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Decomposing Existence:
Evidence from Germanic[1]

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1 Introduction

In this paper, I will review some characteristics of existential constructions in Germanic, most prominently from German. The constructions I will discuss involve a semantically empty pronoun, which stands proxy for the subject. For this reason, I refer to them as „impersonal existential constructions" - as opposed to expressions like „X exists", which involve an existential predicate and a lexical DP subject. In section 2, I will review some basic characteristics of impersonal existential constructions in German.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the fact that (impersonal) existential constructions can be divided into „locative existentials" and „pure existentials". The term „locative existential" refers to the kind of existential construction we are familiar with from many languages, as *there is* in English, *il y a* in French, *hay* in Spanish, *ima* in Croatian and *es hot* in Alemannic varieties of German. For example, *there is* can either be used to denote temporary presence of an object at a certain location, as in (1a), or to express existence as such, as in (1b):

(1)a. There is a wolf at the door.
   b. There are many unicorns.   Milsark (1977: 1, 20)

Pure existentials are more restricted than locative ones: They do not have the reading in (1a), i.e. they cannot denote accidental and temporary presence at a certain location. When occurring with a locative expression, pure existentials express a habitual relation between the object and the location. Usually, the location is rather large, which often yields a kind of

„habitat" reading. Such existentials are for example German *es gibt*, Danish *der findes*, Swedish *det finns*, Norwegian *det fins* and Icelandic *der være til*. In section 3, I will contrast locative and pure existentials using data from Germanic languages. The habitual interpretation of pure existentials is compared with individual-level predication and generic quantification over situations in section 4.

In section 5, I will concentrate on two impersonal existentials: Standard German *es gibt* „it gives" and Alemannic *es hot* „it has". Based on diachronic observations, I will argue that both impersonal existentials are derived from their „personal" counterparts by absorption of the external argument. The difference between locative and pure existentials follows from the respective argument structures of the different verbs involved. The process of external argument absorption affects the possessor argument in the case of locative existentials. In the case of pure existentials, the affected argument is the agent argument. The absorption of the agent argument has quite dramatic consequences: The eventive interpretation is replaced by a stative one, and a generic operator is introduced into the argument structure. This operator is responsible for the habitual interpretation, which is typical of pure existential constructions.

In section 6, I will discuss apparent counterexamples to the claim that German *es gibt* is a pure existential. It will be shown that these examples lack a pure existential interpretation, and that they are not associated with pure existential constructions in general. I suggest that this behavior is due to some idiosyncratic property of the verb „give".

2 Impersonal existential constructions in German

In this section, I will introduce two impersonal existential constructions (IECs) in German: the Standard German (Ge) existential *es gibt* „it gives" and the „have"-existential *es hot* „it has", which is found in Alemannic dialects (Ale)[2]. Note that impersonal *geben* is used alongside impersonal *haben* in the Alemannic dialects under discussion. As there is no difference between Standard German and Alemannic dialects with respect to the interpretation of *es gibt*, I will only discuss examples from Standard German. In the following, I will summarize some observations concerning their syntactic behavior.

To filter out the relevant syntactic properties of impersonal existential constructions in German, I will contrast them with the copula *sein*. Syntactically, the copula construction is quite different from impersonal *geben* and *haben*. The examples in (2) show that the 3rd person neuter pronoun *es* is obligatory for both impersonal existential constructions. In the copula construction in (3), on the other hand, it is allowed only sentence-initially, but not sentence-internally.[3] Furthermore, (2) shows that the verb agrees with the dummy pronoun *es* in the impersonal existential construction, not with the lexical DP (sometimes referred to as the „logical subject"). As far as agreement is concerned, the copula construction patterns with the *there*-construction in English: The verb *sein* does not agree with the expletive pronoun *es*,

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[2] The Alemannic data (Ale) represent the dialect spoken in the area around Bludenz in Vorarlberg, which is the westernmost province of Austria. I am grateful to Stefan Gamon, Klaus Hämmerle, Isabella Marte, Martin Summer and Christoph Zimmermann for their judgements and their patience.

[3] Note that the clause-internal expletive pronoun in (3b) is not per se ungrammatical: It can be used in a context where *es* picks up predicative content from the previous discourse. The resulting interpretation is clearly different from (3), though, it is no longer existential.

but with the lexical DP in (3). Example (4) illustrates the situation with respect to structural case:

(2)   a. In meinem Garten   gibt   *(es)   viele Gänseblümchen.
          in my garden   *gives*   *it*   *many daisies*

Ale b. In minam Garta   hot   *('s)   an Hufa Gänseblüamle.
          in my garden   *has*   *-it*   *a pile daisies*
        „There are many daisies in my garden."

(3)   a. Es   sind   viele Gänseblümchen   in meinem Garten.
          it   *are*   *many daisies*   *in my garden*

      b. In meinem Garten   sind   (*es)   viele Gänseblümchen.
          in my garden   *are*   *(*it)*   *many daisies*
        „There are many daisies in my garden."

(4)   a. Es   gibt   einen   Apfelbaum   in meinem Garten.
          it   *gives*   *a-ACC* *apple tree*   *in my garden*

Ale b. Es   hot   an[4]   Öpflbom   i minam Garta.
          it   *has*   *a-ACC* *apple tree*   *in my garden*

      c. Es   ist   ein   Apfelbaum   in meinem Garten.
          it   *is*   *a-NOM* *apple tree*   *in my garden*
        „There is a pond in my garden."

The verbs in the impersonal existential constructions both assign accusative case to the DP. It follows from Burzio's generalization that both impersonal existential constructions have external arguments. This suggests that the pronoun *es* is the subject of impersonal *geben* and *haben*. As a grammatical subject, it resides in SpecIP, where it agrees with the verb and receives nominative case. (Unfortunately, there is no overt morphological difference between the nominative and the accusative form of the neuter pronoun *es* in German.) In the copula construction, though, the lexical DP is the subject, which receives nominative case and agrees with the verb. Here, the pronoun is only a dummy element, a mere V2-licenser. This is supported by the data in (2): As a genuine subject, *es* is always obligatory in impersonal existential constructions, whereas it only occurs sentence initially, and never sentence internally, with the copula.

The neuter pronoun *es* takes over the function of the subject in impersonal existential constructions. Still, it is semantically empty. A classic case of an element that is neither referential nor a genuine expletive is the subject of a weather verb, usually referred to as a quasi-argument. The relevant tests for quasi-argumenthood developed by Chomsky (1981),

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[4] Unfortunately, the Alemannic indefinite article does not show a morphological difference between nominative and accusative case. The case situation can only be demonstrated using the unreduced definite article (here with demonstrative force). The following left dislocation structure is somewhat marked because of semantic reasons, the accusative is clearly the expected form.
    (i) ? Den Bom, den hot's nur bei mir im Garta.
          this tree, this has-it only with me in-the garden
          „As for this kind of tree, it only exists in my garden."

Travis (1984), Safir (1985), Bennis (1987) and Vikner (1995) are i. substitution by a more referential pronoun, and ii. control of embedded PRO.

Both tests work for weather-*es* in German. Substituting weather-*es* „it" by the more referential d-pronoun *das* „this" is possible at least in some varieties of German, as in (5a).[5] It is marked, though: (5a) can only be used in emphatic exclamations. But the substitution test does not work for the non-referential pronoun in *es gibt* and *es hot*. Substitution of *es* „it" by *das* „this", if possible, destroys the existential interpretation: The pronoun *das* is interpreted as having predicative content, and this triggers a kind of causative meaning for „give" in (5b), and a possessive meaning for „have" in (5c):

(5)   a. % Das regnet heute aber wieder stark!!
           this rains today but again strong
           „It is raining quite strong today."
       b.   Das gibt einige schwerwiegende Probleme.
           this gives some terrible problems
           „This will cause/produce terrible problems."
Ale   c.   Des hot a paar gsalzene Probleme.
           this has a pair salty problems
           „This has a few terrible problems."

According to this substitution test, the pronoun in *es gibt* is not to be regarded as a quasi-argument. But it seems to be an important property of impersonal existentials that they have a semantically empty subject. So this test might simply not be applicable to the construction.

The other test that works for weather-*es* in German is control of PRO in a subordinated clause; cf. example (6a). Safir (1985) states that the subject of *es gibt* is not able to control. His example is repeated here as (6b):

(6)   a.   Es$_i$ regnete den ganzen Winter ohne PRO$_i$ jemals zu schneien.
           it rained the whole winter without PRO ever to snow
           „It rained throughout the winter without snowing."
       b. * Es$_i$ gab neue Modelle, ohne PRO$_i$ wirklich gute zu geben.
           it gave new models, without PRO really good-ones to give   cf. Safir (1985: 226)

Another look at the data shows that the control test is not very reliable for *es gibt*:

(7)   a. ?? Es$_i$ gibt viele Aufsätze zu diesem Thema, ohne PRO$_i$ auch nur eine überzeugende Theorie zu geben.
           it gives many papers about this topic, without PRO even just one convincing theory to give
.   b. ?? Es$_i$ regnete den ganzen Urlaub, ohne PRO$_i$ eine metereologische Erklärung zu geben.
           it rained the whole vacation without PRO a meteorological explanation to give

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[5] (5a) is rather colloquial, and not possible in all varieties of German (as indicated by the percentage sign %).

c. ? Es$_i$ gibt in dieser Gegend viel Wasser, ohne PRO$_i$ jemals richtig zu regnen.
it gives in this area much water without PRO ever really to rain

