

Davidson on Thought and Language

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Abstract

How is thought connected to language? It is widely accepted that language depends on thought. Without thought, having a language is impossible. But whether it is possible to think without language is debatable. This essay aims to defend Donald Davidson's claim that thought and language depend on each other, with a particular focus on the thesis that thought depends on language. Humans are animals with language. For human beings, thought and language go hand-in-hand. Some non-linguistic animals, however, are thought to possess the ability to think, which suggests that thought does not need to be inextricably intertwined with language. To show why thought requires language, this essay teases out Davidson's arguments in favor of the proposition and rebuts positions commonly taken as making it untenable.

Key Words: Davidson, thought, language, interpretation, holism