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Wondering at the Natural Fecundity of Things: Essays in Honor of Alan Prince

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Wondering at the Natural Fecundity of Things

Essays in Honor of Alan Prince

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Preface

On behalf of his PhD students, his collaborators, and the phonologists who have taught with him, we are pleased to present this collection of papers to Alan Prince on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (June 20, 2006). The authors have all benefited from Alan's influence as a teacher, a mentor, and a colleague, and by their presence in this collection these papers recognize that contribution.

It is dangerous to generalize about a career as long and productive as Alan's. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that Alan's research and teaching have been guided primarily by the dictum that theories must be taken very seriously. Alan's work shows that studying the properties of theories of language discloses important insights that a more descriptive orientation might miss. How is a theory structured? What is its logic? What consequences can be deduced from it? These are the questions that we see asked and answered throughout Alan's career.

It is equally dangerous to pick a few of the most important intellectual contributions from a major scholar's career, but six truly stand out:

- In Prince (1976) and Liberman and Prince (1977), we have the first studies of word stress in metrical theory, setting out a range of ideas and principles that are still part of the metrical canon.
- Prince (1980) on Estonian quantity and Prince (1983) on the metrical grid are essential readings for the representation of stress and rhythmic structure, and are timeless classics to be studied by current and future phonologists.
- McCarthy and Prince (1986/1996) is the origin of the theory of prosodic morphology, which is relevant to the study of reduplication, templatic morphology, and word minimality.
- In two important conference papers, Prince 1985 (BLS) and Prince 1990 (CLS), we find the seeds of the metrical analyses that later occupy center stage in Optimality Theory.
- Pinker and Prince (1988) is the single most influential critique of Connectionist approaches to human language and cognition.
- In their 1993 manuscript (published in 2004), Prince and Smolensky introduce Optimality Theory. This book would appear on anyone's shortlist of the most important works in generative grammar since 1950.

It is no accident that so many of Alan's works are the products of collaboration. He is an intellectually open and generous colleague and teacher who has written papers with students as well as junior and senior colleagues. Beyond this, there are countless acknowledgments and footnotes in important journal articles and groundbreaking dissertations where some of the most interesting and crucial ideas are attributed to Alan.

Having sailed past the Scylla of generalizing about Alan's research program and the Charybdis of choosing his most important contributions, we find ourselves with one remaining obstacle to navigate. Festschriften, particularly when they are presented on a significant birthday, can seem like the denouement of a career that the honoree had planned to continue for many years to come. We would therefore like to note that Alan has of late been enjoying one *annus mirabilis* after another, composing deeply thoughtful papers on language learning and on the formal properties of Optimality Theory. The bibliography below is already out of date and becoming more so every few months.

This Festschrift is primarily available in electronic form, and there is a reason for that. When Alan created the Rutgers Optimality Archive in 1993, Internet directories of papers and preprints were rare generally and unknown in the field of linguistics. By making the latest research in OT available to everyone, ROA leveled the playing field for linguists everywhere in the world, particularly as Internet access became ubiquitous. Now, an antipodean linguist can dip his net into the sea of OT scholarship and pull up a school of fine ideas (mixed with an occasional fugu or coelacanth). That same linguist can also circulate his work to the OT research community and get feedback on it. ROA has been a great service to the field.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their invaluable help with the formatting, editing, and bibliography-checking process: Klinton Bicknell, Alex del Giudice, Ruth Kramer, Dave Teeple, and Matt Wolf.

We and the other contributors wish you, Alan, great happiness on this birthday and in the future.

Eric Baković
Junko Ito
John McCarthy

June 20th, 2006