Book Reviews

Robert D. Van Valin, Jr. & Randy LaPolla, *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, xxviii + 713 pages, ISBN 0-521-49565-2 (hardback), £50.00, US$ 74.95; ISBN 0-521-49915-1 (paperback), £17.95, US$ 29.95.

Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function, henceforth *Syntax*, is a comprehensive and impressive statement of a theory of syntax. The authors acknowledge certain components of the theory as being derived from other theories and the work of various individuals, but it is most obviously a development of Role and Reference Grammar. The theory as it appears here is not actually referred to as Role and Reference Grammar, indeed it is not baptized with any particular name at all. In its fundamental orientation, concepts, and notation, however, *Syntax* clearly continues the tradition of Van Valin & Foley (1980), Foley & Van Valin (1984), and Van Valin (1993). Indeed, quite a lot of the discussion, examples, and figures of Van Valin (1993) reappears in only a slightly changed form, and sometimes even in an unchanged form, in *Syntax*. The book is offered as a textbook for both introductory and advanced courses in syntax and I shall consider its appropriateness as such after reviewing other features of the book.

The exposition of the theory requires nine solid chapters. A relatively brief Chapter 1, "The goals of linguistic theory", considers some alternative approaches to the study of language, with the present theory being described by the authors as taking a "communication-and-cognition" perspective. The reader is also advised that *Syntax* is intended both as an explanatory theory of syntax, as well as being a descriptive framework which can be used by linguists writing grammars. Chapters 2 through 7 present a full account of the syntax and semantics of simple sentences. The chapter titles indicate the path by which this account

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proceeds: "Syntactic structure, I: simple clauses and noun phrases", "Semantic representation, I: verbs and arguments", "Semantic representation, II: macroroles, the lexicon and noun phrases", "Information structure", "Grammatical relations", "Linking syntax and semantics in simple sentences". Chapters 8 and 9 extend the discussion to many kinds of complex sentences: "Syntactic structure, II: complex sentences and noun phrases" and "Linking syntax and semantics in complex sentences". A short but interesting epilog, "The goals of linguistic theory revisited", completes the presentation by reflecting on issues relating to language acquisition. The highly professional and thorough approach evident throughout *Syntax* is seen also in the substantial References section, an Index of Languages, and a Subject Index.

Without attempting to document all the conceptual and methodological details of *Syntax*, there are certain key features of the theory which should be mentioned. One of the most striking is the relentless cross-linguistic orientation. This is not a theory which pays only lip service to the idea that cross-linguistic data is desirable. The cross-linguistic data is placed firmly and squarely at the centre of what we are asked to consider. (I counted 102 entries in the Index of Languages, with Dyirbal, Enga, English, French, Georgian, German, Icelandic, Italian, Jakaltek, Japanese, Lakhota, Malagasy, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Sama, Tepehua, and Turkish being the most extensively discussed.) From this point of view, *Syntax* is not unlike Givón (1984, 1990), though there is considerably more discussion and a more sophisticated linguistic interpretation of the data in *Syntax* than what one finds in Givón's two-volume work. Also, and importantly, the cross-linguistic orientation of *Syntax* goes beyond merely illustrating theoretical ideas by reference to various languages. Rather, the cross-linguistic orientation provides the motivation for, and not just the illustration of, the theory. This is in accordance with a requirement of typological adequacy (p. 8), attributed to Simon Dik, whereby the linguistic theory which one constructs should be applicable to all languages without "forcing" a language to fit the theory. So, for example, neither syntactic subject nor VP is seen as a universal category of grammar, and neither of these concepts plays a role in theory or description. The strong cross-linguistic perspective should be an attraction for those linguists whose interest in linguistics arises from a fascination with the magnificent diversity of the world's languages.