First of all, the judgements vary: Some speakers accept sentences of the form *es$_i$ gibt ... PRO$_i$ geben*, like Safir's (6b) and my (7a), more readily than others do. Second, consider a sentence of the form: *es$_i$ regnet ... PRO$_i$ geben* as in example (7b). Although weather-*es* has been proven to be a controller, its control properties decrease substantially, when the embedded predicate is impersonal *geben*. Third, note that the control properties of *es* in *es gibt* improve clearly, when the embedded predicate is a weather verb as in the constellation *es$_i$ gibt ... PRO$_i$ regnen*; cf. example (7c). Whatever is responsible for the behavior of *es gibt* with respect to control, it cannot be explained by the (non-)argument status of the subject *es* alone. Interestingly, even those speakers who do not find (7c) acceptable agree that control by a genuine expletive pronoun (a mere V2-licenser) as in (8) is much worse:

(8) * Es$_i$ werden in dieser Gegend viele Niederschläge gemessen, ohne PRO$_i$ jemals richtig zu regnen.
it are in this area many precipitation-PL measured without PRO ever really to rain

The results of these two tests for quasi-argumenthood should not be overrated. From a syntactic point of view, the pronoun in *es gibt* and *es hot* is clearly more argumental than expletive. And at least in terms of control, it behaves differently from the expletive V2-licenser. I'd like to think of it in the following way: There is a continuum of argumenthood, and the subject-*es* of an impersonal existential construction might be less argumental than weather-*es*, but it is clearly more argumental than a real expletive (e.g. a V2-licenser). For this reason, I will refer to it as a semantically empty quasi-argument.[6]

There is another difference between impersonal existential and the copula construction: *es gibt* and *es hot* can do without a predicate, much like the English *there*-construction. In (9c), neither the expletive *es*, nor the copula supply enough predicative content to stand alone. (9c) can only be interpreted, when the pronoun picks up referential or predicative content from previous discourse, but then it is no longer expletive, and there is no existential import whatsoever.[7]

(9) a. Es gibt außergewöhnlich viele stumpfsinnige Menschen.
it gives extraordinarily many mindless people
„There are extraordinarily many mindless people."

Ale b. Es hot wahnsinnig viel gstörte Lüt ghet.[8]
it has crazily many mindless people had

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[6] For more details and examples see Czinglar (1997).

[7] These examples make clear that there is a difference between expletive *es* plus copula in German and expletive *there* plus copula in English. The *there*-construction allows bare existentials; cf. McNally (1992:144). Expletive *there* is not as semantically empty as expletive *es*, it is similar to the German pronominal adverb *da*. See Bayer & Suchsland (1997) for more on *da* and existentials in German.

[8] Syntactically, it is clearly possible to use *es hot* without any predicate (in contrast to the copula). For semantic reasons, some spatio-temporal specification seems quite essential for the *es hot* construction; see section 5.1.

„There have been extraordinarily many mindless people."

c. * Es sind außergewöhnlich viele stumpfsinnige Menschen.
   it are extraordinarily many mindless people
   target: „There are extraordinarily many mindless people."

(10) Und nach Felmys Ansicht gibt es heute fast nur hundsmiserable Drehbücher.
   „And in Felmy's opinion there are almost only lousy scripts today."
   attested: Corpus „Mannheimer Morgen, 1989"[9]

If there is no locative specification as in (10), the existence of the object depicted by the lexical DP is asserted with respect to the relevant discourse universe determined by context and knowledge of the world. As Jörg Felmy is a German actor, his assertion that there are only lousy scripts probably pertains to scripts available in Germany. If he were a film critic, he could be talking about all the scripts of the world.

In contrast to the English *there*-construction, there is no predicate restriction with the German copula construction introduced by the pronoun *es*; more on the predicate restriction in section 4.1. Any kind of predicate can appear in (11c), just like any kind of predicate can appear with the copula alone. German *es gibt* and *es hot*, on the other hand, pattern more like *there is*, in that not all kinds of predicates are allowed. But the restriction is of a completely different nature: Additional predicative material must be locative in nature; cf. (2) and (4). Adjectival[10] and nominal predicates are in general not allowed:

(11) a. * Es gibt viele Österreicher {krank, stumpfsinnig, Idioten}.
   it gives many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}
   target: „There are many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}."

Ale b. * Es hot an Hufa Öschterricher {krank, gstört, Todel}.
   it has a pile Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}
   target: „There are many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}."

   c. Es sind viele Österreicher {krank, stumpfsinnig, Idioten}.
   it are many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}
   „(It is the case that) many Austrians are {sick, dumb, idiots}."

Quite the same is true for non-locative PPs as in (12). When a non-locative PP is grammatical in an impersonal existential constructions, it can usually be construed as a DP-internal modifier, as in (13). The fact that (12a) is not as bad as (11a) is also due to a possible DP-internal construal:

(12) a. ?? Es gibt viele Dänen gegen den Euro.
   it gives many Danes against the Euro

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[10] There is no difference between individual-level predicates like „dumb" or stage-level predicates like „sick" in (11); see section 4.1.

b. * Es hot an Hufa Däna gegad da Euro.
it gives/has many Danes against the Euro
target: „There are many Danes (who are) against the Euro."

(13) Es gibt viele Dänen ohne Job.
„There are many Danes without a job."

It has been argued that there is a kind of predicative relation between the lexical DP and the predicate in the English *there*-construction; cf. Williams (1984), McNally (1992) and Wilder (1994). The fact that additional material with *es gibt* and *es hot* needs to be locative sheds some doubt on an analysis of impersonal existential constructions in terms of secondary predication.[11]

The following table gives a short summary of the syntactic behavior of impersonal existential constructions as compared to the copula:

Syntactic properties of impersonal existential constructions (IECs) in German

Syntactic properties	copula *sein*	IECs: *es gibt* and *es hot*
case of non-pronominal DP	NOM	ACC
verbal agreement	with non-pronominal DP	with pronoun *es*
clause-internal *es*	ungrammatical	obligatory
status of the pronoun *es*	expletive (V2-licenser)	quasi-argument (subject)
„predicative" material	syntactically obligatory	syntactically optional
kind of „predicative" material	not restricted	restricted: only locative

3 Characterizing pure existence

In the following, the two impersonal existential constructions introduced in section 2 are compared: It will be shown that *es hot* is a locative existential, while *es gibt* is a pure existential. In section 3.2, I will introduce data from Mainland Scandinavian and Icelandic showing that pure existence is not an idiosyncratic property of the impersonal use of German *geben*.

3.1 „Es gibt" versus „es hot"

The table above shows that the impersonal existential constructions *es gibt* and *es hot* are syntactically quite parallel. Nevertheless, *es gibt* is more restricted than *es hot* from a semantic point of view. Consider (14):

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[11] There are instances of *es gibt* which allow secondary predication, but crucially this involves a shift in interpretation. I will come back to this in section 6.2.

(14) Wie Ihr selbst [...] feststellen könnt, gibt es heute im Bosch-Werk nicht nur einen Kommunisten.

as you yourselves find-out can, gives it today in-the Bosch-works not only one communist

„As you can find out for yourselves, there is not only one communist (working) at Bosch today."

<div align="right">*attested: Corpus „Limas"*</div>

By uttering (14) one does not talk about a certain day, when communists came to visit the Bosch works, but about the number of communists among the (regular) workers there. The location attributed to the object does not just hold for one individual situation. It seems that the property depicted by the locative cannot be interpreted as an accidental property of the object, *es gibt* forces a kind of habitual interpretation. For existence at a large location[12] this often results in a „habitat" reading.[13] The location in (15b) is (normally) neither a common place for horses nor a good habitat for horses, hence the sentence becomes degraded:

(15) a.   Es gibt (viele) Pferde in Kanada.
      it gives (many) horses in Canada
      „There are (many) horses in Canada."
   b. ?? Es gibt (viele) Pferde vor dem Haus.
      it gives (many) horses in-front-of the house
      target: „There are many horses in front of the house."

In contrast to impersonal *geben*, Alemannic impersonal *haben* does not induce such a restriction. It can be interpreted as a mere locative, just like a sentence with a copula (the expletive *es* is inserted to make (16b) parallel to (16a), it does not matter here at all):

(16) Ale   a. Es hot (an Hufa) Rössr voram Hus.
         it has a pile horses in-front-of-the house
      b. Es sind (viele) Pferde vor dem Haus.
         it are (many) horses in-front-of the house
    „There are horses in front of the house."

    The contrast in (15) is not as sharp as one would like it to be. This is due to the fact that one can almost always construct some kind of habitual reading. For example, there could be horses in front of the house most of the time, because it is a rent-a-horse place. One tends to construct such contexts immediately when confronted with a sentence like (15b). It is harder, though, to get a habitual reading in out-of-the-blue contexts:

(17) a. * Maria, schau! Da gibt es ein Pferd in unserem Kartoffelbeet!
      Mary, look! there gives-it a horse in our potato bed

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[12] A similar description can be found in Hammer (1971): German *es gibt* denotes existence as such or existence in a large area; cited in Newman (1996:162).

[13] I'd like to thank Irene Heim (p.c.) for this important observation.

Ale   b.   Maria, luag! Do hot's a Ross i üsram Grundbirabeet!
            Mary, look! there has-it a horse in our potato bed

       c.   Maria, schau! Da ist ein Pferd in unserem Kartoffelbeet!
            Mary, look! there is a horse in our potato bed

         „Mary, look! There is a horse in our potato bed!"

It seems that impersonal existential constructions in German differ with respect to their ability to access individual situations: *Es gibt* does not allow reference to one individual situation.[14] This semantic restriction gives rise to the purely existential interpretation of *es gibt*. Alemannic *es hot*, on the other hand, allows reference to an individual situation. This is true to locative existentials in general, such as *there is* in English and „have"-existentials like *il y a* in French, *hay* in Spanish, *ima* in Croatian[15] and *es hot* in Alemannic; cf. also Freeze (1992).

In the next section, I will show that being a pure existential is not an idiosyncratic property of the verb *geben* in German.

