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philosophy»**

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic of the research. Donald Davidson (1917-2003) appears to be one of the key figures within the ‘Anglo-American’ philosophical tradition of the second half of the XXth century. His philosophical work was the most influential in the theory of action and decision making, philosophy of language and epistemology. Even outside of these “mainstream” areas, Davidson is still considered to be an influential figure: his work on literary language influenced greatly the literary criticism since the 1970-s, with the texts like “What Metaphors Mean” and “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs” being amply discussed to this day.

For the purpose of the present work, I will discuss the issue of antirepresentationalism, the idea that the objects of the outside world are not “*mirrored*” in our minds or conceptual schemes. Amidst the proponents of this idea, Wilfrid Sellars, ‘late’ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Willard Van Orman Quine, Richard Rorty and Robert Brandom are amongst the most widely known figures.

The tendency towards antirepresentationalism in Davidson’s philosophy of language and epistemology has not been studied as amply as other aspects of his philosophy. Therefore, the historical-philosophical research of this tendency in Davidson’s philosophy, as compared against the work of other “antirepresentationalists”, manifests its relevance even beyond the Ukrainian historical-philosophical context.

The state of scientific elaboration of the issue:

Despite being widely known and studied in the West, Davidson’s work is not widely studied in Ukraine. The only work of a Ukrainian academic dedicated exclusively to Davidson’s philosophy is Ihor Alleksiuk’s “Logical-semantical analysis of action statements by Donald Davidson”(2009), which touches on the

topics in Donald Davidson's theory of action, more specifically, the logical form of action-sentences.

Western scholarship on Donald Davidson's inclinations toward antirepresentationalism is somewhat ampler. Richard Rorty is, probably, the most renowned and widely recognized interpreter of Davidson's philosophy, with his criticism of epistemology heavily relying on Davidson's conclusions, even though not always correctly interpreting them (see: Rorty 1981;1991). "On the Very Idea of the Conceptual Scheme"(1974) and "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge"(1983) acted as major points of reference for Rorty's own take on antirepresentationalism.

In the contemporary scholarship on antirepresentationalism, Davidson's work is explored relatively rarely. However, research dedicated to Donald Davidson's criticism of correspondence theory of meaning and truth touches on topics discussed in this work. Valuable insights can be found in Neale (2001), where he explores Davidson's antirepresentationalism in the light of the truth-conditional theory of meaning, ontology and a special breed of coherentism employed by Davidson.

Davidson's antirepresentationalist stance was addressed directly by a range of authors. Marchetti (2011) compares Davidson's antirepresentationalism to what Rorty understood his own quest against representationalism to be. John McDowell (2001) argues that Donald Davidson's rejection of the scheme-content dichotomy (considered to be one of the core ideas within his antirepresentationalism) is ill-founded and, contrary to what Davidson claims, does not successfully contest empiricism as a major philosophical current. Ramberg (2001) presents Davidson's antirepresentationalism as a way to refute scepticism, while also examining the historical development of his views. Douglas James McDermid (2000) examines Rorty's argument against scepticism in the light of, in particular, Davidson's work on antirepresentationalism. Lervik Are (2002) explores various types of antirepresentationalism in Anglo-American

tradition, ranging over the work of Wilfrid Sellars, Robert Brandom, Richard Rorty and, unsurprisingly, Donald Davidson. Other than that, this topic remains somewhat marginal, despite major contemporary philosophical figures (like John McDowell) addressing the issue, and no Ukrainian scholar has written on this specific topic so far.

The object of this thesis is Donald Davidson's philosophy.

Subject-matter of this thesis is Donald Davidson's proclivity towards antirepresentationalism, as exemplified by his work in philosophy of language and epistemology.

The goal of this work is to analyze Donald Davidson's antirepresentationalism in the light of his work in the philosophy of language and epistemology, as well as in other fields such as decision theory, formal semantics and analysis of literary language.

This goal is to be achieved by solving the following **tasks**:

- To analyze the state of affairs in 'Anglo-American' philosophy of language in the second half of the XXth century and the respective role of Donald Davidson in its development;
- To explore and compare Davidson's philosophical insights to the antirepresentationalist tendencies in the work of his contemporaries, like that of Richard Rorty, Wilfrid Sellars, W.V.O. Quine and others;
- To analyze Donald Davidson's criticism of the correspondence theory of truth and meaning, the category of reference, linguistic convention and other epistemological notions;
- To explore the paradigmatic instances of Donald Davidson's antirepresentationalist doctrine of meaning - metaphors, malapropisms and the literary language;
- To analyze the alternative approaches to meaning, interpretation and knowledge Davidson suggests to substitute for the criticized notions.

Structure of the thesis. The work comprises an introduction, three main chapters, conclusion and a list of references.

In the 1st chapter (“Donald Davidson and issues in the philosophy of language in the second half of the XXth century”) I explore the intellectual landscape Donald Davidson was a part of, and delineate a set of problems he was the most concerned with and the way they were addressed by his contemporaries.

In the 2nd chapter (“Meaning, truth, action: Donald Davidson’s theoretical stance”) I analyze Donald Davidson’s contribution to the field of philosophy of language and epistemology, with the stress on the antirepresentational aspect thereof. In particular, I analyze his work which does not contain any explicit criticism of representationalism, yet, from which presuppositions of his further “attack” on representation can be discerned. By this, I mean his take on decision theory, theory of action and philosophy of mind.

In the 3rd chapter (“Redundant categories: Davidson’s quest against representation and convention”) I explore antirepresentationalist and antirconventionalist position Davidson takes with respect to language and knowledge. Together with his critique of these notions, I present what his ‘positive program’ that can be called ‘externalism without representation’ consists of.

In the conclusion, I provide a summary of the conducted research.

Theoretical and methodological foundation of the research. In this work, I employ a variety of methodological instruments, with due consideration paid to the general approaches of scientific research (comprehensiveness, coherence, objectivity and proper evidential base). I applied analytical and comparative approaches. For instance, when analyzing Donald Davidson’s own writings I restricted myself largely to an analytical approach; whenever I examined the historical-philosophical context and Davidson’s place within it, I resorted to a comparative approach.

Sources used include Donald Davidson's writings, the work of his contemporaries and contemporary research of his philosophical project.

I consulted a few dozens of Davidson's essays, grouped into five collections: "Essays on Actions and Events"(1980), "Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation"(1984), "Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective"(2001), "Problems of Rationality"(2004), "Truth, Language, and History"(2005). I also used the only book ever written by Davidson, his "opus magnum", published posthumously, - "Truth and Predication" (2005). There, he explored how the formal-semantical notion of truth examined in his early work can be useful to settle philosophical issues concerning interpretation, knowledge and ontology.

Amidst the work of his contemporaries, I used the work of Richard Rorty (1981;1991), Wilfrid Sellars (1997), Willard Van Orman Quine (1963; 2013), Michael Dummett (1986; 1996), John McDowell (2001), Barry Stroud (2018) and many others. These authors were active participants of the discourse Davidson was engaged in, acting either as his intellectual 'allies' or critics.

Contemporary scholarship on Donald Davidson's work in the philosophy of language, epistemology and antirepresentationalism in particular, is represented by comprehensive contributions by Bjorn Ramberg (1991; 2001), Elisabeth Camp (2013), Ernest Lepore (1986; 2013), McDowell (2001), Engel (2013), Are (2002) etc.

Approbation of the results of the research was conducted at the International Conference "The Days of Science", held at the premises of Taras Shevchenko University on 21-22 of April:

- "Quest Against "Conventional Meanings": a Brief Overview of Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language" (International Scientific Conference «The Days of Science of the Faculty of Philosophy – 2021», the first session, April 21- 22, 2021: [Abstracts] / Ed.board: A.Konverskyi [and other]. – Kyiv: Publishing centre «Kyiv University», 2021. – 500 p).

The result of the research is summarized in the following points, to be subsequently submitted for the defence:

1. Antirepresentationalism cannot, and should not, be conceived as a unified theoretical framework. In fact, it comprises philosophical projects of a wide array of philosophers, in one way or another contesting the idea that our thoughts and sentences are true in the virtue of the relation of representation. Donald Davidson is a proponent of a peculiar breed of antirepresentationalism, differing somewhat from Rorty's conception thereof. A consistent criticism of correspondence theories of truth and meaning prompted Rorty to "recruit" Davidson for his cause. However, Davidson, unlike Rorty (in his own words), does not attempt to get rid of the necessity "to provide a general justification for knowledge claims", and by far not as pessimistic about the epistemological enterprise as Rorty is.
2. Davidson attempted to create a minimalistic theory of truth and meaning and vehemently denied the necessity to supply an explicit definition for both terms. Unlike Dummett, Putnam, Kripke and virtually (almost) all of his contemporaries within the analytic tradition, he opposed the idea of a "full-blooded" in Michael Dummett's terms, theory of truth and meaning: these, quite often, relied on one or another variant of correspondence theory. Davidson intended to supply a procedural, dialogue-like structure (Convention-T) to account for meaning formation, rather resembling Gadamer's concept of dialogue. This proximity "in spirit" (though not in method) manifests itself in the rejection of an idea of linguistically unmediated knowledge, thus contesting the idea of "mental representation" as a foundation of knowledge.
3. Davidson wanted to provide an account of how we understand each other, without stress on either correspondence of our language to reality, or a shared linguistic convention. A theory of meaning capable of properly

accounting for a natural language was, essentially, a theory of truth analogous to Alfred Tarski's theory of truth for formal languages. All intricacies of a theory aside (Davidson did not devise a theory itself, rather laid a philosophical foundation), its results should have roughly the following structure:

s (structural description of a sentence in object language) is T (true) if and only if p (interpreting sentence in meta language);(Davidson, 1967, 23).

By thus doing, he severed the *justificational* connection between meanings and the world: no correspondence has to be established to *explain* what the words mean, rather explication of truth conditions for a language will do the job. Truth and meaning do not depend on representations.

4. Another crucial notion Davidson employs is the idea of *radical interpretation*. In short, we can "radically interpret" the speaker of an alien language by simply testing utterances of her language, without prior understanding thereof, against the evidence available to us; and reading basic logical components of our language into her language (Davidson, 1973). It also presupposes that in order to *maximise agreement* we should perceive our interlocutors as rational beings and their speech as containing similar logical properties as ours. This is called *the principle of charity*.

This implies that, despite the fact that occurrences in the world *do not justify* our believing that something in the world is so-and-so, the *causal* connection persists. This means that occurrences in the world can cause us to believe something, but do not warrant the correctness of our *interpretation* of an occurrence. What warrants correctness of interpretation is the capacity to distinguish between what seems to be the case and what is the case, for what another interlocutor is needed.

If I and at least one agent react similarly, both verbally and nonverbally, to the same causal occurrence (which is recognized by both, and both recognize that it was recognized by either party), then I can assume we can

gradually master each other's language (the concept of *triangulation*) (Davidson, 1991).

Even more importantly, the idea of triangulation is an abstraction of necessary conditions for what we call thought: thinking, for Davidson, depends on a linguistic capacity, and a linguistic capacity is inherently intersubjective. Thus, our knowledge, even of our minds, given that we know insofar as we command language, is public, and justification of truthfulness thereof can emerge only in the course of public linguistic intercourse, and not from a direct or indirect representation of an object.

5. The truthfulness of our beliefs, given the absence of *justificational* connection between them and the world, is justified by other beliefs. This doctrine can be called 'coherentism', given that it presupposes the relative coherence of our belief-system that makes knowledge possible: we are prone to making mistakes and to recognize one we must be capable of identifying a wrong belief; to do so, the majority of others must be true (Davidson, 1983).

This rules out the necessity to refer to any form of representation, either mental or linguistic, to justify the truthfulness of knowledge.

6. Reference, as an explanatory category, is unintelligible, for we cannot specify the entities our words (or the whole sentences) refer to. Neither can we intelligibly relativize reference to a language or theory, for it presupposes that within a language or a theory reference can be *fixed* exclusively for a set of entities, thus fixing ontology. In fact, given that we cannot intelligibly limit the amount of places the predicate 'refers' has in a theory of language, we cannot treat the category of reference as an explanatory category. Reference remains a theoretical concept (by finding truth conditions for a speaker's language, we know what she 'refers to'), but we cannot explain contents and truth conditions of sentences in terms of the concept of 'reference'.