Another aspect of *Syntax* which goes hand in hand with its strongly empirical approach is the insistence upon clear, statable, and to a large extent operationalized procedures for arriving at analyses. More so than in some other theories, *Syntax* provides—and insists upon—certain

procedures in order to arrive at aspects of the analyses. Consider, for example, the question of semantic representation. A notation inspired by symbolic logic is employed for this purpose, but it is arrived at in a particular and well-defined way. The analyst applies up to six tests to determine, first of all, which of six or so verb classes the verb in the clause belongs to: state, activity, achievement, accomplishment, active accomplishment, causative. (There are some changes in the tests employed by *Syntax*, compared with Van Valin (1993: 34–35).) Once the verb class has been determined, the analyst then consults a kind of look-up table (p. 109) which gives the schematic logical structure appropriate for the core of the clause. (Again, there are some possibly confusing changes here compared with Van Valin (1993: 36): the logical structure assigned to achievement verbs in Van Valin (1993) is the structure for accomplishment verbs in *Syntax*, and the logical structure of accomplishment verbs in Van Valin (1993) appears with causative verbs in *Syntax*!) While there are limits to the insights which can be gained by operationalized procedures in linguistics, the approach yields solid and defensible results. Also, it seems the only feasible approach to take when one has adopted such a broadly cross-linguistic perspective, where the analyst can not possibly have native-speaker intuitions for all the data being analyzed.

Another impressive feature of the book is the rich diagrammatic representation of the analyses. The diagrams of Role and Reference Grammar—nicely exemplified by the tri-axial diagram associated with *What did Pat give Robin yesterday*? used on the cover of Van Valin (ed.) (1993)—have always struck me as elegant and informative. It is surprising just how much morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information is conveyed in them. *Syntax* makes extensive use of Role and Reference Grammar-type diagrams—all carefully drawn and aesthetically composed—which definitely enhance the quality of the book (and provide some welcome relief from the strain of reading about 700 pages of text).

One distinction which is fundamental in *Syntax* is that between "arguments", which belong to the "core" of the clausal syntax, and "adjuncts", which sit outside the core in the "periphery". A distinction like this is familiar from most theories of syntax, albeit under different names. A very common diagnostic used to distinguish arguments and adjuncts in some approaches is the omissibility test: if the phrase can be omitted and still leave a complete (though shorter) sentence, then that phrase is an adjunct. This does not appear to be a criterion authorized in *Syntax* which relies instead on counting the number of semantic arguments in the logical representation and/or determining that the phrase is a time or setting of an event. An interesting consequence of this is the analysis of a phrase such as *to the store* in *Paul ran to the store*. By the omissibility

test, the prepositional phrase here is an adjunct. But in *Syntax* (p. 160), the logical representation of this clause involves an "active accomplishment" verb which must have the logical structure in (1):

(1) **do′** (Paul, [**run′** (Paul)]) & BECOME **be-at′** (store, Paul)

Since there are two semantic arguments in this representation, "Paul" and "store", both *Paul* and *at the store* will be core arguments in the syntactic representation. (In a clause like this, *at the store* is called an "argument-adjunct"—a term not used in Van Valin (1993).) The *Syntax* division between core and periphery is clear enough when one follows the *Syntax* procedures, but one should be wary of equating this division with similar ones in other theories.

It would be unrealistic to expect any reviewer to agree with every single position adopted by the authors of such an extended discussion of syntax and there were some places where I felt a little uncomfortable with the discussion. The treatment of the preposition *to* in the clause *Kim gave the book to Lee* is one such case. The *to Lee* phrase is said to be required by the logical representation associated with *give*. Therefore, it is argued (pp. 52–53, 161), the preposition *to* here has no independent logical representation. For some linguists, the uses of *to* in *Kim gave the book to Lee*, *Kim ran to the store*, *from three o'clock to four o'clock*, etc. represent meaningful and related uses of *to* and they would claim that this polysemy should be part of an account of this preposition. There is not even a nod of acknowledgement in the direction of the Cognitive Linguistic movement with its extensive exploration of polysemy, especially prepositional polysemy. A way of treating such prepositional polysemy in the Role and Reference Grammar approach is suggested in Jolly (1993: 282–283) in an extremely brief discussion but this is not developed at all in *Syntax*.