3.2 Pure existentials in Scandinavian

Existentials of the *es gibt* type do exist in languages other that German. In this section, I will introduce data from Danish (Da), Swedish (Sw), Norwegian (No) and Icelandic (Ice).[16]

Mainland Scandinavian has a construction involving the s-passive of the verb „find". In Danish it combines with the locative adverbial *der* „there" and in Swedish and Norwegian with the 3rd person neuter d-pronoun *det* „this". Hopper (1998: 154) characterizes the Scandinavian s-passive as a morphological medio-passive (MP), where the reflexive pronoun *sik* became part of the verbal morphology. This medio-passive form is no longer productive, for regular passive formation a periphrastic passive form involving *blive* „become" is used. But it has survived in certain relics, including the existential construction.

Just like German impersonal existentials, „find"-existentials can be used bare, i.e. without locative material:

(18)   Da   a. Findes der engle?
            find-MP there angels

      Sw   b. Finns det änglar?
            find-MP this angels

      No   c. Fins det engler?
            find-MP this angels

         „Are there angels? (or: Do angels exist?)"

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(19) Da   a. Der findes børn der gerne spiser spinat.
            there find-MP children who gladly eat spinach

     Sw   b. Det finns barn som gärna äter spinat.
            this find-MP children who gladly eat spinach

     No   c. Det fins barn som gjerne spiser spinat.
            this find-MP children who gladly eat spinach
            „There are children, who like to eat spinach."

Just like *es gibt*, the s-passive of „find" is restrictive with respect to the kind of location it occurs with. Whenever a non-accidental relation between object and location can be construed, the s-passive is fine; cf. the German example in (14):

(20) Da   a. ? Hos Bosch findes der mange gode ingerniører.
              at Bosch find-MP there many good technicians

     Sw   b.   Hos Bosch finns det många bra ingenjörer.
              at Bosch find-MP this many good technicians

     No   c.   Hos Bosch fins det mange gode ingeniører.
              at Bosch find-MP this many good technicians
              „There are many good technicians (working) at Bosch."

(21) Da   a.   I Stuttgart findes der mange danskere.
              in Stuttgart find-MP there many Danes

     Sw   b.   I Stuttgart finns det många danskar.
              in Stuttgart find-MP this many Danes

     No   c.   I Stuttgart fins det mange dansker.
              in Stuttgart find-MP this many Danes
              „There are many Danes (living) in Stuttgart."

But as soon as the relation between object and location can no longer be interpreted as habitual or as a kind of „habitat" the existential becomes ungrammatical; here the contrast in (15) is replicated for Norwegian:

(22) No   a.   Det fins (mange) hester i Canada.
              this find-MP (many) horses in Canada
              „There are (many) horses in Canada."

     No   b. ?? Det fins (mange) hester foran huset.
               this find-MP (many) horses in-front-of house-DEF
               target: „There are many horses in front of the house."

In Danish, there is another way to express pure existence for a context like (18): the copula *være*, the locative adverbial *der* and the particle *til*. Icelandic has a very similar existential construction, differing from the Danish one in that it does not necessarily involve a locative element:

(23) Da a. Er der engle til?
         be there angels at
     Ice b. Eru til englar?
         are at angels
         „Are there angels? (or: Do angels exist?)"

The Icelandic construction is interesting, because it exhibits a contrast similar to the one with the medio-passive of „find" in Mainland Scandinavian. The particle *til* „at" is used in the pure existential only. It must not be used, when an accidental, merely locative interpretation is intended:[17]

(24) Ice a. Það eru (til) hestar í Kanada.
         there are (at) horses in Canada
         „There are horses (living) in Canada."
     Ice b. Það eru (*til) hestar fyrir framan husid.
         *there are (*at) horses in front of the-house*
         „There are horses in front of the house."

In sum, the evidence from Scandinavian languages suggests that the observation made for the German impersonal existential construction *es gibt* (namely that it can only refer to individual situations; see section 3.1) can be generalized:

(25) Pure existentials do not allow reference to an individual situation, which specifies an accidental property of the object.

4 Pure existence as a habit

The generalization in (25) is reminiscent of the well-known difference between individual-level and stage-level predication; cf. Carlson (1977/80), Kratzer (1988/95), Chierchia (1995) and others. In the following, I will show that pure existentials behave similar to individual-level predicates, and I will suggest an account in terms of generic quantification.

4.1 Individual-level predication

The fact that pure existentials prohibit reference to particular situations makes them similar to individual-level predicates (IL-predicates): Pure existentials and individual-level predicates seem to both specify properties pertaining to individuals as such. Stage-level predicates (SL-

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[17] Icelandic *vera til* behaves like German *es gibt* regarding the basic distinction between pure existence and location. But the use of the particle *til* does not disambiguate between an existential and a locative reading in all contexts. Although a purely existential meaning can easily be construed in (i), it is still ungrammatical to use *til*:
   (i) Í Stuttgart / Í essu husi eru (*til) margir Danir.
       in Stuttgart / in this house are (at) many Danes

predicates), on the other hand, may be accidentally true of an individual in a single situation. Consider the classical contrast in (26):

(26) a. Firemen are available.
      b. Firemen are altruistic.   Kratzer (1988/95: 141)

As Carlson (1977/80) observed, the interpretation of the bare plural subject varies with the choice of the predicate: In (26a) it is ambiguous between existential and generic interpretations, but in (26b), due to the individual-level predicate, it receives the generic reading only. In an influential article, Kratzer (1988/95) formulates the difference between individual-level and stage-level predication in terms of argument structure. Stage-level predicates have an extra (Davidsonian) argument, which individual-level predicates lack: the event argument. Contrary to Carlson's previous analysis involving different sorts of variables for „individuals" and „stages", Kratzer takes a quantificational stand point. Combined with Heim's (1982) theory of unselective binding, the extra variable introduced by the event argument of stage-level predicates (here represented as l) can be bound by any quantifier, for example by an existential or a generic quantifier.

(27) Firemen are available.
      a. $\exists$ x,l [fireman(x) & available(x,l)]
          „There are firemen available."
      b. G x,l [fireman(x) & be(x,l)] [available(x,l)]
          „It is a characteristic property of a fireman that he is available."
      c. G l [here(l)] $\exists$ x [fireman(x) & available(x,l)]
          „There are typically firemen available around here."   cf. Kratzer (1988/95:141)

As individual-level predicates lack an event variable, it cannot be quantified over. Hence individual-level predicates cannot be applied to single events (or situations) involving individuals, but only to the individual argument (x) as a whole. As a consequence, the following interpretations of (26b) should be possible:

(28) Firemen are altruistic.
      a. G x [fireman(x)] [altruistic(x)]
          „Usually, firemen are altruistic."
      b. $\exists$ x [fireman(x)] [altruistic(x)]
          „There are altruistic firemen."   cf. Kratzer (1988/95:141)

Clearly, (26b) does not have the reading in (28b). To exclude this reading, Kratzer needs two assumptions: First, individual-level predicates do not project a VP-internal subject position, their subject is base-generated in SpecIP. Second, Diesing's Mapping Hypothesis holds: Material from IP is always mapped to the restrictive clause, hence subjects of individual-level predicates cannot be existentially closed. I will not go into this analysis in detail; see Kratzer (1988/95), Diesing (1992).

As is well known since Milsark (1974, 1977), the English *there*-construction allows predication by stage-level predicates, but not by individual-level predicates as in (29b) and (29c):

(29) a.   There are three people (who know you) sick with the flu.
     b. * There are three people (who know you) able to answer that question.
     c. * There was a woman a contestant on the game show.   McNally (1992: 10f)

Carlson (1980:128) ties the predicate restriction to be observed in (29) to the semantics of the copula, which he assumes to be operating over stages.[18] A newer analysis of the predicate restriction in the English existential in terms of „stages“ can be found in Musan (1996).

At first sight, this seems to be exactly the opposite with pure existentials: The locative is not interpreted as a transient property of the object. This is not expected, since locative PPs are usually well-behaved stage-level predicates.[19] Still, the relation between the object and the location expressed by a PP in pure existential constructions must not be an accidental one.

One important property of individual-level predication is stable stativity: individual-level predicates do not like to be temporally modified; cf. Kratzer (1988/95) and Chierchia (1995). Consider the following pure existential in German:

(30) Es gibt einen Verrückten in unserem Haus.
     it gives a lunatic in our house
     „There is a lunatic (living) in our house.”

As soon as temporal modification suggests that the location is not a habitual residence or a habitat for the object, a sentence with *es gibt* becomes degraded. A locative existential like *es hot* can receive a temporally restricted interpretation, though, as the contrast in (31) shows:

(31) a. ?? Gestern gab es einen Verrückten in unserem Haus.
          yesterday gave it a lunatic in our house
Ale b.   Göschtrd hot's an Verruckta i üserm Hus ghet.

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[18] This is not an unusual assumption: Rothstein (1983) also posits three different kinds of *be*: predicative, identificational and existential. According to Carlson's split, we find two different copulas in Spanish. Their use is contingent on the kind of predication, *ser* appears with individual-level predicates and *estar* with stage-level predicates:
    (i)   Juan es inteligente/alto/fiable.
          „John is intelligent/tall/trustworthy.“
    (ii)   Juan está enfermo/aburrido/cansado.
          „John is sick/bored/tired.“   Mejías-Bikandi (1993: 331f)
[19] McNally (1992:139) points out that „there is a class of nouns for which locative predicates behave as if they were individual-level. These are nouns such as *dent*, *hole*, *space*, which are interpreted as relations between some entity and a location.” Like other individual-level predicates they do not license existential readings for bare plural subjects and they are ungrammatical in *when*-clauses; see Kratzer (1988/95: 129f) for the IL/SL-contrast in *when*-clauses:
    (i) # Holes were in the wall.
    (ii)# When the hole is in the wall, it is easy to look through.McNally (1992: 139)
These data suggest that the IL/SL-properties of predicates do not necessarily follow from lexical information about the predicate alone, but also depend on the kind of object predicated over.