7. Davidson's anti-representationalism contests three different fallacies associated with the representationalist stance. First, he dispels the idea that there are perceptual intermediaries between our epistemic concepts and the world, such as sense data, perceptions, impressions and the like. Second, he contests the idea that we can make truth of our sentences and theories dependent on the state of affairs in the world, for the events in the world are inscrutable and essentially unknowable without linguistic interaction with other speakers. Lastly, he rejects the whole idea of phenomenalism of the mental, i.e. that subjective mental constitution and not intersubjective interaction, create foundation for knowledge.
8. The account of communication and interpretation Davidson suggests is not only antirepresentational but also anticonventionalist. This means that linguistic convention, as a syntactical and semantic abstraction of what language consists of, is not an appropriate explanatory tool to account for the way we understand each other. We do not share a convention, thus understood. According to Davidson, no language consists of shared conventions or antecedent regularities. What we know in advance, before conversing (*prior theory*), is in no way shared, and the only thing we can share is the *passing theory* put in motion while conversing (Davidson, 1986). Having the same language translates into being capable to converge on passing theories, with varying degrees of precision and success; while linguistic competence is described by the ability to prompt such theories (1986).
9. The literary language is, for Davidson, a paradigm case for our linguistic competence as a whole. Whenever we interact with the literary forms we find ourselves in a position where we seem to learn a new language: no conventional grammar or semantics is at play, and representational intermediaries on behalf of the mental are of no help for us when we deal with the literary.

CHAPTER I

DONALD DAVIDSON AND ISSUES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE XXth CENTURY

Let's take a look at Tom Johnson's "very difficult piece for solo string bass" called "Failing" (Johnson, 1976). The performer has to read the text that accompanies the score. The text attempts at mimicking what is going on on the musical side of the piece, describing obstacles the musician has to overcome and constantly hinting at the risk of, guess what, failure. Both the performer and the audience have to resolve or, at least, attempt to resolve the jigsaw suggested by the name of the piece - what is failure in this particular piece? What if "I fail to fail", for instance? Closer to the end the text instructs the performer to improvise. It explicitly states that the improvisation has to resemble the written text inasmuch as not to be distinguished from it by the audience.

For a layman like me, who is not that well versed in music, the problems this particular piece draws our attention to concern interpretation, interpretation in a linguistic sense. The bassist is being forced to create comprehensible utterances following the meaning of the written text. The audience is supposed, in turn, to interpret the interpretative process the performer is engaged into. An almost literary enterprise indeed.

There are few different agents involved in the process of distinguishing meanings conveyed by the piece: the one who performs it, the audience and the author, who, arguably, himself interpreted the piece in a certain way. We shall not forget that the peculiar form of notation employed in the score prompts the musician to perform certain *actions*, resulting in music itself, which is also interpreted according to whatever standards of interpretation are being employed whenever we are listening to it. In short, we are dealing with the interpretation of

language, action and what seems to be non-linguistic phenomena. This piece with all its artistic pretensions seems to exemplify the very mundane instances of our relation to the world and to other agents. Indeed, I could have used any other “artistic” piece: a literary text, poetry, or an aphoristic phrase one does use unwittingly from time to time. “Failing” is a condensed conglomerate of problems of interpretation we are facing elsewhere: while interpreting speech acts; texts that presuppose multiple interpretations and multiple actors with more than one illocutionary set of intentions (similar case with Bible, for instance); non-linguistic phenomena; intentions of the author, and relations thereof to the artistic freedom of the performer granted to her by the former, etc.

This rather prolonged introduction hints at the problem we will be primarily concerned with here: Davidson’s account of language and knowledge beyond, as Rorty calls it elsewhere, “representational” stance. Davidson, in fact, is a representative of a peculiar breed of antirepresentationalism, and I will argue that this tendency in his philosophy is somewhat different from what Rorty understood to be antirepresentationalism.

1.1 RICHARD RORTY AND THE ANTIREPRESENTATIONALIST STANCE

By antirepresentationalist stance I will understand what Rorty argued for it to be in the “Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature”.

Representationalism, roughly speaking, is the idea that our cognitive faculties and/or linguistic schemes we use to provide an account of reality do so in the virtue of accurate “representations” of the world around us; and such schemes are judged against the alleged accuracy of cognitive or linguistic representation (Rorty, 1981, 10). Rorty, borrowing some means from Wittgenstein, James, Gadamer, Sellars etc., argued against the idea that knowledge in general and truth in particular stem from the accuracy of

representation of an object in our conceptual scheme, or in the subject's mind. Rorty saw the fallacy of representation in the philosophy of mind and language as one of the most detrimental tendencies in the XXth century philosophy, reducing epistemology to the competition of conceptual schemes with equal - and equally unfounded - pretensions towards objectivity (373-375). Rorty, and here his proximity with Davidson is the most apparent, believed that our idea of truth, of objectivity and that of knowledge has nothing to do with the way our language, mental faculties, or conceptual schemes “mirror” objects in the world with the help of various intermediaries, such as representations. Rather, the process of acquisition of knowledge resembles a dialogue, with no apparent chance to run into an ultimate conclusion. The metaphor of ‘edificaitonal conversion’ as a model for what advance of human knowledge should look like, draws heavily on Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Besides, Rorty relies heavily on Wittgensteinian intuitions regarding language as a “form of life” and its public nature in order to dismantle the conception of objectivity and knowledge founded on the idea that we can somehow find a *reason* for what we know about the world in the world itself, or in our perceptions, impressions or sense data. In fact, the world does not inform our conceptual schemes via such means, and our conceptual schemes do not mirror the world, and no such task should be ever considered - the criteria for adequacy of our worldview emerges in communication with the proponents of different conceptual schemes, and such conversation, ideally, should see no end, and should facilitate understanding between and within abnormal, “incommensurable” discourses (347).

Thus, any ‘transcendental’ assumptions, i.e. that an exhaustive range of ultimate principles of knowledge, language, perception etc. can ever be given, should be abandoned: it is neither possible, nor desirable. Therefore, a theory of truth shall not and cannot supply a transcendental account of truth. No satisfying answer as to what “The Truth' is' can be given: if no undisputed foundation of our knowledge exists “out there in the world”, thus, the truths are contingent and rely

on what is best suited to create knowledge, i.e. the best instruments we can employ to conceptualize stuff. Representation/correspondence, needless to say, is not at play here: justification for what we deem true is a matter of our always changing “forms of life”, beyond which we simply cannot reach.

Amidst those whom Rorty perceived as his “allies” Donald Davidson was one of the most prominent figures: both were, to an extent, inspired by Wittgensteinian notions regarding language, Sellarsian notions regarding coherentism and antirepresentation, (quasi-)Gadamerian notions about problems of interpretation. Rorty appears to adhere to Davidson’s minimalistic account of truth, where nothing more than “the meaning of words and the way the world is” is needed to verify it (Rorty, 1991, 139). Davidson’s truth-conditional theory of meaning, even though not deprived of formalistic rigour, suggests one of such ways to account for truth and meaning without stress on the ultimate and undisputed conditions. Furthermore, truth for both philosophers appears to be a simple, widespread, and unproblematic notion: truth of a belief is supported by the truthfulness of other beliefs, and falsity of some of them is indicated, once again, against the truthfulness of others (Davidson, 1983; Rorty, 1991).

We will delve deeper into all these issues later, though, the trend we will follow is transparent: Davidson attempted to provide an account of how we understand each other and the world based on notions different from representation/correspondence. Subsequently, I will examine his work in the philosophy of language in the light of the tendency towards antirepresentationalism, which can be traced in Davidson’s philosophy, and what prompted Rorty to “recruit” him for his cause.

1.2 WILFRID SELLARS AND THE QUEST AGAINST THE GIVEN

Yet, Davidson was not the first one in his criticism of representationalist stance. Rorty was, in particular, inspired by the work of Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989), whose argument from the 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' (1997) we are going to examine briefly. In the introduction to the 1997 edition, written by Richard Rorty himself, Sellars is depicted as one of the three most important figures in the analytic philosophy of the second half of the XXth century. The main theme of the essay is the criticism of the 'myth of the given' - the idea that what is immediate to our perception, intermediaries like 'sense data' or objects of the transcendent reality, can act as an ultimate foundation of knowledge.

EPM is, according to Rorty, an effort to push the analytic philosophy from Humean empiricism towards a Kantian way of looking at things - and knowledge (Rorty, 1997, 3). Knowledge, in other words, would rather not be accounted for in terms of perceptions, impressions or 'sense data', but in terms of how we form our concepts. In this sense, as we will see later, Davidson follows Sellars in the following respect: Davidson's antirepresentationalism is predicated on the idea that the immediately 'given' cannot act as a justificational foundation of knowledge. Furthermore, as Rorty writes, the linguistic nature of propositional attitudes (beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) - something what Davidson, too, argued for, - was one of the corollaries of Sellars' quest against 'the given': mental states can hardly be made intelligible without being formulated sententially via public means (7).

The quest against 'the given' is, in part, the quest against various intermediaries between our knowledge and the world out there: inner episodes, sense contents, and other forms of subjective iterations of events in the world. In EPM Sellars examines various fallacies classical empiricism entailed. Let's recall Bertrand Russell's 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description'. There, Russell, famously advocates for the notion of 'sense data' as a perceptual foundation for knowledge: we need direct *acquaintance* with the constituents of a description to give it content (Russell, 1911, 127). The 'sense

data' seems to be localized in some place within a person's mind, for we, according to Russel, are not acquainted with physical objects directly (112). The idea, Sellars claims, is unintelligible. Various ways philosophers tried to account for the foundation of conceptual knowledge involved one or another form of 'sense data talk', namely a foundation of knowledge which required immediate and unmediated (by previously learnt concepts) access by the mind (Sellars, 1997). Sellars seems to deprive the 'sense data', or any other non-epistemic concept, of a status of epistemically significant 'fact' - causal intermediaries between us and the world do not in themselves justify our veridical beliefs (Sellars, 1997, 21). Here, I attempt a very crude (for the sake of brevity) reconstruction of the argument as it is present in the EPM: the idea that something immediately accessible and non propositional can act as justification for our conceptual knowledge is flawed because justifications take the form of an argument; a good argument has its premises correct, and premises, in turn, are of propositional nature; propositions are, essentially, linguistically mediated abstractions; therefore, justifications which use as their premises non-propositional entities (objects, perceptions, sense data etc) are not justifications at all (Sellars, 1997; DeVries & Triplett, 2000).

Besides, reporting propositions that are self evident *in the virtue of being formulated in accordance with rules of reporting usage* (and, implicitly, by thus expressing the contents of non-propositional 'inner perceptual episodes' (DeVries&Triplett,2000, 73)), which philosophers of the past were sometimes tempted to view as foundations for subsequent conceptual knowledge, also lack credibility on similar grounds (Sellars, 1997, 70-73).

Abandoning internalism with respect to foundations of knowledge (and internalism aping a coherentism by resort to propositionally formulated 'reports' of inner states), Sellars embraces externalism, externalism of the kind Donald Davidson will later advocate for (Davidson, 1990): correctness of our perceptual beliefs and reports of such beliefs depends on how we were conditioned to

respond to them, and of what such reports are true of (Sellars, 75-76). One learns how to provide *reasons* for believing thus and so, and the capacity to provide reasons, i.e. to justify the correctness of a report is, doubtless, a product of social interaction: *The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.*(Sellars, 1997, 76). Various representations of the world, like inner episodes or propositions about such inner experiences, are not only redundant, they fail to provide an answer to the question they were designed to solve: for being able to intelligibly formulate a report about a simplest ‘experience’, one has to possess some of the concepts and be certain about whether such a report is warranted or not. This is, indeed, a rudimentary exposition of Sellars’ project. What we can derive from what has been said, is the notion of linguistic and cognitive capacity as reliant on learnt framework of rationality: knowledge (and language) is predicated on public exchange between rational agents, and speculations with regard to ‘the given’ before the mind (and efforts to ‘localize’ the mind in the head) do not do justice to explanation of how we think.

