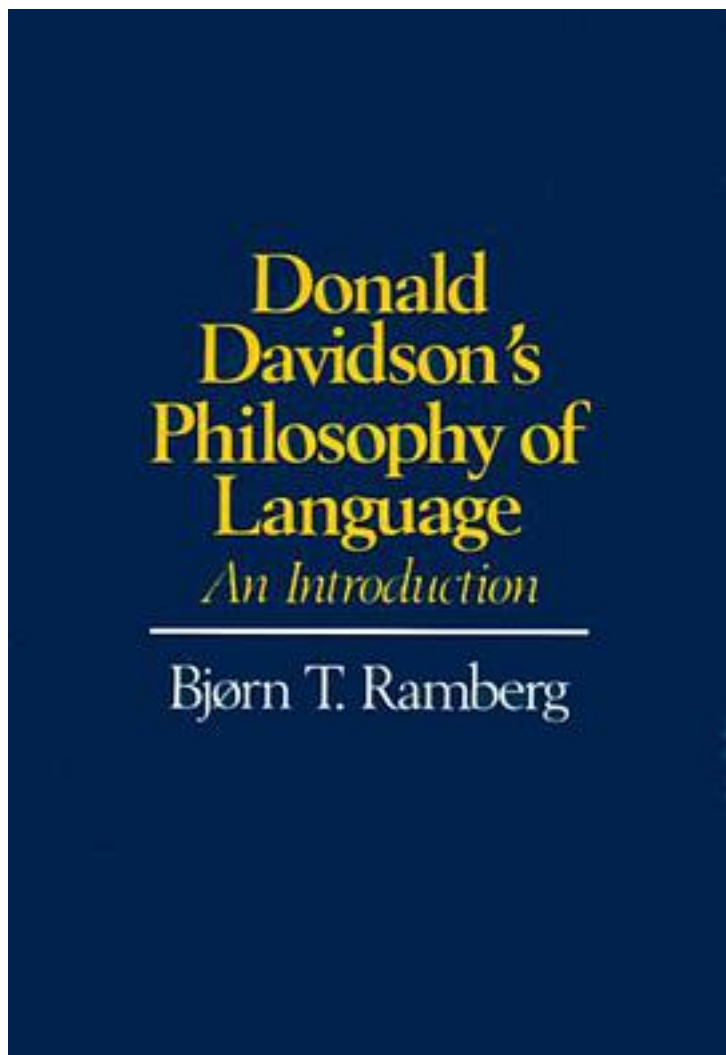


Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language



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This book is an introduction to and interpretation of the philosophy of language devised by Donald Davidson over the past 25 years. The guiding intuition is that Davidson's work is best understood as an ongoing attempt to purge semantics of theoretical reifications. Seen in this light the recent attack on the notion of language itself emerges as a natural development of his Quinian scepticism towards "meanings" and his rejections of reference-based semantic theories. Linguistic understanding is, for Davidson, essentially dynamic, arising only through a continuous process of theory construction and reconstruction. The result is a conception of semantics in which the notion of interpretation and not the notion of knowing a language is fundamental. In the course of his book Bjorn Ramberg provides a critical discussion of reference-based semantic theories, challenging the standard accounts of the principle of charity and elucidating the notion of radical interpretation. The final chapter on incommensurability ties in with the discussions of Kuhn's work in the philosophy of science and suggests certain links between Davidson's analytic semantics and hermeneutic theory.

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