> *yesterday has-it a lunatic in our house had*
> „Yesterday, there was a lunatic in our house.“

Whereas there might be a context allowing a habitual interpretation for (31a) (see (38a) below) such a context is much harder to find for (32a), which involves the adverb *gerade* „at the moment of speaking". (32) provides a clear contrast then:[20]

(32) a. * In unserem Haus gibt es gerade einen Verrückten.
       in our house gives it at-this-moment a lunatic
Ale b.   I üserm Hus hot's grad an Verruckta.
         in our house has-it at-this-moment a lunatic
         „There is a lunatic in our house right now."

Exactly the same situation can be observed with pure existentials in Mainland Scandinavian: As soon as temporal modification suggests that the locative relation is only temporary and/or accidental, the sentences become degraded:

(33) Da a. * I Stuttgart findes der mange danskere i dag, på grund af fodboldkampen.
            in Stuttgart find-MP there many Danes today, because of football-match-the
     No b. ?? I Stuttgart fins det mange dansker i dag, på grunn av fotballkampen.
            in Stuttgart find-MP this many Danes today, because of football-match-the
     target: „Because of the football match, there are many Danes in Stuttgart today."

(34) Da a. ?? Efter fodboldkampen fandtes der mange danskere ude på gaden.
            after football-match-the find-MP-PAST there many Danes out on street-the
     Sw b. * Efter fotbollsmatchen fanns det många danskar ute på gatan.
            after football-match-the find-MP-PAST this many Danes out on street-the
     No c. ?? Etter fotballkampen fantes det mange dansker ute på gata.
            after football-match-the find-MP-PAST this many Danes out on street-the
     target: „After the football match, there were many Danes out on the street."

To make a locative statement as targeted in (34) the copula must be used:

(35) Da a.   Efter fodboldkampen var der mange danskere ude på gaden.
     Sw b.   Efter fotbollsmatchen var det många danskar ute på gatan.
            after football-match-the were there/this many Danish out on the street

Another testing ground for the individual-level/stage-level contrast are progressive contexts: In German, *beim* „at+the" followed by a nominalized infinitive introduces an event, which takes place at the same time as the event predicated of by the main verb. As can be seen in

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[20] Despite the fact, that it is hard to get clear judgements of ungrammaticality for these sentences alone, the contrast to a locative-existential like *es hot* is clear. This is acknowledged by all speakers of Alemannic.

(36), an individual-level predicate as „black" resists spatio-temporal anchoring by such an adverbial, whereas a stage-level predicate like „hungry" is fine:

(36) a. ... weil fast alle Schwäne$_i$ (*beim PRO$_i$ Schwimmen) schwarz sind   IL-PRED.
          ... *because almost all swans (*at-the swim-INF) black are*
      b. ... weil fast alle Schwäne$_i$ (beim PRO$_i$ Schwimmen) hungrig sind   SL-PRED.
          ... *because almost all swans (at-the swim-INF) hungry are*
      „... because almost all swans are black/hungry while swimming."

For a similar reason, a *beim*-phrase induces ungrammaticality with the pure existential *es gibt*, whereas it is fine with the locative existential *es hot*:

(37) a. * Es gibt zwei Verrückte$_i$ in unserem Haus beim PRO$_i$ Kartenspielen.   PURE EXIST.
             it gives two lunatics in our house at-the card-playing
Ale   b.   Es hot zwä Verruckte$_i$ i üserm Hus bim PRO$_i$ Kartaspila.   LOC. EXIST.
             it has two lunatics in-the house at-the card-playing
             „There are two lunatics playing cards in our house."

Interestingly, there is a grammatical reading for (36a), in which the predicate „black" is reinterpreted as a stage-level predicate. If swans are animals that change their color, much like chameleons, (36a) is fine. Unlike the copula, *es gibt* has its own generic import, which forces the PP „in our house" to denote a more permanent property of the object. It is hence not surprising that the PP cannot be reinterpreted in such a way. The interpretation of the respective predicates in (36a) and (37a) is of a completely different origin: In (36a), the adjective „black" is an individual-level predicate, which Kratzer (1988/95) argues to be a lexical property. The habitual/generic interpretation of (37a) is a property of the pure existential construction itself, not of the locative PP. This is why the latter cannot be rescued by reinterpreting the locative as a stage-level predicate.

   Although pure existentials usually become degraded when temporally modified, there are examples where spatio-temporal anchoring is fine:

(38) Ge   a. Gestern gab es noch keinen Verrückten im Haus, der ist erst heute eingezogen.
                 yesterday gave it yet no lunatic in the house, he is only today moved-in
                 „Yesterday there was no lunatic in the house yet, he only moved in today."
      No   b. Nettopp nå fins det ikke dinosaurer, men det fantes dinosaurer før.
                 just now find-MP this not dinosaurs, but this found-MP dinosaurs before
                 „Just now there are no dinosaurs, but earlier there used to be dinosaurs."

The examples in (38) are clearly pure existentials. It seems that what is temporally modified here is the assertion of existence itself. The spatio-temporal modifiers (adverbs, tenses) specify the onset (or the endpoint) of the asserted existence, but there is still enough of a spatio-temporal stretch left for expressing pure existence.

There are also real counterexamples to the claim that *es gibt* prohibits existential quantification over particular situations. In fact, there are contexts where impersonal *geben* even acquires a clear eventive reading:

(39) Morgen wird es ein Gewitter geben.
      tomorrow will it a storm give
      „Tomorrow, there will be a storm."

In section 6.1, I will argue that sentences like (39) are completely independent of the phenomenon of pure existence. This is supported by the fact that the Scandinavian pure existentials cannot be used in contexts like (39).

I have shown that the locative in pure existentials behaves like an individual-level predicate with respect to temporal modification. It was useful to compare pure existentials to individual-level predicates as a heuristic device. But it is not clear, how a locative PP could be an individual-level predicate in pure existential contexts and a stage-level predicate in locative existential contexts. The analogy to individual-level predication does not help in explaining the behavior of pure existentials. In the next section, I will suggest an analysis in terms of generic quantification.

4.2 Generic quantification over locations

The individual-level behavior of locations in pure existentials could also have a different source: a generic operator binding a spatio-temporal variable.[21] As already mentioned, Carlson (1977, 1980: 79) identifies the existential reading of a bare plural with stage-level predication and its generic reading with individual-level predication. From a different, namely a quantificational point of view, Milsark (1977) makes an interesting observation: A sentence like (40) is at least two-ways ambiguous, it can be a statement about typhoons or a statement about this part of the pacific.

(40) Typhoons arise in this part of the Pacific.   Milsark (1977: 22)

In the first reading, the predicate „arise in this part of the pacific" is interpreted as an individual-level predicate and „typhoons" gets a generic reading, as predicted by Carlson. But in the second reading, the subject „typhoons" gets an existential interpretation and (40) is more like a generic statement about „situations in this part of the pacific".[22] These two readings can be roughly captured as follows:

(41) a. G x [x is a typhoon] ∃ s [s is a situation in this part of the pacific & x arises in s]
      b. G s [s is a situation in this part of the pacific] ∃ x [x is a typhoon & x arises in s]

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[21] Chierchia (1995), for example, treats individual-level predication on a par with generic quantification: All individual-level predicates have an event argument, but it is always bound by a generic operator.
[22] Wilkinson (1986) notes that this reading is not predicted by Carlson and proposes that (at least some) generics should be treated in a Lewis/Kamp/Heim framework of quantification; see Kratzer (1988/95: 139f) for discussion.

There is a sense in which pure existentials are similar to (41b): There is a generic (or habitual) source that ties together the object and the location. This could be captured in a similar fashion:[23]

(42) a. Es gibt Verrückte in diesem Haus.
          „There are lunatics (living) in this house.“
      b. G s [s is a situation in the house] ∃ x [x is a lunatic & x is in s]

Pure existentials involve some kind of generic quantification over situations, and this entails that reference to an individual situation is no longer possible. If the extension of the spatio-temporal variable (s) is restricted too tightly, e.g. by temporal modification or pragmatic context, generic quantification is no longer possible. This seems to be a general property of habitual sentences. Whereas (43a) can have a generic interpretation, namely that Fido was a car-chaser, (43b) cannot:

(43) a. Fido chased cars.
      b. Yesterday, Fido chased cars.

In contrast to a habitual sentence like (43), pure existentials have a generic source inherent to them, hence there is no way for them to be interpreted non-habitually. As a consequence, a pure existential, which is temporally restricted, does not make much sense. In the next section, I argue that the generic operator enters the scene as a by-product of a process of „de-agentivisation".

5 Decomposing Existence

If the scenario for pure existentials developed in the last section is correct, we have to find out where the generic quantifier comes from. I believe the behavior of the two German impersonal existential constructions is to be derived from the argument structures of the verbs involved. The impersonal existential constructions *es gibt* and *es hot* are syntactically quite similar (cf. section 2), but they involve different verbs: „give" and „have". I will argue that the interpretational differences stem from certain differences in argument structure.

5.1 Locative existentials with possessive „have"

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[23] Note that reading (41a) is not easily available for the pure existential in (42), the bare plural cannot be interpreted generically: At least as long as the object DP is in its base position, it is always existentially closed, i.e. it is not a property of lunatics in general that they live in this house. It might be possible, though, to get a generic reading for topicalized objects:
    (i) Schwertfische gibt es im westlichen Teil des Pazifiks.
         sword-fish-PL gives it in-the western part the-GEN pacific-GEN
         „As for sword fish, they exist in the western part of the pacific."