1.3 LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN AND THE INTRICACIES OF THE FORMATION OF MEANING

Ludwig Wittgenstein, unlike Sellars, had become a member of philosophical canon rather early. The notions his philosophical project is usually associated with are, to an extent, in accord with Sellars and Quine, and mark (together with the two other philosophers) a shift in understanding language and cognition.

In this work, we will confine ourselves to ‘Philosophical Investigations’ and will not address the evolution of Wittgenstein’s views on language. This is

the ‘late Wittgenstein’ who is in accord with Davidson (I would say, the ‘late Davidson’) on the question that the account of meaning amounts to a description of *use* (Stroud, 2018, 255).

For both, linguistic competence is associated with agency, and for both linguistic and cognitive capacity does not depend on perceptual intermediaries, fine structure of the mind, or idealized sets of rules and conventions.

The term ‘language game’, the one that has become a platitude even outside the philosophical context (probably, because it is intuitively understood by virtually anyone encountering it), is a proper entry point for us to examine Wittgenstein in relation to Davidson. Even though no explicit definition thereof is present in ‘... Investigations’, the idea is rather simple: by playing a game, we engage in a social enterprise, where interaction (conceptual in this case) is governed by certain regularities, negotiated by speakers. Let's take a look at the list of such games: *Forming and testing a hypothesis— Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams— Making up a story; and reading it— Play-acting— Singing catches— Guessing riddles— Making a joke; telling it— Solving a problem in practical arithmetic— Translating from one language into another— Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying* (Wittgenstein, 1953, 12). We could not perform any of these without learning how to pray, to sing catches or formulating scientific hypotheses, and to learn we need someone else to lead the process. Davidson expresses similar idea via the concept of triangulation: to have a language and thought, one has to have a companion, with whom one can choose the best way to describe the causal history of interaction with the shared world (Davidson, 1990a, 1991).

For Wittgenstein, even though the language game presupposes some sort of interaction with the world (as is the case with ostensive learning), the process of concept formation does not depend on perceptual fillings, it does not have purely experiential foundation, unlike ‘classical empiricist’ would claim (Wittgenstein, 1953, 67). The identity of words is fixed by indicating their

respective roles in sentences and the entire language as a whole; yet, the identity, which is the word's meaning, cannot be fixed with precision akin it is done in dictionaries - the best we can hope for is a sort of 'family resemblance' (32). We can understand a concept, yet, there is nothing that warrants a complete definition of a term: we resort to common features, other concepts the one we wish to define includes, akin to some traits that family members share. Apparently, we cannot ground the conditions for 'family resemblance' for concepts in anything else (in a different order of explanation), be it similarity in 'sense data', 'experiences' or 'feelings' (with respect to perceptual beliefs); in a similar vein we do not (in any intelligible way) ground the foundation for certain hereditary physical traits in traits of character, or family mythos. The foundation for neither, in fact, is needed. The correctness of uses of words is reliant on the rational justifications for application of concepts, and the latter cannot be without the shared language, and at least one companion to play a language-game with us (Wittgenstein, 1953, 93). This claim is made in support of another, that there is no such thing as private language, even if such a language concerns our intimate perceptions or propositional states: this is not a language at all if there is no public justificational standard for a claim to be correct (Ibid.). Without such a criteria we are not going to be able to distinguish between what *is* right and what only *seems to be* right.

The rules, governing the language games we play, appear to be inscrutable too (Wittgenstein, 1953, 39). It is not only unnecessary to speak of foundations of comprehensive speech or concept formation, conventional rules or 'antecedent regularities' imagined as idealizations governing our speech and thought, it is unwarranted by our linguistic practices: rules in natural language presuppose alteration in the course of their application. Otherwise, it is not hard to imagine in what a dire state humanity would have found itself if one could elucidate definite rules one has to follow for her speech to be intelligible: no scientific discoveries, no literature, no formation of new philosophical concepts. But this is an extreme case. The conclusion Wittgenstein makes is that we would rather not

explain our linguistic competence through rule following outside the ever-changing social practice: the right or wrong instances of ‘rule following’ are judged against the verbal reactions of others (Wittgenstein, 1953, 82). But rules are not idealized entities, omnipresent within human discourse; we rather instantiate and, at the same time, adjust them in the course of actual use. Indeed, there are some standards of intelligibility, but these are not expressed by rigid syntactic rules, or rules matching words or sentences with their contents. In this sense, Davidson follows in Wittgenstein's footsteps: he does not accept conventions as governing standards for linguistic competence. We rather ‘form a theory’ of a speaker each time we engage in a conversation, adjust it to a multitude of intervening factors (malapropisms, ‘slips of the tongue’, metonymies etc.), and we can do so not in the virtue of knowing the rules or conventions (Davidson, 1982a; 1986).

Even though the account we have just sketched is very limited, we nevertheless can state that Wittgenstein is close to Davidson in two important respects.

First, both are antirepresentationalists in the sense that meanings of our sentences and contents of our thoughts do not derive from the accuracy of mirroring of the reality: concepts are formed and tested within the more general framework of rational explanations, with the latter being possible only because the standards and rules are agreed and tested within the public domain.

Second, Wittgenstein, coining the term we reserved for Davidson, is anticonventionalist. The rules, of grammar or inference of meaning, derive not from abstract entities such as conventions - they are grounded in practice. For both Davidson and Wittgenstein, antecedent regularities of any sort do not provide a ground for explaining how we form concepts and learn languages.

CHAPTER II

MEANING, TRUTH, ACTION: DONALD DAVIDSON'S THEORETICAL STANCE

Davidson is arguably one of the most prominent scholars in the domain of philosophy of language of the second half of the XX century. His works touching on formal semantics, theory of action and topics in logic do not exhaust the area of his inquiry, rather the contrary. The above-mentioned sphere of Davidson's research is based, to a certain extent, on the presuppositions applicable to more "loose", less formalized areas, such as literary language, history of philosophy, and some issues pertaining to the field of epistemology. No wonder that some are unable to resist the temptation to approximate his philosophy with Gadamer's (Ramberg, 1989, 140-141), or read their conception of pragmatism into his work (Davidson, 1987(a); Rorty, 1991).

Even though I am not going to explicitly subscribe to either of these readings, I am not unsympathetic towards them. For instance, Davidson's account of truth and meaning is procedural rather than definitive - we cannot have a strong, "full-blooded" in Michael Dummett's terms, and universally applicable definition of truth and meaning (Stroud, 2018, 251). Akin to hermeneutics, Davidson emphasized the importance of the dialogue-like, recursive process of interpretation to an extent resembling Gadamer's metaphor of conversation (Davidson, 1991, 219). Also, he constantly expressed his disdain with correspondence theories of truth, as well as reference, in a manner not dissimilar to pragmatist account of truth and knowledge (Rorty, 1991). As I have already mentioned, he understood language as not being entirely dependent on shared convention, depriving the latter of a leading role in the process of understanding and communication (Davidson, 1982; 1986). Besides, correspondence, even though for some time he attempted to save the term (Davidson, 1969; 1983) does not play any role whatsoever in determining truth conditions for sentences. Yet,

the question remains: how can we characterize language without stress on correspondence and the shared convention?

2.1 THEORY OF TRUTH AS A THEORY OF MEANING

Our answer may start with one obvious consideration: we do not have anticipatory knowledge of the languages we speak, we *learn* them. Exclusive representational schemes tend to become outdated with invention of new terminological apparatus, conventions are subject to change, and we ourselves tend to learn new languages or expand our understanding of those we already know. To know a language is not to memorise the content of the relevant dictionaries and grammar textbooks. Neither it is to connect objects or sensory experiences to words or sentences in an exclusive fashion. Rather, an appropriate theory of meaning presupposes that in order to know a language, one has to be able to understand a potential infinity of utterances in that language, given the basic components of a language (words) are of limited supply (Davidson, 1965; 1973). We are, after all, finite beings, and the same goes for our vocabularies. Apparently, speakers and hearers do not consult a theory of language while communicating and interpreting each other; yet, their capacity to communicate and interpret each other is best described against a theory of some sort (Davidson, 1994, 113). In order to create a theory of meaning that allows to describe how an infinity of sentences can be interpreted by a speaker knowing a language, Davidson resorts to Alfred Tarski and his Convention T.

For the purpose of present work we are not going to delve deep into how Tarski himself envisioned a formal-semantical theory of truth. We will limit ourselves to the most general restrictions Tarski supplied for *the result* a theory of truth should yield - a 'truth definition' (which is not definition in a strict sense) of the predicate 'is true' for a particular language. Whatever exact form a theory takes, the formally correct definition of "is true", formulated in a metalanguage,

for a language under scrutiny (object language) 1) must entail all sentences of the form *x (in O; object language) is T(true) in language L if and only if p (in M; meta-language)*, that a language contains; and 2) true sentences in the said language are a subset of all the sentences in that language (Tarski, 1983, 187-188).

For Davidson, though, neither of the languages (object- or meta-) at hand has to satisfy *all* the requirements Tarski supplies for formal languages. For instance, even though Tarski had formal languages with a finite number of sentences in mind (Tarski, 1983, 188), Davidson extended his approach to natural languages with the infinity of sentences. He was concerned with a truth-conditional theory of meaning capable of explaining how finite number of rules and words inform the meanings of the infinity of sentences in a natural language (Davidson, 1965, 8), and, to this end, was interested in truth as the more basic and less vague notion than meaning (Davidson, 1967, 22, 24). The requirements Davidson supplied for the truth-conditional theory of meaning presupposed compositionality, that is that truth conditions of sentences obtain in the virtue of the roles it's primitive parts play within a sentence, and, subsequently, the whole language: we start with formulating primitive axioms for a language and move towards more complex ones (Lepore & Ludwig, 2006, 11). In order to indicate the meaning of the infinity of sentences in terms of the formal structure thereof and the roles words play within it, we have to abide by restrictions for theories of truth supplied by the Convention-T¹(23).

In Davidson's iteration, meanings obtain in the virtue of equivalence in truth conditions between two sentences in the theorem (T-sentence) of the following shape:

s is T if and only if p;

¹ The formally correct definition of "is true", formulated in metalanguage, for a language under scrutiny 1) must entail all sentences of the form *x (in O; object language) is T(true) in language L if and only if p (in M; meta-language)*, that a language contains; and 2) true sentences in the said language are a subset of all the sentences in that language (Tarski, 1983, 187-188).

where s stands for the description of compositional structure of a sentence (in object-language), and p for the sentence in a language under scrutiny interpreting (or translating) it (meta-language) (Davidson, 1967, 23). A T-sentence uniquely fixes extension of a predicate ‘is true’ for an interpreted sentence in the object-language. An appropriate theory of meaning presupposes that in order to know a language, one has to be able to understand a potential infinity of utterances in that language, and being able to understand the end result of such a theory (Davidson, 1965; 1973). A proper theory of truth, as it yields the infinity of T-sentences, would show how the roles of structural elements and rules for their composition inform the meaning of the infinite number of sentences a natural language “contains”. By finding how parts function within a sentence (singular terms, predicates, quantifiers), and with a set of axioms for a theory (reference of singular terms; satisfaction for predicates) we can assume their contribution to a sentence’s truth-conditions in each particular case; and, if a theory is correct, it has to provide a formal proof of a theorem (a T-sentence), with the latter providing a unique truth-conditions for a sentence given that the roles of its parts *in a language* (given the roles they play within sentences where we find them) are known.

I do not know any German. Yet, as a sufficiently competent speaker of English (the language, in which a theory of the sort described will be formulated) I can comprehend the second part of the biconditional “schnee ist weiss” is true iff snow is white; and given that truth conditions for the utterance in German equal to those in English, and mimic the basic formal structure of the utterance in English, I have some scant idea of what does this sentence mean: the snow is indeed white, but in German. As of yet, I can surmise what semantic primitives such as “Schnee”, “ist” and “weiss” mean, and what role each performs in the language they belong to. By finding how other semantic primitives contribute to truth conditions of other simple sentences, I can assume their roles in a language as a whole. And, if I am to be persistent enough, I could similarly test other

sentences in German against those with similar truth-conditions in English, and indicate meanings of other linguistic primitives, with some assumptions made as to the grammatical and logical form of sentences (of increasing complexity) thus tested. After a while thus spent I would be able to claim that I know (or have devised a theory for) German, more or less.