One point in the discussion which caused some confusion when I first read it was the reference to the "subject" in relation to a set of Dyirbal sentences (pp. 142–143). The authors claim that "in Dyirbal the undergoer is the syntactic subject in the active voice" (p. 143). Thus, "the tree" in a Dyirbal sentence like "the man.ERGATIVE cut down the tree.ABSOLUTIVE" functions as the syntactic "subject". At this point in the book, the topic of grammatical relations has not been properly introduced and one would be relying upon English language intuitions about "subject" and "object". Consequently, one would be inclined to take "the man.ERGATIVE" as the subject-like phrase rather than "the tree.ABSOLUTIVE". *Syntax*, as we discover in the later chapter on Grammatical Relations does not see "subject" as a universally valid category of syntax and its use on p. 143 is meant only as a way of helping a naive reader through the data, but I found it

confusing rather than helpful at that point. (The absolutive phrase in Dyirbal, as is explained on pp. 276–278, is to be analyzed as the "syntactic pivot" and the "syntactic controller", key concepts in the syntactic analysis armory.)

The preceding criticisms should be seen as minor quibbles in the context of a book which has been written and produced to such high standards. It is a book which has developed out of ideas from various competing schools of thought, in addition, of course, to building upon the basis of previous work in Role and Reference Grammar. *Syntax* manages to integrate all the ideas into one whole, successfully in my opinion, and the result is an extremely rich, highly elaborated theory. At the same time, it serves as a practical, usable manual for doing syntactic analysis of the world's languages, not just English.

Let me return now to the question of using *Syntax* as an introductory or advanced textbook in syntax. Perhaps it is only fair to mention here that I have a difficulty with the Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series, as a series of textbooks, in terms of how appropriate these books are in the context of my own teaching in an undergraduate linguistics programme. The truth is that there is hardly a book in the Cambridge Textbook in Linguistics series which is written at a level and in a style which the majority of my undergraduate students would be comfortable with. *Syntax* continues these high (!) standards. It is written without really making any concessions to the beginner: the intimidating length of the book, for a start, is not something one can easily ignore if it is being aimed at introductory students; its density in terms of how much information is conveyed per page; the pace at which the reader must move through the ideas; an uncompromisingly advanced style of writing; the extensive use made of footnotes. The authors (p. xxi) list the parts of the book recommended for an introduction to syntactic theory and these include parts (or sometimes all) of the nine chapters. I do wonder whether this is the ideal way to write an introduction to the field or to entice students into a new area. Even if one is expected to read just the "introductory" sections of *Syntax*, one cannot ignore the conceptual and physical weightiness of the whole book, which could well be discouraging for all but the most intense student. Included in those sections recommended for introductory courses are comparisons with other theories, e.g., the comparison of *Aspects*, *Barriers*, and Minimalism on p. 244 and the discussion of Lexical Mapping Theory on p. 248. Comparisons like these assume a familiarity with the field and strike me as entirely inappropriate as part of an introduction to syntax. As a textbook for an advanced course in syntax, it would be quite feasible, even a good choice. After all, as the authors (p. xix) explain, the book began as transcripts of lectures which

were used in courses, successfully I am sure, at different universities. The exercises at the end of each chapter are extensive, interesting, and challenging, and they are a strong feature of the book, but here, too, I feel they are more appropriate for an advanced rather than a beginning student.

Summing up, then, *Syntax* is a richly detailed statement about the syntax of human languages which deserves respect and attention. It contains within its covers wonderfully stimulating and provocative samples of the world's languages, ingenious descriptive devices and notations, and a carefully integrated theory. As for its claim to being a textbook for either introductory or advanced courses in theoretical syntax, I regret that I am not quite as confident about its suitability as I would like to be. On a positive note, I would say that if previous offerings in the Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series have hit the right note with your students in the past, then this one will too.

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Ewald Lang & Gisela Zifonun (eds.), *Deutsch—typologisch*. (Institut für deutsche Sprache: Jahrbuch 1995.) Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996, vii + 700 pages, ISBN 3-11-014983-4, DM 220.00.

This is a collection of papers given at the 1995 annual meeting of the Institut für deutsche Sprache (IdS), which, according to the opening remarks by

IdS director Gerhard Stickel (pp. 1–3), aimed to use typological comparison in order to learn more about the German language. The meeting was co-sponsored by Berlin's Forschungsschwerpunkt Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Typologie und Universalienforschung, and most of the papers were substantially revised for publication here. The volume is organized into eight sections which respectively deal with general theoretical matters (three papers), verb-second phenomena (four papers), negation (three papers), lexical fields (four papers), "grammaticalization and mixed type" (three papers), pronouns (two papers), morphology (three papers), and phonology and orthography (four papers.) All but the "grammaticalization" section have a great degree of thematic unity.