As already mentioned, locative existential constructions involving the verb „have" are quite common across languages, for example *il y a* in French, *hay* in Spanish, *es hot* in Alemannic, *ima* in Croatian and Bulgarian; cf. for example Freeze (1992) and Heine (1997). It is plausible to assume that impersonal „have" is derived from possessive „have". Many researchers from different theoretic backgrounds claim that possessive, existential and locative constructions are tightly related to each other; see Freeze (1992), Heine (1997: 202f) and references cited therein.

There are well-known syntactic and semantic arguments that the verb „have" is itself derived from locative, benefactive or other copula constructions. Following Benveniste (1960), it has been claimed that some element, which may be locative or marked by some oblique case, incorporates into the copula „be" yielding „have". Subsequently, the argument realizing the location or benefactive is promoted to subject position. This is, in a nutshell, how possessive „have" is derived by Freeze (1992) and Kayne (1993). Adapting this kind of analysis, Kayne (1993) gives an explanation of (the rise of) auxiliary „have", and Belvin & den Dikken (1997) derive experiencer „have". Assuming that the verb „have" is derived from „be" plus something, is tantamount to assuming that it has some functional character, also in its main verb use. Being a rather functional element to begin with, it is not surprising that it will undergo a process of grammaticalization yielding the „have"-existential.

Heine (1997) characterizes the grammatical shift from simple „be" towards the concept of „possession" in cognitive terms. In the languages he discusses, this process seems to be in line with what is argued to be a basic principle of grammaticalization: It proceeds from relatively concrete to increasingly abstract meanings. Heine argues that possessive „have" is never derived from the simple existential meaning of the copula alone (as in *cogito ergo sum*) . All sources of possession - for example, dative or genitive expressions - can be described as „X exists with reference to Y". Heine argues that the change to „Y possesses X" involves a step of abstraction. In impersonal „have"-existentials, a semantically empty pronoun replaces the Y-argument, which may then resurface as a location. Therefore „have"-existentials are considered as conceptually more abstract than the possessive construction; cf. Heine (1997: 94f). Although the exact measures of abstractness in his reasoning are not entirely clear to me, it seems clear from a syntactic point of view that a construction involving a dummy pronoun subject is more „grammatical" than one that can have a variety of subjects. And „have" has certainly lost part of its lexical meaning when it appears in a „have"-existential.

Following Heine, impersonal *haben* in German originates in the Latin (La) copula-plus-dative construction, which develops first into possessive *haben* and get then transformed to *es hot* in some German dialects, as for example in Alemannic dialects:

(44) La   a. Liber est Johanni.
           book is John-DAT
           „John has a book (with him)."
       Ge   b. Hans hat ein Buch (bei sich).
           „John has a book (with him)."
       Ale   c. Es hot an Hufa Büacher i dem Lada.
           it has a pile books in this shop
           „There are many books in this shop."

I suggest that the transition from possessive to impersonal „have" involves the syntactic absorption of the possessor argument. The argument structures of the three constructions in (44) can be roughly characterized as follows:[24]

(45) a. THEME   [POSSESSOR/LOCATION   *est*]   cf. Latin (44a)
      b. POSSESSOR [THEME   (LOCATION)   *haben*]   cf. German (44b)
      c. *es*   [THEME   LOCATION   *haben*]   cf. Alemannic (44c)

Kratzer (1994) provides strong arguments for separating the external argument from the verb and its internal arguments: Internal arguments can change the interpretation of the verb in quite an idiosyncratic way. Consider the following examples from Marantz (1984): *kill a cockroach* vs. *kill a conversation* vs. *kill an evening* vs. *kill a bottle*. External arguments also induce changes in the interpretation of a verb phrase, but these changes are highly predictable. Consider one of Kratzer's examples:

(46) a. The performance grabbed Maria.
      b. A stranger grabbed Maria.   Kratzer (1994)

„[The] alternation consists in a pairing of an Aktionsart and a thematic relation. Agent arguments go with action verbs (the (b) examples), and cause arguments go with non-action verbs (the (a) examples)." (Kratzer 1994). Agents must be animate, so external arguments denoting non-animate entities are interpreted as causes and induce the non-action interpretation of a verb phrase. Kratzer further assumes that arguments are introduced by heads. As there is a tight relation between Aktionsart and voice, Kratzer argues that it is a Voice-head which introduces the external argument. This Voice-head is a (possibly empty) inflectional head and assigns accusative case to the object. As in a Larsonian VP-shell, the direct object is base-generated in the specifier position of VP.

Kratzer's framework provides the optimal tools for understanding what is going on with the impersonal existential constructions in German. The external argument of possessive „have" is absorbed by a semantically empty pronoun, and this yields an existential interpretation. The argument structures for possessive *haben* in German and impersonal *haben* in Alemannic dialects are represented in (47a) and (47b) respectively.

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[24] To keep the structures simple, I treat possessive „have" as if it were an underived main verb. The derivation of „have" from „be" might result in a more complicated structure, but the basic intuitions are preserved in (47).

(47) a.　　　　　　VoiceP　　　　　　b.　　　　　VoiceP

　　　POSSESSOR/HOLDER　　　Voice'　　　　　*es*　　　　Voice'

　　　　　　　　VP　　　　Voice°　　　　　　　VP　　　　Voice°

　　　THEME　　　　　V'　　　　　　THEME　　　　　V'

　　　(LOCATION)　　　V°　　　　　LOCATION　　　　V°
　　　　　　　　　haben　　　　　　　　　　　*haben*
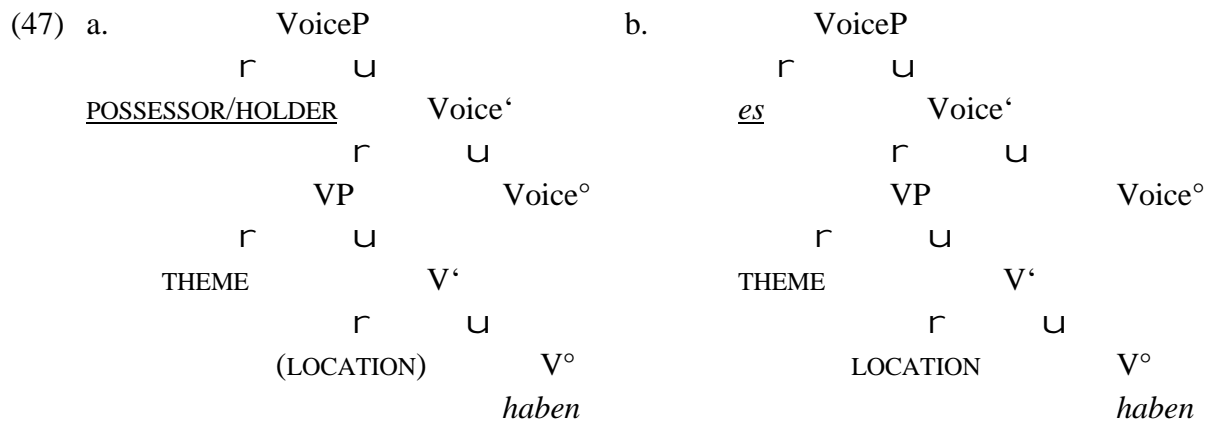
The external argument in (47a) is replaced by a semantically empty pronoun in (47b), which bears the default features [3sg, neuter]. In section 2, I gave some arguments that this pronoun is not to be treated as a mere expletive, but rather a quasi-argument. This is compatible with its insertion in an argument position, here Spec of VoiceP.

In Kratzer's framework, the semantic connection between verbs and their external arguments is not a matter of lexical selection. To establish this connection, she assumes a semantic mechanism dubbed „Event Identification". I will not repeat the technical details here, but here is one of her examples: The sentence *Rasoa owns the clothes* involves a stative predicate (*own the clothes*) and a „holder" of the state (*Rasoa*). Semantically, both are predicates (or, functions) which contain the same kind of event argument: a state. So the event argument can be identified by Event Identification without crashing. In (47a), we have exactly the same situation. In (47b) the place of the holder argument has been taken by a semantically empty pronoun. The result is a state without a holder (nothing is predicated of *es* „it" in (44c)). This is simply another way to express the fact that (47b) is an impersonal construction. Syntactically, there must be a Voice-head, because we know from section 2 that the theme argument has accusative case. So there must be an external argument, and there is, it just lacks lexical-semantic content.

There is another aspect in which existential „have" differs from possessive „have": In its normal use, a „have"-existential in Alemannic involves some kind of locative specification, at least the locative adverb *do* „there". This is not a syntactic requirement (cf. the discussion in section 2), but a semantic one. It seems that a locative argument is needed to make up for the semantic emptiness of the external argument. Intuitively, the locative argument specifies the range or extension of the holder argument. This intuition is shared by all my informants. Interestingly though, judgements by speakers from different regions differ slightly. None of my informants accepts (48a), but some of them allow sentences like (48b) and (48c).[25]

(48) Ale　a. ?? Es hot nur a grade Primzahl.
　　　　　　　　is has only one even prime

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[25] My informants from the area around Bludenz fall in two groups with respect to this question: Those from Nenzing accept (48b) and (48c) quite clearly, while those from Bludenz/Bürs do not. When I checked with other Alemannic speakers (from south of Bludenz or north of Feldkirch), they all reject (48b) and (48c) rather clearly. I'd also like to thank Stefanie Dipper (University of Stuttgart) for pointing out to me that in her Alemannic dialect, spoken in the area around Stuttgart (Swabia, Germany), a locative element is strictly obligatory with impersonal „have".

              „There is/exists only one even prime."

Ale   b. % Es hot wahnsinnig viel gstörte Lüt.
              it has crazily many mindless people
              „There are extraordinarily many mindless people."