The exact composition of the machinery behind it is up to a theory of truth to specify. On my reading, Davidson's project at this stage amounts to delineating starting points from where a full-fledged truth-based semantic theory has to be advanced. He rather presented the meta-theoretical account, leaving the question of what it is for an arbitrary sentence in a language to be true (Davidson, 1973(a), 70) to a theory (or theories) yet to be devised (1969, 46).

Speaking of theories, or a composition of truth-conditional semantics, more refined sketches of these can be found in Neale (2001), Larson and Segal (1995) and Segal (1999).

For Davidson, truth conditions obtain in terms of the relation of satisfaction, which is to be understood as functions that assign the variables (tokens with their value yet unknown) in the object language to the objects over which these tokens range (Davidson, 1969, 47-49; Lepore, 2001, 307). In a sentence 'x has beaten y', with free variables 'x' and 'y', a function f satisfies the sentence if it maps variable 'x' to an entity that has beaten 'y', and 'y' to an entity that has been beaten, in an appropriate order (Davidson, 1969, 47). The relation of satisfaction seems to be a simple and unambiguous one, a theoretical posit equivalent to how we intuitively understanding a predicate to be true of an entity (Lepore & Ludwig, 12-13). The truth conditions for a sentence in the object language, as provided for in metalanguage, obtain in the virtue of satisfaction conditions for individual variables (argument places for predicates).

The relation of satisfaction, it seems, need not be explained in the virtue of something even more basic, akin to correspondence to facts or representation of the state of affairs 'out there' (Davidson, 1969). The relation itself allows us to

build a theory from axioms, that state reference conditions for terms ('t' refers to t) and satisfaction conditions for predicates (x satisfies predicate 'P' if and only if Px); then, our argument should proceed with stating satisfaction of complex sentences as deriving from satisfaction of their parts, and so on (Glanzberg, 2013, 157). Davidson, at first, conceived the satisfaction relation as a subspecies of a correspondence theory of truth: the relation obtains in the virtue of a function assigning objects to semantic primitives and sentences, thus, a specific breed of correspondence (Davidson, 1969, 48). The view, however, was discarded later (Davidson, 1987), provided that truth conditions do not obtain solely in the virtue of this relation: it indeed does clarify the roles of words within a language, helps establish the 'semantic identity' thereof, but does not *explain* the relation to the world, and does not provide content for sentences (Glanzberg, 2013, 162). The compositional apparatus of the sort is necessary to build a truth-conditional theory of meaning, yet, until one is faced with the task of empirical verification of its results, it seems to be an empty theoretical construct. It rather helps us *describe* what a competent speaker of a language usually knows, but no to *explain* linguistic competence. Satisfaction (and reference) does not explain the relation to the world, but rather posits, in an empirically verifiable way, the relation of expressions to entities, if we are to formalize speaker's 'knowledge' of a language.

Once we face the task of testing a theory, we rather presuppose that truth conditions for a sentence are so-and-so - "schnee ist weiss" is true iff snow is white - and wait until a competent speaker affirms or discards our supposition; as a result, we will know whether a predicate "is true" is defined correctly by our theory (Davidson, 1967, 27; 1973, 128). What makes the verifiability possible, is our ability to recognize the attitude of 'holding true' on behalf of a speaker (Davidson, 1974(a)). The formal-semantical theory of truth acts as a posit which, even though allows us to derive meanings from knowing unique truth-conditions for a sentence (and how it's parts contribute to its' truth conditions), does not

allow for a context-sensitive language (with indexicals, indirect speech etc.) to be interpreted by the formal instruments within a theory of truth alone (Glanzberg, 2013).

One important conclusion follows. We can verify the results of a theory based on nothing more than the attitude of holding something true, with this attitude acting as a logical primitive, as some call it, discernible in all conceivable human languages (Norris, 1988, 223). “Holding something true” predates meaning, and propositional contents are discernible by the virtue of indicating this basic attitude. Our colloquial “means that” is precisely a reiteration of the Tarski-like formal structure (Davidson, 1970, 60), and success of the interpretative sentence that follows after “means that...” is based on the condition that what we thus say is true (or, at least, is taken to be true). Truth, in turn, is not definable in terms of correspondence to entities: sense data, material objects and the like do not act as foundations for truth-conditions for our sentences. What we can do is to connect our expressions to the entities they are about; but these entities themselves do not make our sentences about them true.

Furthermore, the formal-semantical theory of truth is not sufficient to *explain* the linguistic competence of speakers. To this end, and this is what Davidson recognized in his later writing, we should pay more regard to the social aspect of language and concept acquisition: Tarski-like theories *describe* what the subsequent concepts attempt to *explain*.

2.2 INTERPRETATION RADICALIZED

The explanatory account of conditions upon which our linguistic competence is predicated may start with the consideration of how we can interpret others from scratch. We know we can (I learned my first language somehow), so by giving an account of the situation of seemingly ultimate complexity, one can elucidate explanatory concepts for our linguistic competence.

How the Tarski-like doctrine can help me if I do not possess anything that can supply truth conditions in the known language for the one I want to learn? Davidson calls for the notion of *radical interpretation*, analogously to Quine's *radical translation* (Quine, 2013, ch.2). In short, we can "radically interpret" a speaker of an alien language by simply testing utterances of her language, without prior understanding thereof, against the publicly available evidence (Davidson, 1973). The basic, and the only attitude we can be more or less certain about, is the one of holding something true (Davidson, 1974(a), 144). And, with due persistence and luck, we can collect enough responses expressing this attitude (or the opposite one) towards the way we mimic native-speaker's linguistic responses about the shared world in order to derive axioms for a theory of her language (Davidson, 1973, 136). Importantly, this model (as well as other similar models) does not supply us with a manual applicable to real-life process of language acquisition. Rather, it shows what we cannot do without while interpreting someone from scratch.

At this stage, we have to take into account the ostensive aspect that is involved in the process of learning of the basic truths a language under scrutiny contains about the world. While speaking of truth of sentences in such alien languages we also have no choice but to presuppose truthfulness of the majority of beliefs of our interlocutors, attributing them a sufficient degree of rationality in order to understand them (Davidson, 1973, 137; 1974(a), 153). It would be unreasonable on my behalf to try to understand someone, i.e. learn her language, without seeing this person as rational, and her beliefs as largely true. Attribution of rationality to speakers and truthfulness to much of their beliefs, alongside projection of our minimal logical structure onto their language, is known under the name of *the principle of charity* (Davidson, 1967, 27). In his later works, Davidson suggests two sub-principles to expand the initial version. The first one is the *principle of coherence* according to which we must presuppose logical consistency of what the speaker means and, at the same time, believes. The

second one is the *principle of correspondence*, which implies that we respond to the same causal occurrences in the world: *Both principles can be (and have been) called principles of charity: one principle endows the speaker with a modicum of logic, the other endows him with a degree of what the interpreter takes to be true belief about the world.* - (Davidson, 1991,211).

Owing, in part, to this principle we are able to *learn* a language with no *prior* idea of conventional grammar and semantics thereof.

The Tarski-like structure only helps to supply us with the formal template of how truth conditions, if verified against what is held true in a language community, amount to meanings: we can analyze the collected data (assent to true sentences) and derive axioms, in the virtue of which we subsequently define the roles of semantic primitives and rules within a language.

In order to apply it successfully for further description of a language, we must adhere to the restrictions laid down by the principle of charity, and to presuppose that the majority of beliefs of speakers about the world are true. As we will see a bit later, instances of disagreement and error can be tested only against the background of massive agreement (Davidson, 1975, 168; 1983, 150).

To sum up, radical interpretation presupposes that without certain assumptions, namely that other speakers abide by the same logical constants, what they say (and believe) about the world is largely true and that they are rational, we cannot approach interpretation: otherwise, we face a risk of misinterpreting other speakers; and, subsequently, the risk of not being able to describe their languages via means supplied by truth-conditional semantic theory.

2.3 WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW WITHOUT:THE CONCEPT OF TRIANGULATION

As we have already hinted above by emphasising the role of, roughly speaking, ostension in the process of radical interpretation, there is something me

and the interpreted can, at some point in time, start conversing about. For interpretation to succeed, I and my potential interlocutor have to be able to commune about the world we both share and conceptualize, each in one's peculiar way. The idea is that of *triangulation*: in order to start communing about anything, there have to be at least me, my interlocutor, and the world (Davidson, 1991). I will try to read what I know about my surroundings in my own language into how my companion interacts - both verbally and nonverbally - with the world. Then, I will try to mimic her verbal behaviour and wait until she agrees whether what I say is true or not: we assume that we can indicate the attitude of holding something true no matter how alien the person we interpret is. Once again, the process can be described by recursive application of the Tarski-like formula, with the specifications to place, time, speaker etc whenever necessary. If we, thus described, engage in the process of testing each other's linguistic responses to the world we can, hopefully, learn languages of each other.

Even though the triangle does not supply an exhaustive list of what is warranted for successful communication to take place, it is a minimum one has to possess in order not only to master command of an alien language but to come to have what we see as knowledge.

Our knowledge is per definition intersubjective: knowledge of our own mind, of the world and of other minds is impossible without language - otherwise, it does not count as knowledge at all (Davidson, 1991; 1975). The minimum we have to possess in order to have knowledge about nature, our own thoughts and thoughts and attitudes of others is a triangle comprising us, at least one interlocutor, and the world. Following Wittgenstein, Davidson presupposes that there is no such thing as private language, thus, it is hard to imagine anything inherently objective that can be held true by someone without the possibility to communicate it and, thus, agree or disagree about conditions under which instances of knowledge under scrutiny are true (Davidson, 1991, 209). Evidence supplied by the interaction with the world counts only against the agreement as

to how to approach it conceptually, i.e. linguistically. Even though we cannot access someone's thoughts directly, we can get acquainted with the evidence which we both can comprehend and, subsequently, test each other's linguistic responses against it. The basic attitude towards the world that can be "read" by the interpreter, given that the object is perceived by both, is the one of holding an utterance true. Truth, as Davidson's application of Tarski-like theorems presupposes, can be characterized only in the light of linguistic interaction: our first step in order to understand meanings of a language yet unknown is to derive truth conditions of what is said, i.e. what usually equals to what speakers of a language under scrutiny hold true. One can say that the only standards of truth we have is what is agreed upon by speakers, with such an agreement being possible to establish only through communication. Otherwise, there is no objective knowledge about the way things really are. Our knowledge of our own mind, thoughts and attitudes is always a public knowledge: we know something about ourselves only to the extent we know the language, without which truth-conditions of our beliefs cannot be assessed. Truth is the core concept for defining knowledge, yet it is so inasmuch as truth is a linguistic, and only thus epistemic, property (Davidson, 1991, 209; 1975, 162).

2.4 WHAT JUSTIFIES OUR THINKING SO? COHERENCE VERSUS CORRESPONDENCE

Some indeterminacy, however, persists. Given that we rely on establishing truth-conditions for a specific language to determine meanings, when facing the task of interpreting a language yet unknown, we grant a wide discretion to speakers of that language to decide what is true and what is not. Speakers, as we

know, can be mistaken, or refuse to agree about certain meanings, especially whenever our conversation touches on the matters which we cannot access through ostension. This, undoubtedly, leads to the possibility of error or inability to understand someone at full. Yet, indeterminacy does not equal to incommensurability. In order to indicate an error on our behalf, we must assume that we understand what renders such a conclusion erroneous: our true beliefs against which we see the error.