Ewald Lang (*Das Deutsche im typologischen Spektrum*, pp. 7–15) identifies the merit of typology as providing a more diverse measure of comparison. Indeed, the development of linguistic theory in the last forty years has made it abundantly clear that studying a language without an appreciation of other languages is likely to result in a skewed view not only of that particular language but also of language in general. Typological comparison has become the standard operating procedure in all theoretical frameworks, including the Minimalist/Principles-and-Parameters framework, which some of the papers assembled here adopt.

Bernard Comrie (*Sprache und Sprachen: Universalien und Typologie*, pp. 16–30) cautions that not all differences between languages have a larger typological significance. As an example he shows that nothing else follows from the fact that cross-linguistically nominal complements of copular verbs may receive either nominative or oblique case marking. Comrie also stresses that modern typologies are partial typologies, meant to characterize individual constructions instead of whole languages. What constitutes an interesting typological finding is the discovery that two logically independent characteristics correlate across languages.

Contrastive linguistics has a long tradition in Germany, so Ekkehard König (*Kontrastive Grammatik und Typologie*, pp. 31–54) addresses their relationship. While contrastive studies doubtless continue to turn up new and interesting observations, König demonstrates the superiority of comprehensive typological surveys. He shows that a number of claims that were made in the linguistic literature based on bilateral comparison of two languages do not hold up once other languages are considered. Linguistic typology, with its long-standing theoretical concern about sample creation clearly stands on methodologically sounder footing here. König continues to examine features of German which characterize it as a typically Germanic as well as features which characterize it as a typically European language.

Given the thrust of these foundational papers by Lang, Comrie, and König, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that few of the contributions to this volume refer to more than a convenience sample of (mostly European) languages. Several are explicitly contrastive studies of English and German, e.g., the contributions by Olson and by Wilder, while others get by without reference to any data from languages other than German, e.g., the papers by Haftka and by Fuhrhop.

Beatrice Primus (*Dependenz und Serialisierung: das Deutsche im Sprachvergleich*, pp. 57–91) opens the section on verb-second phenomena. This paper, like Christer Platzack's (*Germanic Verb Second Languages*, pp. 92–120) and Brigitta Haftka's (*Deutsch ist eine V/2-Sprache mit Verb-Endstellung und freier Wortfolge*, pp. 121–141), attempts to account for word order in German main clauses. While Primus seeks a semantic explanation, Platzack and Haftka pursue a syntactic account in terms of Chomskyan formal syntax.

In a highly original contribution, Chris Wilder (*V2-Effekte: Wortstellungen und Ellipsen*, pp. 142–180), finds correlations between different word order patterns and the type of ellipsis allowed. There is much original data contrasting ellipsis in German and English in this paper, although the validation of Wilder's generalizations awaits the investigation of further languages in accordance with Comrie's caution noted above.

Section 3 of the volume addresses negation. Applying the concept of grammaticalization either explicitly or implicitly, all three contributions here are in agreement that consideration of diachronic factors is essential for coming to an accurate understanding of negation. Barbara Lenz (*Negationsverstärkung und Jespersens Zyklus im Deutschen und in anderen europäischen Sprachen*, pp. 183–200) surveys the phenomenon in some European languages that negative markers have undergone repeated weakening with the consequent addition of a new negative element. Karin Dornhauser (*Negationssyntax in der deutschen Sprachgeschichte: Grammatikalisierung oder Degrammatikalisierung*, pp. 201–217) retorts that Jespersen's cycle, as it is usually understood, oversimplifies the actual diachronic development and calls for more detailed diachronic studies. Finally, Elke Hentschel (*Negation in Interrogation und Exklamation*, pp. 218–226) investigates sentences like *Isn't that Bill?* in which a negative marker appears without signaling negation semantically. This brief study attempts an explanation of such sentences in terms of "universal logic".