Ale   c. % Es hot an Hufa Goga, wo kan Spinat mögan.
              it has a pile children who no spinach like
              „There are many children who do not like spinach."

Ale   d.   Es hot mr viel zviel Lüt ghet.
              it has me-DAT many too-many people had
              „For me, there have been too many people there."

In general, speakers prefer to use impersonal „give" to express pure existence when there is no locative element present at all. That the requirement of a locative element is rather semantic than syntactic, is also shown by (48d): Here it is the present perfect tense, which expresses the fact that we are talking about a clearly defined spatio-temporal interval. A specific location is part of the common knowledge of the speaker and the hearer, so the lack of an overt locative is no problem for the speaker of any dialect.

Note that impersonal „have", as well as the copula construction, is in principle compatible with a pure existential interpretation. Both are able to convey a purely existential interpretation, when a locative element is present and the (pragmatic) context enforces it.[26]

A detailed analysis of possessive and impersonal „have"-constructions is beyond the scope of this paper. In this section, I discussed a possible derivation scenario for *es hot* in terms of external argument absorption. In the next section, I will propose a similar operation for the derivation of impersonal pure existentials. The two constructions differ in one important aspect, though, which is argued to provide an explanation of the difference between a locative-existential and a pure existential interpretation

5.2   *Pure existentials with agentive verbs*

Intuitively, the relation between possessive and impersonal „have" is much more obvious than between the agentive double object verb *geben* and the impersonal existential *es gibt*. I will first discuss some diachronic and synchronic uses of the verb *geben*, which make this relation clearer. I will then propose that the impersonal existential derives from eventive *geben* by external argument absorption. There is a semantic affinity between „have" and „give": „have" characterizes possession, and „give" can be described as involving change of possession.

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[26] Contexts expressing existence without involving any sense of location at all are rare; see Czinglar (1998). It could be argued that the assertion (or denial) of the truth of a proposition is such a context. In German, the d-pronoun *das* can refer to a proposition. (i) expresses that the proposition in question cannot be true. Alternatively, one could say that the situation expressed is non-existent. Only impersonal *geben* can be used to express this kind of „existence":

   (i)   Das gibt es nicht, (dass der Paul grüne Haare hat)!
             this gives it not (that the Paul green hair has)
             „It's not true (that Paul has green hair)!"
   (ii)   * Des hot's ned, (dass da Paul grüane Hoor hot)!
             this has-it not (that the Paul green hair has)

There is one important difference between the two impersonal existential constructions: Only existential „have" can refer to an individual situation, existential „give" always expresses pure existence (cf. section 3.1). In the following, I argue that this is due to the thematic properties of the external argument, which is affected by absorption.

Impersonal „have" and impersonal „give" can be viewed as result of a process of grammaticalization. Ans van Kemenade (p.c.) pointed out to me, that it is quite likely that an element with some functional character like „have" undergoes such a process. An element that has a full-fledged argument structure like „give" is much less expected to grammaticalize in such a way. It is crucial that „give" only shows the semantically bleached meaning „exist" in one special construction, namely when combined with a dummy subject pronoun. Recall the fact that *es* „it" in *es gibt* cannot be replaced by *das* „this" without yielding some kind of non-existential causative meaning; cf. section 2.

In his study on the origin of the German *es gibt* construction[27], Newman (1998) suggests that the impersonal „give" is derived from the main verb „give" by a process of grammaticalization. Whereas agentive *geben* is present throughout the history of (written) German, its impersonal variant only appears in the Early New High German (NHG) period, specifically in the 16th and 17th century. As Newman points out, the emergence of *es gibt* can be construed as part of a more general proliferation of impersonal constructions in the New High German period. In that period, *es gibt* is mostly used to convey the meaning „it produces", „it yields" or „it gives rise to" (cf. *ergeben* in contemporary German):

(48) NHG a. (...) da schneiet und hagelt es mit Gelt zu, das es Beulen gibt
              (...) there snows and hails it with money PTL, that it bumps gives
              „(...) it will snow and hail with money, so much that it will cause bumps."
      NHG b. wann nur alte Weiber unnd die Hund dran seychten, so gebs guten
              Burgundischen Saltpeter
              when only old women and the dogs at-it urinated, so gave-it/this[28] good
              Burgundy saltpeter
              „all you need is for old women and dogs to urinate on it, and you'd get good
              Burgundy saltpeter"

                                                    Newman (1998: 310f), glosses added

Newman relates the impersonal construction in (48) to a special use of *geben*, which does not involve a benefactor/goal argument. He states that this construction was already established before the occurrence of impersonal *geben*. According to Newman, the development of the „produce/yield" sense of „give" from the „transfer control" sense is widely attested across languages. Again, the interpretation of (49) is roughly equivalent to Modern German *ergeben* „to produce", „to yield" or „to give rise to":

(49) NHG   als vil all Berge Trauben geben
             as much all mountains grapes give

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[27] Newman concentrates on one text: Fischart's „Geschichtsklitterung", a greatly expanded translation of Rabelais' „Gargantua", published in 1575.

[28] The clitic *s* in *gebs* is ambiguous between the neuter pronoun *es* „it" and the d-pronoun *das* „this".

„as much as all mountains produce grapes"

<div align="right">Newman (1998: 316), glosses added</div>

Some instances of this use of *geben* can still be found in contemporary German:[29]

(50) a. Kühe geben Milch.
    „Cows give milk." (agentive „produce")
   b. Diese Trauben geben guten Wein.
    these grapes give good wine
    „We get good wine from these grapes." (non-agentive „yield", cf. *ergeben*)
   c. Das gibt Ärger.
    this gives trouble
    „This will cause trouble." (non-agentive „cause")

As Newman points out, there is a clear cause-effect relationship in (48) to (50): The subject is identified with a kind of cause, and the object specifies the effect. These examples can be related to existential „give" in the sense that the effect part specifies the coming into existence of an object. Again, grammaticalization seems to proceed from rather concrete to more abstract lexical meanings from (51a) to (51c). All three usages co-exist in contemporary Standard German:

(51) a. *agentive ditransitive „give"*
     Maria gibt Anna einen Knüppel.
     „Mary gives Anne a club."
   b. *causative transitive „give"*
     Das gibt blaue Flecken.
     this gives blue spots
     „This will cause bruises."
   c. *existential impersonal „give"*
     Es gibt einige Heldinnen (in dieser Stadt).
     it gives some heroines (in this city)
     „There are some heroines (in this city)."

In Kratzer's (1994) framework, the change in interpretation from (51a) to (51c) is straightforwardly explained by the specific pairing of an Aktionsart and a thematic relation (cf. section 5.1): „Since agents must be animate, and causes may or may not be animate, external arguments that denote non-animate entities force the non-action interpretation [...]." (Kratzer 1994). The external arguments in (51b) and (51c) are non-animate, hence not compatible with the agent function which results in a non-action interpretation. The d-pronoun *das* „this" in (51b) still has enough referential content to be compatible with the

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[29] This sense of „give" is also found in Alemannic dialects. Here is an example from the dialect spoken in the Montafon valley, which is south of Bludenz (due to Werner Abraham (p.c.)):
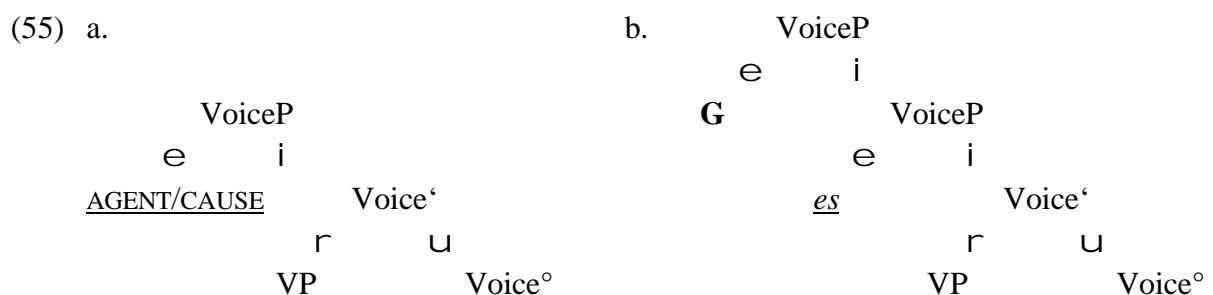   (i) Des git ötschas.
    this gives something   „This will cause something (rather unpleasant)."

cause function.[30] The expletive pronoun *es* in (51c) does not have semantic content whatsoever, it cannot instantiate any semantic function. The result is a state without a cause - an impersonal existential construction. The transition from eventive *geben* to stative *geben* is represented in (52):

(52) a. [VOICEP AGENT [VP THEME [V' BENEFACTOR/GOAL *geben*]]]   event
    b. [VOICEP CAUSE [VP THEME [V' *geben*]]]   state
    c. [VOICEP *es* [VP THEME [V' (LOCATIVE) *geben*]]]   state

According to Newman (1998), (52a) and (52b) were both in the language at the time when (52c) emerged. I will stay neutral on the question, whether (52c) was derived from (52a) or (52b). The parallelism between the benefactor/goal and the locative argument makes it attractive to assume that (52c) derives from (52a). Comparing the scenario in (52) to the one in (45), an important difference between „have" and „give" becomes evident: In (45), it is the possessive argument, and in (52) it is the agent/cause argument that is absorbed by *es*.

I assume a Larsonian shell structure for agentive *geben*, combined with Kratzer's VoiceP analysis. In Larson's (1988) structure for English *give*, the benefactor/goal argument starts out in complement position of V. (52a) represents the analogous structure for German, abstracting away from the fact that the derived dative argument will end up in a higher position. In contrast to English, Standard German *geben* does not exhibit a dative alternation in general. But in Southern German varieties, agentive *geben* also occurs with a PP-goal, instantiating an inanimate location. For example, (53) is generally accepted in Austrian German:

(53) % Peter gibt das nasse Handtuch auf die Heizung.
     Peter gives the wet towel onto the radiator
     „Peter puts the wet towel onto the radiator."

