challenge (if any) is to be expected from the hearer; and non-declarative speech acts need to take into account to what extent the hearer may be imposed upon.

Ch. 7: Discourse coherence recruits the grammatical devices discussed in Ch. 5 and Ch. 6, and adds the devices characteristic of clauses that either 'build a bridge' between two clause-chains or qualify, within a chain, as initial, medial, or final. Throughout, it is emphasized that coherence is not in the discourse but in the mind: 'grammar [is] a conventionalized tool for representing the interlocutor's mind during communication' (179).

Ch. 8: An analogy is drawn between language and science insofar as both speakers and scientists make crucial use of abductive reasoning. The scientist's 'interlocutor' is the research community whose potential challenges must be anticipated at each step.

Ch. 9: People are likely to change their behavior, i.e. to project a different image of themselves, as their audience changes. This plasticity has given rise to the notion of multiple self. Yet a careful reading shows that even proponents of the multiple-self view implicitly tend towards some (attenuated) version of essentialist self, or 'central controller'. Schizophrenia is a case where the central controller is lacking while autism exhibits pragmatic rigidity or inability to adapt to changing contexts.

Ch. 10: An analogy is drawn between speech and martial arts insofar as both require close monitoring of the hearer's/opponent's state of mind. Martial arts in turn exemplify strategic thinking in general. The central Taoist notion of *wu wei* is interpreted, not as inaction, but as action furthered by context.

As is evident from the preceding account (which had to omit a lot of details), G presents an ambitious program and manages to hold its many strands together remarkably well. The treatment of the more narrowly linguistic data in Chs. 5–7 is impeccable. A few comments will now follow.

Let us start with the central notion of context. Traditionally, semantics and pragmatics are thought to deal with context-independent meaning and meaning in context, respectively. G's novel contribution, as he sees it, is to reinterpret 'context' so narrowly as to identify it with the mind of the interlocutor. The emphasis on the 'other minds' aspect is certainly justified, but one may ask whether it requires literally excluding all other aspects. More exactly, G of course admits that the context of communicative acts subsumes both the physical and

the social environment. These are represented in the socially shared lexicon (of e.g. English), which is identified as the semantic memory, which is a network of nodes and connections located in the left-inferior pre-frontal cortex. By means of these successive reductions, sanctioned by deliberate ambiguities like 'semantic/conceptual' and 'mind/brain', we reach the conclusion that the context is in the interlocutor's brain. This conclusion may be acceptable to representatives of neurolinguistics, but I doubt that this is what G really wants because he elsewhere wishes to resist 'the sweet siren song of reductionism' (248). As a remedy, G might want to endorse more explicitly the relative autonomy of such ontological levels as physical, biological, mental, and social.

G's easy identification of context with mental representation of context has been made possible by the ill-founded habit to treat (e.g.) 'English' synonymously with '(largely unconscious) knowledge of English'. Of course, in order to describe anything (e.g. geometrical figures, chess, or English), one has to know it, but this does not mean that what one describes is not it, but one's knowledge of it (Hutchinson 1974: 71–2, Hofstadter 1995: 52–3, Itkonen 2003: 102–12).

Still, G's contribution must be seen in context. Pragmatics has maintained an ambivalent relationship vis-à-vis psychology. On the one hand, it originated in the speech act theory which is a philosophical doctrine based on intuitional data, as was explicitly pointed out by Searle (1969: 15). On the other hand, although psychology is supposed to be an observational and experimental discipline, psychologists like Clark & Clark (1977: 237–45) incorporated the intuitional-philosophical speech act theory *tel quel* into their (supposedly causal) account of how speaking takes place. Now with his above-mentioned model of 'grammar-cued mental operations' G tries resolutely to place pragmatics in the sphere of psychology. A similar attempt to genuinely psychologize entrenched formal-grammatical concepts has been made by Harder (2006) in an important paper on recursion.

Like many others, G is not quite happy with the 'somewhat inelegant' (14) semantics vs. pragmatics distinction. As conceded by G himself, however, it just refuses to go away. Conventionalization (including grammaticalization) is a gradual process with a beginning and an end, and these more or less coincide with pragmatics and semantics, respectively: 'Semantics is conventionalized context, or petrified pragmatics' (75). This view agrees with Levinson's (2000) tripartite theory of meaning: located between fully conventional sentence-meanings and nonce speaker-meanings, generalized conversational implicatures constitute the 'intermediate layer formed of conventions and habits of use' (23), which means that they occupy the middle range on the conventionalization cline.