Lexical fields are the subject matter of four papers in the volume. Veronika Ehrlich (*Verbbedeutung und Verbgrammatik: Transportverben im Deutschen*, pp. 229–260) classifies German transport verbs according to the aktionsart of the verb (state, process, event), whether the verb

meaning specifies the manner in which the action is achieved, and how the agent and patient participants are involved in the action. Based on this classification, she then analyzes the lexical representation of these verbs. Susan Olson (*Partikelverben im deutsch-englischen Vergleich*, pp. 261–288) is a formal semantic study finding that particle verbs obey the same lexical principles in both languages.

Joachim Grabowski and Petra Weiss (*Das Präpositioneninventar als Determinante des Verstehens von Raumpräpositionen:* vor *und* hinter *in fünf Sprachen*, pp. 289–311) investigate the factors governing the use and the interpretation of the prepositions *in front of* and *behind* and their equivalents in German, French, Italian, English, and Dutch. Whereas previous studies had argued for the relevance of general factors like the discourse context, the dynamicity of the situation and the like, Grabowski and Weiss's experiment shows that the hearer's interpretation correlates most strongly with the prepositional inventory of an individual language and with the social situation in which the preposition is used. This is a highly interesting finding which, if it holds up, would seem to suggest that language-specific paradigms outweigh universal factors in the understanding of prepositions.

In an ambitious paper, Ewald Lang (*Lexikalisierung und Wortfeldstruktur—typologisch betrachtet*, pp. 312–355) develops a typology of lexical fields, using the field of dimensional expressions (*long*, *wide*, *high*, etc.) as an example. Lang demonstrates that the choice of dimensional expressions is observer-based in Korean, but proportion-based in Chinese; other languages use a mix of these two strategies. Typological research on the lexicon is still in its infancy, as Lang rightfully points out, so this study is most welcome.

Östen Dahl (*Das Tempussystem des Deutschen im typologischen Vergleich*, pp. 359–368) outlines some of the pioneering work on tense-aspect systems which Dahl conducted together with Joan Bybee (for instance in Bybee & Dahl 1989). The empirical part of his paper analyzes the perfect and the future in both standard and dialectal German, concluding that the German tense-aspect system is "relatively poor" (p. 367).

Two contributions in this section, John Ole Askedal's *Überlegungen zum Deutschen als sprachtypologischem "Mischtyp"* (pp. 369–383) and Ulrich Engel and Ewa Geller's *Das Verb in seinem Umfeld* (pp. 384–401), might have been more meaningfully included in the section on V2 phenomena as they also focus on the consequences of the typologically unusual positioning of the verb in German. Askedal argues that the different positions of the verb in main clauses and in dependent clauses reflect a typologically unusual clause marking system which overlays a basic verb final word order. In doing so, Askedal offers a deeper, functional motivation for the

positioning of the German verb than the purely formal exercises characteristic of much work in the Chomskyan mode. As such, his contribution forms a valuable counterpiece to the papers by Platzack and by Haftka on this subject. Askedal goes on to argue that the distinct grammatical function of the typologically inconsistent word order pattern in turn provides a rationale for the mixed word order type of German. Askedal finds similar motivations for the typologically mixed status of German in other areas of the grammar, specifically in other "exceptions" to harmonic head-modifier ordering and in the interplay between syntactic rules that are sensitive to case morphology and to configurationality.

Engel and Geller briefly contrast verb position, past tense/aspect expressions, and the marking of yes/no questions in standard German, Swabian German, Yiddish, and Polish. Beyond concluding that German has a unique structural patterning, they question whether Yiddish indeed descends from late-medieval German dialects.

Two papers comprise the section on pronominals. Michal Starke (*Germanische und romanische Pronomina: Stark—schwach—klitisch*, pp. 405–427) shows that German *es* 'it' exhibits properties of both clitics and full pronouns. Starke takes this as evidence that, universally, three distinct types of pronominals exist, i.e., clitics, "weak" pronouns à la *es*, and strong pronouns. He finds all three types of pronominals attested in Italian.

Werner Abraham (*Personalpronomina, Klitiktypologie und die Struktur des Mittelfeldes*, pp. 428–470) seeks to account for the fact that clitics and reduced pronouns occur as proclitics in some languages and as enclitics in others. This is a highly detailed study which reveals great sensitivity to the diverse factors which bring about the observed surface linearizations, including phonology, discourse-functional status, and, foremost, syntactic criteria. Although clitic position largely correlates with Greenbergian word order types, Abraham demonstrates convincingly that only consideration of other syntactic, as well as non-syntactic, factors can lead to an accurate typological generalization.