Here are the structures of agentive/causative *geben* and existential *es gibt*, respectively:

(54) a. VoiceP
    AGENT/CAUSE   Voice'
          VP   Voice°
     THEME   V'
          V°
    BENEFACTOR/GOAL   *geben*

    b. VoiceP
    es   Voice'
          VP   Voice°
     THEME   V'
          V°
    (LOCATION)   *geben*

---

[30] In Kratzer's terminology, the external argument of (51b) is called a „cause argument" (not to be confused with the abstract predicate „cause" in „X causes Y to have Z"). Another possible term for this kind of argument would be „source".

The argument structure in (54a) can be interpreted in the following way; cf. Hale & Keyser (1993): The matrix event of *giving* is caused by the agent/cause argument. This event implicates a subordinate event, which directly affects the theme argument. It is crucial that the theme is affected in (54a) in a real sense, i.e. something very concrete happens with it. The relation between the verb *geben* and the benefactor/goal argument in (54a) can be described as „change of location".

In (54b) the agent/cause argument is absorbed by the neuter pronoun, which results in a stative interpretation.[31] This process also has consequences for the internal arguments: First, the internal benefactor/goal argument - if present at all - must be reinterpreted as a location (a locative PP or a locative adverb). Second, the theme argument of the impersonal existential is no longer affected in any sense. Both consequences are arguably due to the change in Aktionsart.

So far I have explained the stative character of *es gibt*. I have argued in section 3 that *es gibt* is a pure existential. It incorporates a habitual/generic source, which disallows reference to an individual situation. Alemannic *es hot* also represents a state derived by external argument absorption, but it is not a pure existential. What exactly is the difference between *es gibt* and *es hot*, and where does the purely existential interpretation come from?

I'd like to suggest that the habitual/generic interpretation of *es gibt* is another effect of the absorption of an agent/cause argument. Note that in the case of *es hot* it is the possessive argument which is absorbed. Crucially, the process of de-agentivisation (or de-causativisation) transforms eventive *geben* into an impersonal pure existential. The agent/cause argument is absorbed, and only the effect part of the original event is preserved. Arguably, this is the source of the purely existential interpretation. I assume that a generic operator (G) is introduced together with the semantically empty pronoun *es*, which takes the syntactic function of the agent/cause argument:

(55) a.   b.   VoiceP

                                                                    G   VoiceP
              VoiceP

       AGENT/CAUSE   Voice'   *es*   Voice'

              VP   Voice°   VP   Voice°

---

[31] Although the derivation of the impersonal existential construction involves external argument absorption, it is quite different from event passive formation, where the eventive character of the sentence is preserved. If one buys the story that the external theta role in the impersonal existential construction is absorbed by the quasi-argumental *es*, it seems implausible that the passive involves a similar kind of argument absorption, e.g. by passive morphology. Additionally, no accusative case is assigned in the passive, whereas there is accusative case in an impersonal existential construction. If one adopts Grimshaw's (1990) analysis of the passive in terms of argument suppression, the difference of the two constructions could be explained. On the other hand, it is not clear, whether the same principles can be made to apply to the two mechanisms: Unlike passive formation, the derivation of impersonal existential constructions is not productive synchronically. I'd rather suggest that it is a diachronic process, and that form and meaning of the impersonal existential construction are lexicalized by now.

This generic operator is associated to VoiceP, and it quantifies over the event variable of the VP. This yields the following semantic representation of the pure existential in (51c):[32]

(56) a. Es gibt einige Heldinnen in dieser Stadt.
     b. G s [s is a situation in this city] $\exists$ x [x is a heroine & x is in s]
        „There are some heroines (living) in this city."

It seems that the introduction of G is contingent on an agent/cause argument being absorbed by a dummy pronoun. The absorption of a possessor argument in the „have"-existential does not involve such a generic operator. It must be the semantic emptiness of the former agent/cause argument, which prohibits reference to an individual situation. This intuition is captured by a generic operator quantifying over the event variable of the VP. Clearly this is not a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon, it leaves open many questions. Further investigation of similar constructions - for example middle constructions - might lead to new insights.

If this analysis is on the right track, pure existentials in general should be the result of de-agentivisation (or de-causativisation). And indeed, it is an agentive verb („find") that underlies the pure existential construction in Mainland Scandinavian. As already mentioned, the Mainland Scandinavian s-passive is a morphological medio-passive. It seems thus reasonable to assume that the agent argument is absorbed in a similar fashion. Its role has either been taken by the reflexive pronoun *sik*, or by the obligatory dummy elements *der* „there" in Danish and *det* „this" in Swedish and Norwegian. The s-passive in Mainland Scandinavian is no longer productive (as a passive) and has been replaced by a periphrastic passive formed by *blive* „become"; cf. Hopper (1998:154). An existential interpretation is completely impossible with the *blive*-passive:

(57) Da   a.   Findes der engle?
               find-MP there angels
          b. * Bliver der fundet engle?
               become there found angels
           „Are there angels? Do angels exist?"

Interestingly, modals in Danish receive a different interpretation when combined with s-passives than when combined with *blive*-passives. On the basis of these facts, Vikner (1988: 23f) argues that the two passive forms differ with respect to their argument structures: Being the eventive counterpart of „be", *blive* introduces its own theta-role, while there is no external theta-role in s-passives. This analysis is compatible with the one I suggest for pure existential s-passives.

Furthermore, Newman (1996: 167) reports that the s-passive of „give" can be marginally used as an existential construction in Danish and Swedish.[33]

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[32] What if there is no overt location expressed? The generic operator still needs something to bind. And certainly, the theme argument does not receive a generic interpretation. Hence, I assume that some kind of locative element must always be implicitly present. It is bound by the generic operator, and it receives its reference from discourse.

(58) a. Sw   Det gives lösning.
              there gives-MP solution
              „There is a solution.”
     b. Da   Der gives börn som ...
              there gives-MP children, who ...
              „There are children, who ...”.

These facts show that pure existential constructions with „give” are not necessarily restricted to German.[34] Hopper (1998) mentions another property of s-passives, which suggests that the present analysis is on the right track: Most of the contexts, where the s-passive is still used, involve generic or habitual interpretations, as illustrated in (59):

(59) Da   Der spises meget smør i Danmark.
           there eat-MP much butter in Denmark
           „Much butter is eaten in Denmark.”   cf. Hopper (1998:155)

Summarizing this section, I argued that the difference between impersonal locative-existentials and pure existentials can be attributed to the different argument structures of the verbs involved. In both cases, the external argument of the verb is absorbed, but crucially the external arguments are instantiated by different thematic roles. In the case of „have”-existentials, the possessive argument is absorbed, whereas it is the agent/cause argument of „give” and „find” in the case of pure existentials. The absorption of an agent/cause by a semantically empty place-holder is argued to be the source of the generic/habitual interpretation to be found in pure existentials.

6 An idiosyncratic property of impersonal „give”

So far, I have only considered clear cases of pure existential *es gibt*. As already mentioned, there are instances of German *es gibt*, which do allow reference to individual situations in German; cf. example (39), here repeated as (60a). In this section, I will present some contexts, where *es gibt* is not a pure existential. I will argue on the grounds of cross-linguistic

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[33] The existential use of medio-passive „give” in Danish is also mentioned by Grimm & Grimm (1878/1984, Vol. 4: 1706): *der gives mennesker* „there are people”.

[34] According to Moro (1997: 161), we also find existentials involving the verb „give“ in literary Italian: *Si danno due soluzioni* „There are two solutions“. In contrast to the Germanic impersonal existential constructions, the verb agrees with the „logical subject“. Interestingly though, the subject clitic *si* is obligatory in existential sentences, although Italian is a *pro-drop* language. When *si* is dropped, the sentence cannot have an existential interpretation anymore: *Danno due solzioni* „They give two solutions“. The obligatory presence of a dummy subject like *si* with existential „give“ is expected in the account given here. Moro (1997: 159ff) suggests a tentative account of existential constructions, which differs considerably from the one proposed here. He argues that the dummy subject pronouns in existential constructions are predicates raised out of an underlying small clause which they form with the logical subject. Although I find the general idea appealing, the analysis cannot readily be adapted for German, where the „logical subject“ is a clear direct object.

comparison, that these instances of *es gibt* can be clearly distinguished from the phenomenon of pure existence. I suggest that these non-existential uses of *es gibt* are due to an idiosyncratic property of the verb „give" in various languages, and that they are not a characteristic property of pure existence in general.

6.1 Eventive impersonal „geben"

In the following, I will review some clearly eventive uses of impersonal „give". Contrary to the generalization in (25), they allow reference to an individual situation, in fact their interpretation can be paraphrased as „take place" or „happen". Note that in these contexts temporal modification does not pose any problem:

(60) a. Morgen wird es ein Gewitter geben.
          tomorrow will it a storm give
          „Tomorrow there will be a storm."
      b. Gestern gab es ein Erdbeben in L.A.
          yesterday gave it an earthquake in L.A.
          „Yesterday there was an earthquake in L.A."
      c. Dreimal am Tag gibt es einen Stau auf der Autobahn.
          3-times at-the day gives it a traffic jam on the freeway
          „There is a traffic jam on the freeway 3 times a day."

Interestingly, this eventive use of impersonal „give" is not only attested in German. In Spanish (Sp) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP), for example, we find impersonal „give" in contexts similar to (60). Crucially, these languages lack the pure existential meaning of „give".[35]

(61) Sp   a. Se dan muchas tormentas aqui.
                REFL give-3PL many storms here
                „There are many storms here."
      BP   b. Deu praga na goiabeira.
                gave-3SG plague in-the guava-tree
                „There is a plague in the guava-tree."