In the process of radical interpretation, we are compelled to presuppose truthfulness of the majority of beliefs of our interlocutors: our knowledge is inherently dependent on belief, as the latter is closely intertwined with what we take to be meaning (Davidson, 1974(a)). Our utterances about the external world are expressions of *beliefs* about the external world - we rarely do not believe in what we say, and it is foolish to presuppose that others are pathological liars (Davidson, 1991, 209). Evidently, we do not know what a person believes unless we know the meanings of her words, and vice versa (Davidson, 1974(a), 153). Given the veridical nature of meaning, similar considerations apply to belief. We need to understand what our interlocutor believes her words mean in given circumstances, and we cannot even start the process of interpretation without assuming that her beliefs about the world we both share are largely true (Davidson, 1975, 161). Beliefs, we must remember, are interconnected, the 'cohere' in some loose sense, and in order for one belief to hold, the majority of other beliefs about the subject matter the interpreter and the interpreted are trying to converse should be true (Davidson, 1975, 168). As is the case with all propositional attitudes, the concept of belief itself is made intelligible only against the background of interpretation of language. Identifying a belief is the first step one has to take in order to appreciate the difference between a true one and the one that is false: one cannot have a belief without presupposing that it might be proven to be wrong. Beliefs are assessed publicly, against beliefs held by others, and communicated through speech and other forms of linguistic interaction -

otherwise, they are unintelligible, even for ourselves. Truthfulness and falsity of beliefs are assessed only in the process of linguistic interpretation, “...*for the notion of a true belief depends on the notion of a true utterance, and this in turn there cannot be without shared language*” (Davidson, 1975, 170).

The concept of belief, once again, is instrumental for us for distinguishing between genuinely true and what is just held true - since the capacity to distinguish a false one is based on knowing the truth of the majority of others.

2.5 ACTING AND THINKING

Beliefs, as we have already seen, are dependent on language to be made intelligible and they are indispensable to the process of interpretation, both of speech and action. Since other attitudes (desires, intentions etc.) associated with the thinking process are closely connected to belief, we can see that holism about propositional attitudes underlies the entire notion of communication and thinking. The same goes for the account of action. For we cannot provide a theoretical account of action without distinguishing attitudes such as desire, intention or belief that the desired outcome of action might be proven to be true. We can characterize action in a similar manner as we do with speech: similarly to the theory of interpretation, Davidson treats patterns of decision making as reliant on truth-conditions agents ascribe to desired outcomes of their actions (Davidson, 1980, 161). In other words, beliefs and desires are core for determining decision patterns in agent's conduct, as well as in the case with speech (Davidson, 1983, 149). Evidently, we cannot account for action without presupposing the agent believes that the desired outcome is, to an extent, true: *For an agent to have a certain subjective probability for a sentence is for him to hold that sentence true, or false, or for him to have some determinate degree of belief in its truth.* (Davidson, 1980, 164). What seems obvious on such an account is that we can hardly devise a theory of action apart from a theory of interpretation: in all

versions of decision theory Davidson borrows theoretical instruments from, decisions were taken to be, rather uncritically, propositions, meaning that they were perceived as being already interpreted by the agent, having propositional contents laid bare (Davidson, 1980, 154; 1984a, 29). In fact, the theory of radical interpretation is per definition a constitutive part of the theory of action; to provide an appropriate account of action one has to assume that such an account can be given without knowledge of what exactly the agent means prior to interpretation taking place. We have *to come* to meanings she ascribes to her actions.

Davidson understands ascription of preference between different courses of action as a decision between sentences, understood as being not yet interpreted; the descriptive account of action must, therefore, presuppose interpretative process on agents' behalf (Davidson, 1980, 155). Davidson resorts to sentences rather than propositions, and this hints at the striking similarity between his accounts of action and communication. He does so, primarily, in order to allow theoretical elaboration of the possibility of interpreting agent's decisions without initial awareness of propositional contents of agent's desires and beliefs (Davidson, 1984a, 30). Put it differently, Davidson's account of action presupposes the notion of radical interpretation as applicable to it: we can interpret action from scratch using similar means to those applied to interpretation of speech. Thus, we can theorise about valuations agents ascribe to certain outcomes (taken as sentences with propositional contents yet unknown) without knowing the contents of their thoughts and of such attitudes as desire and belief (Davidson, 1984a, 30). In short, we assess desirability in terms of subjective probability of a result turning out to be true. Particularly, the more the agent *disvalues* the falsity of one of the sentences, the more probable/desirable we take it to be, even though she can desire both sentences to be true on equal par (32). We can proceed by formalising agent's responses and seeing a sort of a pattern,

what is no-no, what is esteemed desirable and what is not that interesting after all, and all this using purely extensional means (33)².

Then we proceed as always. By indicating patterns of inference where deviation occurs as rarely as possible we come to see basic logical constants the agent follows, then we try to establish axioms for the theory of truth with consideration to the truth conditions agent ascribes to sentences and the roles constituents play within such sentences and so on (33-34). Once again, we ought to make a ‘charitable’ assumption about the rationality of an agent we interpret, and what potentially may cause her to respond (to assigns subjective probability) in a way she does based on mutually available surroundings.

Importantly, and this is what Davidson’s contemporaries did sometimes omit back in the day (for example, Hacking, 1986; Dummett, 1986), neither his account of action, nor his account of linguistic interaction presupposed that we are talking about how agents and speakers “really behave” - Davidson did not attempt at describing empirical content of neither action nor communication (Davidson, 1980, 166; 1994, 112). The aim of these theories was to generally make sense of how we act, speak and think, not to provide an extensive breakdown of the actual process of interpretation, something what we can hardly

² *The determination of the subjective probabilities and desirabilities of the truth of sentences has, it seems, been accomplished without knowledge of what those sentences mean. But this is not quite the case. We have had to depend upon being able to recognize the negation of a sentence, and to recognize at least one tautology. In effect, then, we have illegitimately been assuming that the truth functional sentential connectives could be interpreted. Can this be done on the basis simply of preferences that one sentence rather than another be true? It can, as follows. Suppose we find an operation O on pairs of sentences that has these properties: first, it is symmetrical. This can be shown by discovering that for any two sentences S and T the agent is indifferent between SOT and TOS . Second, it satisfies the condition that for any three sentences, S , T , and U , whenever the agent prefers S to $(TOU)O((TOU)O(TOU))$ he does not prefer $(TOU)O((TOU)O(TOU))$ to SOS , and whenever he prefers SOS to $(TOU)O((TOU)O(TOU))$ he does not prefer $(TOU)O((TOU)O(TOU))$ to S . The operation O can only be the Sheffer stroke—the operation ‘not both’. SOS turns out to be the negation of S , and $(TOU)O((TOU)O(TOU))$ is a tautology. (This device depends on the fact that a sentence and its negation cannot both be preferred to a tautology.) Of course if this is right, it will turn out that the tautology has a subjective probability of 1 and its negation a subjective probability of 0. (Davidson, 1984a, 33)*

achieve with philosophical means anyway. We can only devise models, yet, without falling prey to the temptation of supplying definitions: the procedural account of minimal conditions upon which intelligibility of these processes relies is all that is needed, at least, from the philosophical point of view. As some commentators put it, he adopts, in certain instances (what triangulation is a prominent example of), what can be called a mild form of transcendentalism (Engel, 2013, 595). As I understand this claim, it presupposes the endeavour to supply minimal conditions without which communication, knowledge and action cannot be called such, with borderline situations acting as theoretical models helping to depict such “transcendental” conditions. In this sense, all interpretation is radical, given it relies on minimal conditions as emphasized by cases of ultimate complexity. Yet, we can deal with cases as such, and we deal with them more often than we think we do. The musician we have abandoned above, thus, appears to exemplify, in a rather rough form, what is taking place anytime we engage in conversation, without what conversation, as well as thinking and what we call creativity, cannot be.

CHAPTER III

REDUNDANT CATEGORIES: DAVIDSON'S QUEST AGAINST REPRESENTATION AND CONVENTION

3.1 THE PROBLEM OF REFERENCE

Reference appears to be a term which, however strong our desire to get rid of representationalist stance is, we cannot simply abandon. Indeed, if we accept, together with Davidson, Tarski-like theory of truth, we will hardly be able to speak intelligibly what a sentence is about without occasionally introducing the term 'reference', or 'satisfaction'.

Importantly, Tarski, as Davidson claims elsewhere, intended his truth definitions to be not simply posits or stipulations of a theory, but to resemble the ordinary application of the predicate 'is true of' (Davidson, 1990c, 291). Apparently, the least problematic sense in which we use the concept of truth is when we talk about the state of affairs in the world, and express our basic perceptual beliefs about our surroundings. We rarely do not agree about platitudes, such as that the sky is blue at a said time for a said circle of speakers, or that snow, more often than not, is white.

What remains unintelligible, though, is the definition of a predicate 'refers to' (Davidson, 1977, 220). Davidson was concerned with reference primarily because the truth-conditional semantics he envisioned to be applicable to a natural language should have accounted for roles of the linguistic primitives (predicates, singular terms etc.) within a sentence as contributing to truth-conditions of a unique sentence (Davidson, 1977, 218). The relation of satisfaction (and reference), Davidson claims, when used to explain what it is for a predicate to be true of a set of entities (or to refer to a set of entities), does not need an explicit definition for the theory of the type he envisioned: the explicit definition of either satisfaction or reference, once given, excludes huge swaths of unique, and

previously unaccounted for, cases when the relation of reference or satisfaction occurs (217).

Once a new predicate for a language is created, and a definition of reference has been so devised prior to that as to unwittingly exclude the application of this new predicate, the theory, apparently, fails. Thus, while being indispensable, 'reference' cannot be supplied with a definition, otherwise putting the entire enterprise to supply truth conditions for the *potential infinity* of sentences at risk. What we can do to determine the unique role of a predicate 'refers to' in a sentence is to determine its extension relative to the instance of use, and nothing more is actually needed (Davidson, 1979, 239).

The inscrutability of reference was associated with yet another problem. The XXth century analytic philosophy had been plagued with the assumption that epistemic, or linguistic, categories are to be explained in terms of categories of different order, non-epistemic and non-linguistic ones (219). For the philosophy of language, such a reduction to a different order of explanation had become a breed of naturalistic fallacy, akin to the one so rigorously criticised with respect to ethics. The problems associated with the concept of reference stem from the very same fallacy, the fallacy of trying to explain what words refer to in terms of non-linguistic concepts. But, as we have seen already, the very effort to explain 'reference' in terms of what words or sentences 'refer to' without accounting for their respective roles in a language i.e. without knowing how and when to use them, is futile (219). The 'building block' theories were wrong in assuming the meaning of semantic primitives, out of which more complex structures are built, is determined by what they seem to refer to, namely, the non-linguistic facts. It is impossible to conceive a word that obtains its meaning independently of its uses in sentences, and within the entire language. Given the role of a word has to be first specified within sentences in which it occurs, (reference to) non-linguistic

facts simply cannot play any significant role in determining meanings³. Thus, any effort to specify the definition of reference based on a version of a building block theory is vain and hopeless.

What is needed, though, for truth-conditional theory of meaning Davidson advocates for, is a way of ‘assigning entities to expressions’, and reference, even though no one precludes us from using it, is far from being the only term to describe this relation (224). Not only are there no exclusive references of singular terms, reference is not the only name conceivable of a simple relation between entities and expressions about these entities.

For Davidson, the features of semantic primitives (references of words, for example) do not constitute the evidential base for correctness of ascription of meanings; rather, the correctness of the results of a whole theory - T-sentences it yields - are examined (Davidson, 1977, 225). Put it differently, it is vain to assign to the term ‘reference’ any explanatory power within a theory, the definition of reference will not and should not affect the results a theory of truth yields. Reference is a wrong place to connect a theory to the world - more simple, and more intuitive way to check whether a theory is correct of a language it is designed for, would be a simple test of the end product (T-sentences) against the actual instances of use.

Apparently, from the inscrutability of reference (but not its absolute redundancy) another perplexity follows: if one cannot give an account of reference in terms of non-linguistic concepts and is bound to the semantics of ‘refers’, are our ontological commitments relativized to a language as well?