Klaus-Michael Köpcke and David Zubin (*Prinzipien für die Genuszuweisung im Deutschen*, pp. 473–491) explore principles which account for gender assignment in German. Though often labeled arbitrary, Köpcke and Zubin correctly point out that native speakers have strong intuitions about which gender a new noun should belong to. They show that a combination of phonological, morphological, and semantic principles achieves a high degree of predictivity for gender assignment in the German lexicon. Of particular interest in this paper is Köpcke and Zubin's exposition that gender assignment can carry meaning in this language.

Wolfgang Ullrich Wurzel (*Morphologischer Strukturwandel: Typologische Entwicklungen im Deutschen*, pp. 492–524) explores the question why German developed from a rather consistent fusional language to a present state which combines elements of all the well-known traditional morphological types. Wurzel elaborates the mechanisms which led to the emergence of agglutinating, introflecting, isolating, and incorporating patterns and claims that they were invariably driven by articulatory simplification and morphological regularization. These fundamental motivations of phonological and morphological change, then, account for the observed development in German. Typological consistency, on the other hand, does not seem to play any constraining role at all.

Nanna Fuhrhop (*Fugenelemente*, pp. 525–550) investigates the morphological linkers which are required in many German compound words. She finds that the highest degree of predictive power is achieved when the phonological substance, rather than the original grammatical function, of these linkers is considered. Though it is limited to a single language and, thus, perhaps misplaced in a typological volume, Fuhrhop's paper succeeds in highlighting the principles that underlie an area of the grammar of German which is often (and evidently quite unjustifiably) considered arbitrary. The same can be said as well about Köpcke and Zubin's findings on German gender and Wurzel's analysis of German morphological development. Together, these three papers reveal principles where many suspected arbitrariness, making this one the most satisfying sections of the book.

The final section is a nod to phonological and orthographical typology, which often go unrecognized in linguistic typology. T. Alan Hall (*Silben- und Morphemstruktur in der Phonologie des Deutschen*, pp. 553–568) shows that phonotactic constraints can have the morpheme as their domain. Ursula Kleinhenz (*Zur Typologie phonologischer Domänen*, pp. 569–584) argues that the phonological phrase does not constitute a universal category, while Kai Alter (*Der Zusammenhang von Akzentuierung und Phrasierung im Sprachvergleich*, pp. 585–614) demonstrates a correlation between accent placement and prosodic phrases. Finally, Peter Eisenberg (*Zur Typologie der Alphabetschrift: Das Deutsche und die Reform seiner Orthographie*, pp. 615–631) develops a typology of alphabetic writing systems based on phonological, prosodic, morphological, and historical parameters.

The volume closes with the 1995 annual report of the IdS (pp. 637–695) and a speech by Helmuth Feilke (pp. 697–700) on the occasion of his accepting the biennial Hugo Moser award. The book is flawlessly produced, to the great credit of its editors and publisher. Still, one could question why publishers' names were omitted from the lists of references.

The few misprints which slipped through are largely insignificant, e.g., *Exploartion* for *Exploration* (p. 317); on page 194, *links* and *rechts* should be replaced by *oben* 'above' and *unten* 'below', respectively; Comrie (1981) is dated 1983 on pp. 376 and 381 and, in any case, one should expect the second edition (1989) of this seminal text to be used.

Although many of the papers in this volume are indeed not very typological, it is valuable in at least two ways. For germanists used to a one-language approach, many of the contributions provide a confrontation with data from other languages, which can serve to illuminate the facts of German in new and interesting ways. Indeed, typologists would argue that only such cross-language comparison can result in a full appreciation of any single language. This benefit of typological analysis accrues even when only a limited number of languages are compared. For typologists, several of the papers here (especially those by Lang and by Dahl) propagate new avenues of cross-linguistic research while others (most prominently those in the morphology section) refine our common understanding of German and its typological characteristics. In sum, while the volume may be disappointing for anyone expecting the comprehensive typological assessment of German implicitly promised in the three foundational papers, there is enough of value here to recommend the volume for its intended audience(s).

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