On the other hand, pure existentials which are not based on the verb „give" do not have this eventive use. This is exemplified for the Norwegian s-passive of „find":

(62) No   a. * I morgen vil det finnes en storm.
                   in tomorrow will this find-MP a storm
                   „Tomorrow, there will be a storm."
      No   b. * I går fantes det et jordskjelv i L.A.
                   yesterday found-MP this an earthquake in L.A.

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[35] The Spanish construction was brought to my attention by Vidal Valmala (p.c.), and (62b) is taken from Newman (1996), who cites Salomao (1990).

„Yesterday there was an earthquake in L.A.“

No   c. *   Tre ganger om dagen fins det trafikk-kork på riksveien.
              three times a day find-MP this traffic jam on highway
              „There is a traffic jam on the freeway 3 times a day.“

I take these facts to be suggestive: The eventive use of impersonal „give" is independent from the phenomenon of pure existence. Arguably, it is an idiosyncratic property of the verb „give". Still, (60) involves *es gibt*, and in the present analysis *es gibt* involves a generic operator. At this point, I do not have a explanation for how exactly the generic interpretation is blocked for the cases in (60). But note three properties of (60): First, the verb *geben* has maintained its eventive character. Second, the connection between *es gibt* in (60) and the double object verb *geben* is less transparent as for pure existentials. And third, the eventive use always involves nominal expressions which seem to have some inherent eventive character: Storms, earthquakes, traffic jams and plagues are usually something that happens.

6.2   „Es gibt" meaning „it is offered"

In this section, I will introduce another use of impersonal *geben* which does not behave according to the generalization in (25). Again, it will be shown that this use can be distinguished from the phenomenon of pure existence.

I suggested in section 2 that *es gibt*, in contrast to copula constructions, does not involve a (secondary) predication configuration. Example (11a), repeated here as (63), shows that secondary predication of the accusative DP by an AP such as *krank* „sick" or *stumpfsinnig* „mindless" or by an NP like *Idioten* „idiots" is ungrammatical:

(63)   *   Es gibt viele Österreicher {krank, stumpfsinnig, Idioten}.
           it gives many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}
           target: „There are many Austrians {sick, mindless, idiots}."

But there are contexts which allow secondary predicates such as the AP *gratis* „for free" or predicative nominals introduced by the particle *als* „as"[36].

(64)   Es gibt ja auch was gratis, nich wahr?
       it gives PTL also something for-free, not true
       „There is something for free, isn't it?"   *attested: Corpus FKO, 1967*

(65)   Er war „Auto des Jahres 1988" (...); es gibt ihn als ungemein geräumigen Familien-Kombi, als Benziner und als Diesel.
       he was „car the-GEN year-GEN 1988" (...); it gives him-ACC as really comfortable family estate car, as gas motor and as diesel motor
       „This was the car of the year 1988(...); it's available as a very comfortable estate car, as a gas motor and as a diesel motor."

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[36] Bowers (1990) regards the particle „as", which links two NPs, as the predicative particle par excellence.

In contrast to the English *there*-construction, an explanation in terms of individual- vs. stage-level predicates (cf. section 4.1) is not feasible: „Dumb" and „(as) a comfortable estate car" are both individual-level predicates, and only one of them is grammatical. Likewise, „for free" and „against the Euro" are both stage-level predicates, and again only one is allowed.

Consider the interpretation of (65) and (66): Here, *es gibt* translates best as „be available (as)" or „be offered (as/for)". This use also has some eventive character, hence it does not resist temporal modification:

(66) a. In japanischen Restaurants gibt es Fisch oft roh.
    in Japanese restaurants gives it fish often raw
    „In Japanese restaurants, they serve fish often raw."
  b. In Las Vegas gibt es beim PRO$_{arb}$ Kartenspielen alle Drinks umsonst.
    in Las Vegas gives it at-the card-playing all drinks for-free
    „In Las Vegas, they offer drinks for free while you are playing cards."

Intuitively, it is not immediately clear that this use is different from the pure existential interpretation. There is one rather clear difference, though: The theme arguments in (64) to (66) are more affected than in the pure existential construction.

Crucially, the medio-passive of „find" in Mainland Scandinavian does not allow this kind of interpretation. This is exemplified for Norwegian:

(67) No a. ?? Det fins også noe gratis, gjør det ikke?
      this find-MP also something for free, does it not
   No b. * Den ble årets bil. Det fins den som komfortabel familiebil.
      this-M was year's car. this-N find-MP this-M as comfortable family car

(68) No a. * I japanske restauranter fins det ofte fisk rå.
      in Japanese restaurants find-MP this often fish raw
   No b. ?? I Las Vegas fins det gratis drinker ved kortspill.
      in Las Vegas find-MP this free drinks by card-play

Where does the eventive character of the German examples come from? I'd like to argue that the secondary predicate induces this change in interpretation. The secondary predicates in (64)-(66) are depictive adjunct predicates, such as „warm" in (69).[37] As the following examples show, they obey the same word order restrictions which can be found in classical

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[37] In general, three classes of secondary predication are distinguished: In some cases, the secondary predicate changes the meaning of the primary predicate, as in *I found her new film crazy*. For that reason, *crazy* is sometimes referred to as an argument predicate. In other cases, the secondary predicate has a resultative interpretation, as in *I hammered the metal flat*. In yet other cases, the secondary predicate modifies a nominal expression without changing the basic meaning of the primary predicate, as in *I drink my tea cold*. In this usage, *cold* is often referred to as a depictive adjunct predicate; cf. McNally 1992, Rapoport 1993. For detailed overviews on the phenomenon of secondary predication see, for example, Abraham (1995, chapters 5 & 6), Staudinger (1997) and Winkler (1997).

secondary predication contexts, such as (69). The predicate must always follow its subject, i.e. the accusative DP, in the Mittelfeld:

(69) a.   Peter hat sein Weissbier warm getrunken.
            Peter has his white-beer warm drunk
      b. * Peter hat warm sein Weissbier getrunken.
            Peter has warm his white-beer drunk
      „Peter drank his white beer warm."   cf. Staudinger (1997:81f)

(70) a.   Bei H&M gibt es viele Pullover billiger.
            at H&M's gives it many sweaters cheaper
      b. * Bei H&M gibt es billiger viele Pullover.
            at H&M's gives it many sweaters cheaper
      „At H&M many sweaters are offered cheaper."

The parallel contrasts in (69) and (70) suggest that the accusative DP and the AP are in a secondary predication configuration. In contrast to (70), the word order in the Mittelfeld is completely free for a locative PP and the accusative DP in pure existentials. Hence, secondary predication cannot be an appropriate configuration for pure existential *es gibt*:

(71) a.   Seit zwei Jahren gibt es einige berühmte DJs in Wien.
            since two years gives it some famous DJs in Vienna
      b.   Seit zwei Jahren gibt es in Wien einige berühmte DJs.
            since two years gives it in Vienna some famous DJs
      „Since two years, there are some famous DJs in Vienna."

The eventive reading of *es gibt* becomes very explicit when a depictive adjunct is present. But it is also possible without a secondary predicate, consider (72):

(72) Gestern gab es vor der Uni Glühwein.
      yesterday gave it in-front-of the university hot-wine
      „They offered mulled claret in front of the university yesterday."

In this case it must be the temporal adverbial in combination with the context which induces the eventive reading. Note that the theme argument is affected by the event of offering it. This is not the case for the theme argument of a pure existential. And (72) is still not quite acceptable when translated into Norwegian, unless a habitual interpretation for the time before yesterday is construed:

(73) No   ?? I går fantes det varm vin foran universitetet.
            in yesterday found-MP this warm wine in-front-of university-DEF

    In this section, I introduced some contexts which allow an eventive reading with impersonal *geben*. I argued that this is not a property of pure existentials in general, but a

special property of the verb *geben* in German. One could assume, that the process which transformed *geben* into *es gibt* is composed of different stages. These stages are mapped to certain points on a continuum, which involves the following endpoints: concrete vs. abstract verb meaning, events vs. states and affected vs. non-affected objects. In this view, pure existential *es gibt* would be on the „abstract state with non-affected object" end of the continuum.

7 Conclusion

I argued that we need to distinguish semantically between locative existentials and pure existentials. The difference is exemplified by two impersonal existential constructions in German: *es hot* „it has", which is a locative existential, *es gibt* „it gives", which is a pure existential. „Have"-existentials seem to be locative existentials across languages. „Give"-existentials are not very common across languages, but the agentive verb „find" is the basis of a pure existential construction in Scandinavian languages.

Pure existentials are more restricted in their interpretation than locative existentials: They do not allow reference to an individual situation, i.e. they cannot express an accidental property of the object. I argue that this is best captured by generic/habitual quantification over situations. Impersonal existentials involving the verb „give" in German and medio-passive existentials involving the verb „find" in Mainland Scandinavian behave exactly like that. It is argued that impersonal existential constructions are obtained by a process of external argument absorption. „Have"-existentials are derived from possessive „have" by absorption of the possessive/locative argument. Pure existentials are derived from eventive „give" and „find" via absorption of the agent/cause argument. In both cases, a semantically empty element is inserted in external argument position. The absorption of an agent/cause argument by a semantically empty place-holder is argued to be the source of the habitual/generic interpretation.

This analysis does not capture all occurrences of German *es gibt* „it gives. Sometimes *es gibt* may have eventive character. This eventive interpretation can be clearly distinguished from the pure existential interpretation, though. Crucially, pure existentials based on „find" do not allow such eventive readings. And we find the same kind of eventive impersonal „give" in languages which do not have pure existentials. This exceptional behavior of *es gibt* is hence argued to be an idiosyncratic property of the verb „give".

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