For Davidson, the relativization Willard Van Orman Quine attempted, namely that ontology is to be fixed relative to a language or theory (Quine, 1969,

³ *If the name 'Kilimanjaro' refers to Kilimanjaro, then no doubt there is some relation between English (or Swahili) speakers, the word, and the mountain. But it is inconceivable that one should be able to explain this relation without first explaining the role of the word in sentences; and if this is so, there is no chance of explaining reference directly in non-linguistic terms (Davidson, 1977, 220)*

50), remains unintelligible. For Quine, ‘it does not make sense to speak of objects independent of a theory’ given the reference of separate symbols of a theory or language cannot be made intelligible, and so is for Davidson. Yet, Quine falls prey to another fallacy he himself, as it seems, attempted to defy: if we cannot determine the reference and thus fix it uniquely to tokens of a theory or a language, why claim that we can *arbitrarily* fix a unique ontology to a theory? Objects of a theory, for Quine, act as variables, namely theoretical entities the values of which, one can say, depend entirely on their roles within a theory; and ontological commitments of a theory are relative to what such a theory assigns a role of ‘bound variables’, or quantificational variables like ‘nothing’, ‘something’ etc. (Quine, 1963b, 7). This is, in some respect, the way to fix the ontology of a theory or a language without stressing on what names or singular terms refer to, with such quantificational terms as applied to sentences being the only criteria of ‘involvement in ontological commitments’ (Quine, 1963b, 12). The commitment, however, is limited to either our arbitrary decision or the best theory we have about the world.

The fact that Quine pointed out at the inscrutability of reference and, nevertheless, insisted on the possibility to fix ontology *relative* to a theory or language is what Davidson tried to contest. Such relativization cannot be done, because either in the object- or metalanguage the word ‘refers’ cannot be accounted for in semantic terms; and this means that ontology of the word ‘refers’ for a particular case or a language cannot be made intelligible - we do not understand its function to be certain of what this word is about. The semantics of ‘refers’ cannot be made unambiguous for any particular theory, either by an arbitrary choice or otherwise (Davidson, 1979, 232).

Quine’s analogy between the coordinate systems (position of an object is relative to a coordinate system) and language is not quite illuminating either. Davidson shows why exactly by using the following example:

The relativized question ('Where is Bronk's house in the address system of the Bronx ?') is clear and answerable, and the answer is complete. It has no further hidden parameter. We can, of course, go on to ask another, similar question: 'Where is the Bronx?' And this question in turn makes no sense until relativized. But once relativized, it is clear and answerable. No predicate with an extra place is hidden behind the relativized location predicate.

The predicate with an extra hidden - and indeterminate - place is 'refers'. It is hard to establish what exactly 'refers to' is necessarily true of in a language, unlike the address of 'Bronk's house' or the location of Bronx itself.

To elucidate the futility of effort to specify the unique reference 'relative to a theory' let's take a look at the example of permutation of the universe: 'Wilt is tall' in one universe refers to 'Wilt' and tall things; if the permutation is expressed by predicate 'the shadow of', after the permutation is completed, 'Wilt is tall' is going to refer to the 'shadow of Wilt' and shadows of the tall things (Davidson, 1979). The truth conditions of the phrase 'Wilt is tall' in both 'universes' appear to be equivalent - but not in the virtue of what the terms refer to, but in the light of facts, which cause speakers to assent to or dissent from a sentence (Davidson, 1979, 230). These are the causal patterns that prompt a speaker to respond (linguistically) in a certain way to an object or an event. Or it seems so.

In fact, one facing the task of interpreting what 'Wilt' and the predicate 'is tall' refer to faces an extremely complicated task of fixing the extension of a predicate 'is tall' and reference of the 'Wilt'. If one attempts to provide a background theory of truth for a speaker, and assumes that that speaker takes the idea of permutation of the universe seriously, such a theory will yield two alternative propositions: Wilt refers to 'Wilt' and Wilt refers to 'the shadow of Wilt' in a speaker's language (Davidson, 1979, 234). The one who encounters such a theory for a speaker faces a rather complicated task of specifying what the predicate 'refers to' is actually true of: no unique extension can be given even

relative to a theory, for the objects of such a theory for a speaker remain unspecifiable. There are at least two, with the possible infinity of them. In the end, it is not clear how many more places the predicate ‘refers to’ will have. The coordinate system for patterns of reference within a theory itself is unspecifiable.

What we would rather get rid of is the idea that a language or a theory fixes reference and ontology uniquely, what Quine seemingly argued for. Davidson seems to settle the issue by devising a ‘theory of a speaker’, in the virtue of which we can determine what an utterance ‘refers to’, the unique extension of a predicate for a particular instance of communication rather than of a whole theory of truth for language (Davidson, 1979, 239). This, in other words, presupposes a unique ‘language’ a speaker uses, and in the light of how its semantic primitives are allocated in the sentences and the propositional attitudes of a speaker, we have an idea of what she ‘refers to’. For Davidson, unlike Quine, there is no unique language an utterance belongs to. We can choose between the languages. i.e. various truth conditions assigned to the same sentence or utterance, given the instance of use (Davidson, 1977, 225); with our choice of a theory (and of language for a speaker) to be adjustable according to the evidence available, i.e. according to the holistic theory of a person (her beliefs, desires, fears, etc) (Davidson, 1979, 240).

In other words, holism about propositional attitudes and meaning helps us determine what language a person speaks at a specific instance, and what predicate ‘refers to’ is true of. What seemingly remains invariant, is a semantic identity of what a speaker utters, but the semantic identity is not the exclusive factor that helps us determine what language the speaker uses.

To conclude, the concept of reference, even though not entirely redundant, does not need an elucidation in terms of a separate theory that accounts for it. The idea of a unique reference, either ‘universal’ or relative to a language, is unintelligible, since the diversity of theoretical and linguistic practices does not allow us to confine the concept within a limited definition. Provided linguistic

analysis of how we use the predicate ‘refers to’, there is no way we can intelligibly summarise the set of cases it is applicable to within a definition, even if for a single language.

What one’s sentence ‘refers to’ is rather to be determined on the basis of a theory of a person as a whole: what her beliefs are, what she wants and what her utterances are about. There is, in such a case, no unique and determinate language an utterance belongs to: Davidson, by resorting to a ‘theory of a person’, manages to allow an utterance with the semantic identity unchanged to belong to different ‘languages’ attributable to different speakers at different times. Reference, thus devised, makes sense as a theoretical concept, one among possible many, that allows us to connect expressions with events they are about. What reference cannot do, though, is to act as a foundation for explaining what event or object an utterance is connected to, and what our sentences are true of.

The consequences of this account of reference for representationalism are clear: if there are no ‘scrutable’ entities our utterances (or parts of utterances) refer to, there is essentially nothing to ‘mirror’ in the language. The fallacy of trying to define reference in terms of non-linguistic concepts is a derivative of more general problems of representationalism, the dualism of content and conceptual scheme (Davidson, 1974b, 190) and the privilege of the subjectivist position with respect to knowledge (Davidson, 1979a, 235).

3.2 DONALD DAVIDSON’S ANTIREPRESENTATIONALIST EXTERNALISM

Donald Davidson faced a rather complicated task: he sought to defy various forms of representationalism and, at the same time, to remain an externalist. The attack, according to Bjorn Ramberg, is threefold: Davidson contests 1) ‘sense content’ as a breed of mirroring of the world accessible to the mind; 2) attacks the idea that correspondence is a foundation of truth and 3) attacks *intensionality*

and phenomenalism (Ramberg, 2001). I will now briefly address the three before we move to the specific type of externalism Davidson adopts.

First, Donald Davidson, following in the footsteps of Wilfrid Sellars, attempted to contest the validity of epistemological theories that claimed that there has to be an epistemic intermediary between the world and our beliefs: ‘impressions’, ‘sense contents’, ‘percepts’, ‘sense data’ and many more ‘classical empiricist’s’ posits that were once believed to stay between the world and the knowledge of this world (Ramberg, 2001, 221). Indeed, it is easy to succumb to the idea that we can ground our knowledge in what is ‘given’ before the mind, what mind can introspect and carry within it - aren’t the causal patterns between reality itself and our beliefs too precarious a foundation for knowledge? They are indeed. However, the intuition that the knowledge, even though its foundation seems to be so intimately close to the knowing mind, is false and prone to scepticism. It is foolish, Davidson claims, to insist that there is a necessity to resort to the perceptual, and purely subjective, intermediaries (as his good friend W.V.O. Quine often did when he wrote of ‘sense stimulations’ as the foundation of perceptual beliefs (Quine, 2013, ch.2)) to secure a foundation of knowledge (Davidson, 1984b, 1988). If we put a mirror’s image of the world before the introspecting mind, we do not achieve much in terms of laying the secure foundation for thought. Perceptions, lookings and sense data, even though it seems that by representing the world before a subject’s mind they fixate definite ‘content’ before it, rely too much on what cannot be made intelligible: essentially private and, thus, unverifiable inner episodes. In short, the first representationalist foe for Davidson is ‘classical empiricism’ with its inclinations towards perceptual fillings that blur a direct causal connection between our beliefs and their causes.

Second species of representationalism Davidson contests is that which views correspondence as ‘explication of truth’(Ramberg, 2001, 219). It is true that in his early writing Davidson attempted to characterize Tarski-style doctrine

as a subspecies of the correspondence theory of truth even though he did not share the basic suppositions of such theories (Davidson, 1969; 1983). The objection to correspondence as a foundation of truth is familiar: it is hard, if not impossible, to determine what exactly our true statements or their parts correspond to (Davidson, 1990c, 303). The relation, as is the case with reference, is inscrutable since the tokens of a language or a theory cannot be, even if arbitrarily, exclusively provided with the objects to correspond to (303). The conclusion Davidson formulates is the following one:

The correct objection to correspondence theories is not, then, that they make truth something to which humans can never legitimately aspire; the real objection is rather that such theories fail to provide entities to which truth vehicles (whether we take these to be statements, sentences or utterances) can be said to correspond. If this is right, and I am convinced it is, we ought also to question the popular assumption that sentences, or their spoken tokens, or sentence-like entities or configurations in our brains, can properly be called "representations," since there is nothing for them to represent. If we give up facts as entities that make sentences true, we ought to give up representations at the same time, for the legitimacy of each depends on the legitimacy of the other. (1990c, 304)

Put it differently, since entities for which the relations of correspondence occur are in principle indeterminate, one can hardly insist that 'truth vehicles' can represent, or mirror, the state of affairs in the world. This is the type of externalism one can hardly accept, for it not only tries to explain linguistic and epistemic phenomena in non-linguistic terms (the above mentioned naturalistic fallacy with respect to reference), but cannot specify entities that allegedly make sentences about them true.

The third species is phenomenalism, the subjectivist *intensionality* of mental states. This view, which Davidson calls 'epistemic' (Davidson, 1990c, 298) presupposes that the content of our mental states, what these mental states

are ‘about’, is confined to the boundaries of the subjective (Ramberg, 2001, 220). This view is epistemic in a very particular sense, namely that views the mental as intrinsically private, with its fine structure being not only inaccessible to the outside observers, but reliant on nothing outside the introspecting mind. The idea of giving content to thought without borrowing publicly available means to make it explicit is, as we have already seen, an outright impossible venture: there is no thought without the concept of belief, and no concept of belief can be formulated without (Davidson, 1974a, 1994).

The idea that the intimate knowledge of states of our own mind is unmediated, and that these phenomenal states act as representational devices for knowledge of real or abstract objects lacks credibility (Davidson, 1984b; 1988). Phenomenology beyond public means of concept formation is something Davidson refuses to concede to, especially if such a phenomenalist view of inner states presupposes no relation to the world (Davidson, 1988, 50). The conclusion Davidson makes is radical - no epistemological foundation for empirical knowledge is needed at all, for it is as unproblematic as a causal description of any other phenomena (46). The knowledge of other minds, even while those having them do not speak, is, too, not as problematic as one might have thought - given our thought is always linguistically mediated (Davidson, 1991, 209), we can attribute propositional states to people based on how we are used to do and conceptualize things (Davidson, 1988, 47). Phenomenalism that does not assume public nature of propositional states and knowledge (of one’s own mind, too) falls prey to the representationalist habit of viewing the concept formation as an introspective mirroring. Davidson dispels this view. Yet, the first person authority, as we shall see a bit later, remains intact.

