1. In my paper 'The case against events', I argued that there is no real theoretical need to posit events, and hence that considerations of parsimony favor denying that events exist. My strategy was to consider the various reasons Donald Davidson has offered for positing events, and to argue in each case that the theoretical work for which he harnesses events can be carried out without them. Part of this strategy was to claim that the logical form of statements like

(1) The shortcircuit caused the fire

is represented by statements like

(2) *The fact that* there was a shortcircuit *caused it to be the case that* there was a fire,

with the italicized words in (2) constituting a non-truth-functional sentential connective. This is a view which Davidson himself has considered but rejected. He holds that the logical form of (2) is instead made perspicuous by

(3) There exist events e and e' such that e is a shortcircuit, e' is a fire, and e caused e'.

And he also holds that (3) does not represent the logical form of (1). Rather, (1) has the form of a two-place predicative statement, with 'the shortcircuit' and 'the fire' functioning as event-designating singular terms.

Davidson objects to the sentential-connective interpretation of (2) on the basis of a Fregean argument which purports to show that a putative causal connective would have to be truth-functional. I proposed a way of blocking this argument; but my proposal has been criticized by Andrew Altman, Michael Bradie, and Fred. D. Miller, Jr. in 'On doing without events'. In the present paper I shall respond to their objection.
2. Davidson's argument against the sentential-connective interpretation of (2) runs as follows.

It is obvious that the connective in (2) is not truth-functional, since (2) may change from true to false if the contained sentences are switched. Nevertheless, substitution of singular terms for others with the same extension in sentences like (1) and (2) does not touch their truth value. We must accept the principle of extensional substitution, then. Surely also we cannot change the truth value of the likes of (2) by substituting logically equivalent sentences for sentences in it. Thus (2) retains its truth if for ‘there was a fire’ we substitute the logically equivalent ‘\( \dot{x}(x = x & \text{there was a fire}) = \dot{x}(x = x) \)'; retains it still if for the left side of this identity we write the coextensive singular term ‘\( \dot{x}(x = x & \text{Nero fiddled}) \)'; and still retains it if we replace ‘\( \dot{x}(x = x & \text{Nero fiddled}) = \dot{x}(x = x) \)’ by the logically equivalent ‘Nero fiddled’. Since the only aspect of ‘there was a fire’ and ‘Nero fiddled’ that matters to this chain of reasoning is the fact of their material equivalence, it appears that our assumed principles have led to the conclusion that the main connective of (2) is, contrary to what we have supposed, truth-functional (CR, pp. 694–5).

In short, since the two sentential contexts in (2) allow substitution of coextensive singular terms, and since they also allow substitution of logically equivalent statements, the putative causal connective turns out absurdly to be truth-functional.

My response to this argument was this: first, the relevant definite descriptions should receive contextual definitions in accordance with Russell’s theory of descriptions; and second, the principle that coextensive singular terms are replaceable salva veritatae may be assumed only for logically primitive singular terms. This blocks the second substitution-step in Davidson’s argument, where he invokes the fact that ‘\( \dot{x}(x = x & \text{there was a fire}) \)’ is coextensive with ‘\( \dot{x}(x = x & \text{Nero fiddled}) \)’, as justification for replacing (4) by (5) within the causal context created by (2):

\[
\begin{align*}
(4) & \quad \dot{x}(x = x & \text{there was a fire}) = \dot{x}(x = x) \\
(5) & \quad \dot{x}(x = x & \text{Nero fiddled}) = \dot{x}(x = x)
\end{align*}
\]

3. Altman et. at. contend that this way of Blocking the Fregean argument compels me to deny the validity of certain valid inferences, like the inference from (6) and (7) to (8).

\[
\begin{align*}
(6) & \quad \text{The fact that there was a fire in the house belonging to Jones caused it to be the case that the pig was roasted.} \\
(7) & \quad \text{The house belonging to Jones is the oldest building on Elm Street.} \\
(8) & \quad \text{The fact that there was a fire in the oldest building on Elm Street caused it to be the case that the pig was roasted.}
\end{align*}
\]