G actually seems to operate with two distinct notions of context. On the one hand, as shown above, context (as other minds) is something to focus on. But on the other, context is the variation that the organism learns to ignore in order to be able to concentrate on what is invariant, i.e. the categories extracted from the flux of experience. On the latter interpretation (1, 91), context is frame/ground, contrasted with picture/figure.

What G calls 'reasoning by feature association' (52, 212), is usually called 'analogical inference'. It might be advisable, however, to interpret it as a subtype

of inductive inference and to distinguish it from genuine analogical inference, viewed as a subtype of (more abstract) abduction (Itkonen 2005: 25–35). Although G relies heavily on the existence of inductive/analogical/abductive reasoning, he occasionally (111) doubts its psychological reality. Fortunately, such misgivings are unfounded. Holland et al. (1986: Ch. 5) show that rats and pigeons infer hypotheses from successive events and test them against new experience. G's misgivings seem to be due to his view that reasoning is a rational process and that rationality requires consciousness. But there is nothing inconsistent in the notion of unconscious rationality, as shown by the fact that typical animal behavior qualifies as rational (Dickinson 1988: 310, 321, Itkonen 2005: 54–5). G's overall approach amounts to a welcome rehabilitation of analogy (expounded. by Anttila 1989: Ch. 5). On three occasions (11, 207, 215), G claims that abduction is about what *must* be the case. In so doing he overlooks his own quotation (206) from Peirce: 'Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*.'

It is not Kuhn but Popper who, in G's characteristically colorful wording (217), pooh-poohs normal science: 'it is a phenomenon which I dislike ... while [Kuhn] apparently does not dislike it' (Popper 1970: 52). More generally, I do not recognize Kuhn at all from the picture that G gives of him. Nor do I understand why G should think (30) that Wittgenstein is 'at his empiricist worst' when he is unfolding his brilliant conceptual argument against the possibility of private languages (Itkonen 1978: 90–113).

A somewhat inaccurate account is given of modal logic in Ch. 6. Referring to Carnap (1956: Ch. V), G claims (149–50) that the four principal modalities are three types of truth, namely necessary, factual, and possible, as well as non-truth. According to Carnap (1956: 175), however, the corresponding four modalities are defined in terms of both truth and falsity, as follows. 'Necessary' = *Np*, i.e. *p* is necessarily true; 'impossible' = *N~p*, i.e. *p* is necessarily false; 'possible' = *~N~p*, i.e. *p* is not necessarily false; 'factual' = *~Np & ~N~p*, i.e. *p* is neither necessarily true nor necessarily false. To be sure, this is not to deny that when G goes on to give a 'communicative redefinition' of modal logic, he makes a valid point. In light of cross-linguistic evidence, it makes perfect sense to postulate the (epistemic) megamodality of 'non-fact' which subsumes both irrealis assertion and negative assertion.

G reaches (211) the conclusion that, as far as higher organisms are concerned, agency (or intentionality) is the ultimate *causal* explanation, with the concomitant insight that 'the scientist merely recapitulates the bio-organism' (204). Now this is exactly the thesis of Itkonen (1983). When the resulting (empathy-based) causal explanation is spelled out, it proves to be a means – ends analysis, exemplified in a pragmatic context by Leech (1983: 35–44).

G is to be congratulated for having exposed (237) the myth that 'by digging out the word's etymology one has unearthed its primordial *ur*-sense'. Work on metaphor is to a surprising degree shackled by this myth.

G's analogy between other-oriented pragmatics and strategic thinking is supported by the following characterization of a consummate spy master in World War II: 'he looked out on the world through the eyes of his opponents' (Holt 2004:

14). — The text would have hugely benefitted from proof-reading.

In sum, G has written a book which belies the defeatist view that there are no great stories to be told anymore. This is an epic — and overwhelmingly true — story told by an inventive and vigorous mind, and it deserves to be acknowledged as such.

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