Davidson did not attempt to get rid of ‘representation’ entirely. As is the case with reference, the word itself, until it retains some explanatory power or theoretical importance, can exist without doing much harm. The phrase ‘mental representation’ as employed in psychology or cognitive sciences to explain

concrete empirical phenomena does not yield any of the morbid epistemological conclusions Davidson contested, unless the term ‘representation’ becomes central for explaining what our *conceptual* knowledge is predicated upon. Davidson rejects naturalisms of the kind a caricature of a neuroscientist from Peter Hacker’s dialogues is going to accept (Hacker, 2014), that brain states are directly translatable into propositional attitudes, and that veridicality of a belief is assessed on the basis of chemical processes in the brain (sometime ago, though, I think real people accepted this view too).

Davidson chooses to start with banishing scheme-content dualism with respect to concept formation, a roughly Kantian notion (McDowell, 2001, 44) that both Rorty and Davidson advocated against (Rorty, 1981, 272). The idea that one perceives the world through a lense of a conceptual scheme is, despite its’ initial appeal, unintelligible in the light of the same concern I have already discussed with respect to reference. However, in addition to the inscrutability of what the scheme-independent content is, there is another contention, namely that the picture of the world which is ‘relative to a scheme’ cannot be accounted for properly. Conceptual relativism for Davidson amounts to untranslatability between two different schemes, the idea that, when provided with the examples, appears to be self-refuting:

Whorf, wanting to demonstrate that Hopi incorporates a metaphysics so alien to ours that Hopi and English cannot, as he puts it, 'be calibrated', uses English to convey the contents of sample Hopi sentences. Kuhn is brilliant at saying what things were like before the revolution using - what else? - our post-revolutionary idiom. Quine gives us a feel for the 'pre-individuative phase in the evolution of our conceptual scheme, while Bergson tells us where we can go to get a view of a mountain undistorted by one or another provincial perspective. (Davidson, 1974b, 184)

The ‘third dogma of empiricism’, as he calls such a dualism, suggests that relativism in scheme entails relativism in ontology, what directly contradicts what

we know from the actual linguistic practice. The idea that the world manifests itself only relative to a conceptual scheme is a very unrealistic conclusion indeed, for even if we might not share with a foreigner (or them religious people) some ontological commitments, we sure understand them well when talk about our immediate surroundings (192).

What can be said with respect to truth, say, in English for a speaker *S* at time *t*, has nothing to do with the laborious process of locating contents to the scheme *S* shares. The concept of being true suffices to account for what is true and what is not: the totality of what Davidson calls ‘evidence’, what we manage to discover to the best of our ability, is all that is needed to make sentences of our language or our theories true (194). No representational posits in between us and our theories (such as radically different conceptual schemes) are needed to *make* what we say or think true. We can determine what is true for a language or for a speaker, and, given the *dialogical* and *procedural* nature of knowledge (Davidson, 1991), we cannot help but to abandon the unnecessary fixation of truth to conceptual scheme. The connection is simpler, and more direct than some XXth century philosophers had a tendency to think. What he advocates against here, as well as in subsequent writings, is the idea of ontological relativity: we cannot intelligibly have two different descriptions (physicalist and the mental) of the event, if we do not assume that the ontology of the event remains the same. This doctrine is called *anomalous monism* and suggests that given the shared ontology, causal relations obtain between our minds and the outside world: beliefs and desires (and rational explanations of action) can effectively cause us to act, but so do chemical processes in the brain (Davidson, 1963; 1970; 1993b). Relativising ontology impedes such an effort to settle the issue of how reasons we have for our actions cause these actions: if ontological relativity is assumed, we have two competing schemes which, however, is not quite true.

This puts Davidson’s antirepresentationalism into a greater proximity to Richard Rorty’s in yet another important respect: both cast away the idea that

there can be an exclusive conceptual scheme relative to which the world ‘really is’ (Rorty, 1981, 373-375).

What is Davidson's antirepresentationalist externalism exactly, though?

As we have roughly outlined in the above sections, our knowledge (of the outside world) is essentially public in nature: restrictions the concept of triangulation imposes on knowledge, even that of the most primitive causal occurrences, requires a companion whose linguistic responses one ought to compare with her own to be certain that both are thinking about one and the same thing (Davidson, 1991). The causal connections are simple and unproblematic, but the knowledge of them cannot emerge without someone else verbally reacting to them, what the ability to assess truthfulness of the beliefs caused by an occurrence in the world rests upon (Verheggen, 2013). To formulate a true perceptual belief one has to entertain a concept of belief, and to do so one has to participate in the social practice of communication. Being confined to representation ‘within the mind’ will not lead us anywhere but towards scepticism. Instead, Davidson proposes radical interpretivism with respect to our own and others’ minds and the world - the necessary condition for knowledge is that of being able to converse, to rationally justify one’s beliefs. The latter cannot be done without being able to interpret and be interpreted by the other: *Only communication can provide the concept, for to have the concept of objectivity, the concepts of objects and events that occupy a shared world, of objects and events whose properties and existence is independent of our thought, requires that we are aware of the fact that we share thoughts and a world with others* (Davidson, 1990a, 203). A single person (with no prior exposure to a community of speakers) cannot possess all the necessary tools to think about something as true, as well as for entertaining a thought that something ‘seems to be true’. For both, we must be capable of devising some sort of criteria, and even truthfulness of falsity of our plainest perceptual beliefs cannot be established without a companion: *Without such sharing, there would be no grounds for selecting one*

cause rather than another as the content-fixing cause (Ibid.). The contents of our beliefs, desires, fears, intentions and many other propositional attitudes - all expressed linguistically - remain indeterminate without such socially mediated causal connections.

This, in turn, allows our beliefs to ‘enter the logical space of rational justification’ - with the more complex beliefs we cannot help but argue for or against some them, but to provide a justification, we would rather be able to agree on causal connections that obtain between our belief and what tends to cause it. In this sense, Davidson resembles Sellars: our thinking that things are one way rather than the other is a matter of rational justification.

The first-person authority remains intact, for even though the means we use to think are ‘borrowed’ from the public domain, nothing precludes us from keeping our beliefs and desires to ourselves (Davidson, 1984b).

To conclude, Donald Davidson gets rid of representationalism by attacking three basic notions thereof. First, there cannot be any perceptual or mental intermediaries between us and the world, for these are at best redundant. Second, there is no truth-functional entities ‘out there’ which, in the virtue of their presence before the conceptualizing mind or even speech community, make sentences true. Third, phenomenalism of the mental omits the intersubjective, conversational, and externalist aspects of knowledge.

In the following section, I will try to elaborate on the dialogical conception of communication (and knowledge) as Davidson conceived it, as exemplified by his criticism of conventionalism.

3.3 SHARING THE LANGUAGE WITHOUT SHARING THE CONVENTION: DONALD DAVIDSON’S ANTICONVENTIONALISM

The conventionalist view, if we try to formulate it in very rough terms, states that intersubjective significance of language rests upon the shared

convention members of a speech community adhere to in order to be properly understood (See, for example, Lewis, 1975; Dummett, 1996). Conventions for Dummett and Lewis seem to be idealizations which, even though they are learned by speakers, nevertheless somehow exist independently, as ‘antecedent regularities’ governing speech and, consequently, thought.

For Davidson, position as such is unacceptable, for his efforts against representationalisms require a different conception of linguistic and cognitive competence, the one that presupposes dynamic and interactive process of concept formation, as envisioned in his concept of triangulation. Davidson characterises communication and cognition in the light of the holism about propositional attitudes and meaning, where theories of truth for speakers may vary significantly (in the light of what they believe, desire, intend or are repulsed by), while the ‘semantic identity’ of sentences remains the same. A formal-semantic theory of truth, in such cases, does not exclusively supply truth conditions of sentences, the variety of factors is in play. What is even more apparent, the way we actually speak, the way we confuse words, do not pay regard as to correct grammar and, in extreme cases, invent our own, is indicative of the fact that conventions, whatever these may be, *do not act as a foundation* of understanding.

Davidson does not refuse to accept that there is something we more or less share, or expect others to share, in every instance of communication.

Before we illuminate what exactly we share, let us first consider the following example. My poor command of English will be evident to the one who speaks it perfectly. This person, however, can undertake an effort to create a ‘theory’ of what I say in order to decipher the meaning of my utterance, even though I might have made a few mistakes. In order to do so the interpreter shall not blame me outright for being stupid and irrational; accordingly, she cannot rely solely on conventional meanings of words (given that I distorted them). Yet, when I confuse the words “flagrant” and “fragrant” while talking about the gravity of violations of international law, it is reasonable for me to choose the first variant;

and it is reasonable for my interlocutor to believe that I am a reasonable person and do not label such violations as “fragrant”. Or, that I do not intend to label them such. In this situation, we are both trying to create what can be described as a *theory* for interpreting a language we both can already speak: she tries to illuminate for herself what I say; and I try to alter my theory for interpretation of the language in order to be understood better (Davidson, 1986, 100). Even though I try to learn the “right” meaning, neither of us is specifically instructed by conventions: we have to take into consideration various propositional attitudes of each other, such as beliefs, desires and intentions (each time expressed differently), alongside the context and the whole of the language we judge our utterances against (Davidson, 1982a). We want to be understood and we want to understand, therefore, we have to modify our theories about other speaker’s language accordingly in the course of communication.

The distinction of theories into the *prior* and the *passing* appears to be handy to account for the adjustability of our interpretative “machine”. Prior theory is what speakers know before the communication starts, yet do not share explicitly; while the passing theory is what the speakers share or come to share while adjusting to each other’s ‘languages’ (Davidson, 1986, 101). Passing theory is what success relies upon to a larger extent, for this is what speaker intends her interlocutor to use in order to be understood better: she intends pyk to recognize what meanings she intends to convey (102). In other words, passing theory is what a prior theory morphs into to fit the particular instance of linguistic interaction. By being able to thus adjust, my interlocutor can agree on the use of the word on this particular occasion, and on the intended meaning supplied, in part, by the way parts of sentence(-s) are arranged.

Having the same language translates into being able to converge on passing theories, with varying degrees of precision and success; while linguistic competence is described by the ability to prompt such theories (106). Apparently, meanings of words are not confined to the so-called ‘first meanings’ - literal

meanings intended by the speakers (Davidson, 1986; 1993a). We, thus, have to rely on the ability to discern first meanings (*intended* literal meanings of the utterance), force (say, assertion) and perlocutionary intentions (for example, a desire to make someone feel better) to be able to claim that we know a language (Davidson, 1982a; 1986). Minimalism of such an account is alluring, probably, because not much can be, and has to be said about language and our linguistic competence from this point on. We can get rid of conventions, or claims that something can be shared outside the active discourse. We do not omit the systematic character of relations between first meanings, as well as the shared language. Yet, a theory of how we come to share it should rather stress on particular instances when the exchange takes place, without unnecessary idealizations such as conventions or antecedent regularities. The same goes for the literary language, given varying degrees of “deviance” in the way literary forms are devised.

In complicated cases, our passing theory has to be more elaborate and complex, as is the case with the unknown languages. We simply have to be able to account for more unknowns before we converge with those whose speech is, as of yet, alien to us.

At this stage, we can see that our ability to comprehend each other cannot be explained solely by means of formal-semantic theory of truth - it is more fit for descriptions of the actual ability, not the conditions of it. The theory of meaning (and truth) ‘late Davidson’ had in mind was a theory of a speaker, capable of providing an explanation of a ‘complex ability’, rather than universally applicable conditions for a uniform and conventional language (Davidson, 1990c). Getting rid of representational posits, he managed to provide a simple (and, to an extent, quietist) account of how we can form true beliefs and what justifies them (namely, other beliefs). By getting rid of convention as an abstraction that acts as a foundation for communication, Davidson elucidates our ability to understand each other as, first and foremost, rational agents.

In the concluding chapter I will briefly address the most evident case when Davidson's dynamic and dialogue like conception of language and knowledge is applicable to: literary language.

3.4 INSCRUTABILITY OF THE LITERARY?

Here, I think, we can start approaching what is usually marked under the head of "the literary language". The literary, as we will see a bit later, contains features inherent to the ordinary course of communication. Both cases are very similar, if not identical, at least in terms of conditions to be satisfied in order for both "species" of interpretation to be called successful. Evidently, for Davidson, the literary language does not rely on anything associated with the subjective mind, representation of reality in a scheme or linguistic convention.

In his later works, Davidson often emphasizes the importance of cases when the so-called conventional meaning of words does not supply us with means of interpretation of what we encounter in everyday communication. These complex, ambiguous cases help us illuminate how language and interpersonal communication really work.

What is necessary for interpretation to be possible? The best way to see it is to consult such complicated examples as suggested by our use of malapropisms, metaphors and all sorts of artistic extravagance employed in conception of literary forms. None of them, apparently, relies on references, representations or 'sense data' to be made intelligible to us.

What made his contemporaries feel suspicious about Davidson's theory of metaphorical meaning was that it was not that much different from what we take to be "literal" meaning. In fact, nothing pertaining to the peculiarity of metaphor could be tied to a special breed of meaning called metaphorical meanings. Nothing in metaphor suggests that there is content different from what is supplied by literal meaning. I particularly like Rorty's iteration of Davidson's point,

according to which any effort to provide an antecedent theory for interpreting metaphors is an equally vain enterprise as propositional description of surprise as the one takes place (Rorty, 1991, 166). What we are caused to notice whenever we encounter a metaphor is not something to be stated propositionally, or what can be paraphrased with varying degrees of precision (Davidson, 1978, 263). For some reason we do not paraphrase a joke to illuminate it - its effects are explicated by the sheer occurrence of one. Our language, as exemplified by the case of metaphorical use, is capable of producing effects different from those which are limited to propositions, or factual statements - a truism which, surprisingly, often has to be reiterated. Even though we can theorise about the literary, we cannot provide a recipe for yielding exhaustive accounts of the goings-on on the artistic side of what we try to interpret. What we, on the other hand, have, is the literal or, as he calls it in his later writing, first meaning (Davidson, 1986, 91; 1993a, 173) that we have to consult in order to actually comprehend the intended effects metaphor makers may hope for. On Davidson's account metaphors, at least their contents, rely on nothing more than what speakers of a certain language happen to agree about within the ordinary use of language - literal meanings of words (Davidson, 1978, 259).

Even though his view of the literary language had subsequently changed somewhat (Davidson, 1993a, 173), the trend established in "*What Metaphors Mean?*" sprawled throughout the entirety of his writing about the literary language. This trend, at least on my reading, is exemplified by the apparent similarities between the prerequisites of successful instances of mundane communication and interpretation of the literary language. In short, our everyday linguistic behaviour lays on the same foundation as radical cases of interpretation, with the literary belonging to the latter.

In his later accounts of the literary language, the first (literal) meaning still retains primacy in the order of interpretation of literary language (Davidson, 1993a, 173). As is the case with the ordinary course of communication, the

emphasis on what counts as necessary for interpretation of the literary does not change significantly, if at all: we discern ulterior purposes, intentions as to force (assertions, jokes, commands etc.) and semantic intentions with which certain speech acts are produced (Davidson, 1993a, 171). The idea of triangulation also applies to the literary:

“On the one hand it is clear enough that the elements of the triangle remain; there are the writer, his audience, and a common background. But the distances between the elements have lengthened, the connections have become attenuated and obscure.” (Davidson, 1993a, 177)

This extended (at least, in terms of relative distance) triangle in fact exemplifies the ordinary course the initial triangle evolves into. The way we retain and assess linguistically mediated information remains of essentially the same structure: the regions of the world accessible to perception just become more distant. The conclusion applies with respect to sciences, legal texts, and philosophy itself. In neither of the above mentioned spheres novelty can be accounted for if we place too much stress on the sensory data or ‘antecedent regularities’ that somehow structure concept formation and understanding within the above fields. In this respect, Davidson’s anticonventionalism serves as a supporting pillar for his antirepresentationalism: understanding between speakers obtains in particular instances when their ‘passing theories’ converge, not when they assume they use the same conventions for structuring their phenomenalistic image of the world.

In the end, we have to agree on certain standards of interpretation of the literary language in a similar manner as we do whenever we interpret “ordinary” speech. Even though we may have different interpretations, we do nonetheless agree about truisms, and agreement about such truisms is what the possibility of difference of interpretation rests upon: otherwise, there would be no possibility to interpret, to speak and, consequently, to know. (Davidson, 1993a, 181).

Whoever reads «Finnegan's Wake» will not presuppose the language Joyce used there is conventional. She would rather adjust what she knows about the English language to a particular instance of interpretation. The same, in fact, takes place all the time in mundane instances of communication. “‘Why do I am alook alike a poss of porter pease?’” (Davidson, 1989, 153). This demand will not be made any more lucid neither if we examine what do the words represent, nor their conventional meaning - there is no convention at play here at all. What we can do is to try to find points of convergence about trivia, and then, try to test our passing theories against the literary background we have. We can try to surmise what Joyce *intended* his words to mean, what illocutionary force he intended to produce, and what ulterior purposes he intended to achieve in his writing in general (Joyce, for instance, argued, that his ‘ulterior purpose’ was to ‘refine himself out of existence’ (Davidson, 1989)). As for the ordinary language, we can sketch an axiomatic truth-conditional theory of meaning for this particular text, but first, we should establish something like a triangle, within which to test whatever theories we have about what we read. We understand Joyce's writing because we can see him as a rational speaker, because of our ability to ‘read’ his intentions and adjust to slightly different standards of rationality and not to claim difference in ontology (what would trump understanding).

Mundane instances of communication and knowledge are not much different: instead of the literary tradition we have the outside world, and instead of the community of critics, authors and philosophers - our fellow conversationalists. What we would rather get rid of, is the idea that our capacity to understand each other, and the world, is predicated on the accuracy of our linguistic representations and conventions, for those do not allow for what we tend to call novelty and progress.

CONCLUSION

1. Antirepresentationalism, as a collection of distinct, yet similar in substance philosophical doctrines was a response to the spoils of 'linguistic turn' of the first half of the XXth century. Diverse set of theories, ranging across the work of Richard Rorty, Wilfrid Sellars, W.V.O. Quine and the late Ludwig Wittgenstein have one thing in common: they reject the idea that our minds of theories can, or have to, mirror the world, create exact representations of this world akin from a God's point of view, ignoring the social aspect of knowledge. Donald Davidson is one of the most prominent advocates of antirepresentationalism, drawing heavily from the ideas of the above mentioned philosophers.
2. In this work I attempted to analyze Donald Davidson's criticism of correspondence theories of truth and meaning, the category of reference, scheme-content distinction and conventionalism.

To achieve one of his aims, to create a theory of truth and meaning that parts ways with correspondence, Davidson resorts to formal semantics, more specifically, to Alfred Tarski's theory of truth. He attempted to settle the issue of how we can comprehend a potential infinity of sentences given the means we possess (words and rules) are of finite supply. He borrows Alfred Tarski's formal definition of truth in order to establish meanings: for Davidson, knowing the truth conditions of sentences of a language fixates their meaning. The results such a theory of truth/meaning yields - T-sentences of the form 'snow is white' if and only if snow is white - are testable against the real life uses of language and the totality of evidence available to the interpreter.

What is important, is that no parasitic relation of correspondence is needed to be established to discern the truth-conditions of a sentence. Representation 'goes by the board'.

The category of reference, according to Davidson, appears not to have any *explanatory* value - one cannot explain the contents or truth conditions in the virtue of reference a sentence has. We do not get rid of reference entirely, but we should not pretend that the relation is fundamental and 'scrutable'. Rather, a version of a theory of truth allows to specify what sentence 'refers to' for a particular instance of communication. Reference in this sense is just one among possible many terms that can mark a relation between an expression and an object of such expression. Furthermore, the idea that we relativize reference to a background theory of language seems to be unintelligible, since such relativization nevertheless fails to specify the extension of a predicate 'refers to' even if we limit it to just one theory or language.

Scheme-content distinction is another fallacy of representationalism - the idea conceptual schemes organize 'experience' or contents of senses or what the world consists of. In fact, Davidson claims, there is nothing in our senses, or the world itself, in the virtue of what the conceptual scheme is true of its objects. Concepts as representations of objects do not frame the world around us. Furthermore, this distinction entails relativism - the ontology appears to be relative to a conceptual scheme and such conceptual schemes tend to seem uninterpretable by other conceptual schemes. This is a self-refuting position, for ontology can be settled by agents who use different conceptual schemes.

Another problem indirectly associated with representationalism is conventionalism, namely, the idea that communication and concept formation is governed by antecedent regularities of some sort, i.e. linguistic conventions. Davidson argues strongly against this supposition, given that linguistic conventions do not contain the vast corpus of various abnormal cases of use of language. He resorts to a dialogical and dynamic intersubjective definition of communication, for it helps to avoid

skepticism associated with the idea that representations in mind act as a foundation for knowledge. Knowledge is per-definition intersubjective, but it is also adjustable. Conventionalism does not allow for such adjustability.

3. Literary language can be called a paradigm case for Donald Davidson's antirepresentationalism and anticonventionalism. In his early writing, in particular, in his writing on metaphor (Davidson, 1978) the meaning of metaphor seems to be nothing more than its literary meanings. The effects the metaphors have on us is a different story, but the 'semantic identity' of a metaphorical use of language is the same as of any other instance of mundane discourse. The conclusion had been somewhat altered in subsequent writing (Davidson, 1989;1993a), but the idea that literary language was not that much different from the so-called everyday language persisted. The only difference, the literary forms more distinctly demonstrate that representationalist and conventionalist conceptions of language do not hold: literary forms are per definition deviant, and do not have external objects that somehow make them true.
4. Donald Davidson's antirepresentationalism can be understood better if we take a look at his epistemological project. The alternative he proposes suggests that what used to be labelled under the head of 'epistemic' or 'epistemological' has nothing to do with the subjective cognitive capacity. Knowledge for Davidson is essentially public.

Drawing inspiration from Wittgenstein, his later accounts of concept acquisition draw extensively on the idea of triangulation: the notion that our relation with the world can be conceptualized if there is at least one interlocutor with whom we can converse, i.e. settle on truth or falsity of our beliefs about the world (Davidson, 1991). Importantly, no perceptual or phenomenalist intermediaries are required to characterize how we can have knowledge of the world, of our own and other people's minds. The interpretation of speech and, accordingly, other person's thought is

possible so far we use linguistic tools to make our beliefs public. In fact, we really cannot have the knowledge of our own mind without being able to formulate our beliefs linguistically.

Besides, the task of interpreting language asks for creation of a theory of a speaker, with assumed holism about the propositional attitudes (beliefs, desires, intentions etc.). Without a proper account of beliefs or desires of a speaker we cannot properly comprehend what exactly and to what extent is held true. In such a case, we cannot adjust our ‘interpretative machine’, converge on passing theories (Davidson, 1986) with her.

Besides, epistemic or perceptual intermediaries, or occurrences in the reality, do not act as either a foundation or justification for our true beliefs: only the network of our true sententially formulated beliefs can uphold the truth or point out at the falsity of some of them.

To conclude, Davidson’s own epistemological stance presupposes 1) interpretivism with respect to the mental (contents of our own and others’ minds are known insofar as they are accessible through language); 2) social aspect of language and thought and 3) ‘loose’ coherentism, as opposed to correspondence, with respect to beliefs.

5. It is hard to underestimate Donald Davidson’s legacy. Even though some of his ideas were not universally accepted at the time, the antirepresentationalist notions of his philosophy, following in the footsteps of Quine, Sellars, Wittgenstein and Rorty, have their repercussions felt in analytic tradition nowadays. Analytic tradition has almost entirely got rid of correspondence theories of truth and meaning, truth-conditional semantics had become a legitimate field in linguistics, ‘naturalistic fallacy’ of early neurosciences did not get hold on philosophical discourse and, according to Bjorn Ramberg (1989), Davidson’s philosophy assisted in bridging the gap between the analytic and continental traditions.

Apparently, Davidson is not the only philosopher of the second half of the XXth century whose antirepresentationalist stance is to be considered exemplary. Yet, it is impossible to disregard his contribution to the dismantlement of one of the greatest philosophical fallacies of the XXth century - representationalism.

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