

Handout #5

Metaphysics and Epistemology

Impossibility of Radically Different Conceptual Schemes

The dominant metaphor of conceptual relativism, that of differing points of view, seems to betray an underlying paradox. Different points of view make sense, but only if there is a common co-ordinate system on which to plot them; yet the existence of a common system belies the claim of dramatic incomparability. "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1974)

Two Relativities

1. The relativity of truth (or reality) to a conceptual scheme: what is true or so relative to one scheme is not true or so relative to another.
2. The possibility of a plurality of fundamentally different conceptual schemes: there can be schemes which share no concepts in common (or no significant concepts?).

If 2 is false, then 1 is empty. If 1 is false, then 2 is still open.

What is a Conceptual Scheme?

A conceptual scheme is a set of concepts the totality of which is sufficient for it to be the set of concepts of some possible thinker. Davidson, however, identifies conceptual schemes with sets of inter-translatable languages. This depends on two assumptions: only speakers have thoughts and any concept a speaker possesses, and any thought he could think, is expressible in his language. Distinct schemes then are represented by partially non-intertranslatable languages; radically different schemes by non-intertranslatable languages.

The Incoherence of the Relativity of Truth to a Scheme

Relativism of truth to scheme is interesting only if it involves sentences that are alike in meaning. Suppose we identify different schemes with different languages.

1. S means that p in L1 iff S means that p in L2
2. If S means that p in L, then S is true in L iff p
3. S is true in L1 iff S is true in L2.

Two Criteria for Intelligibility

- 1) A condition sufficient for the required state of affairs to obtain and which makes sense in detail of its obtaining. (The Individuation Criterion.)

- 2) A way of telling that certain behavior is speech behavior and not translatable into our own language. (The Identification Criterion.)

The Course of the Argument

The short line:

It is tempting to take a very short line indeed: nothing, it may be said, could count as evidence that some form of activity could not be interpreted in our language that was not at the same time evidence that that form of activity was not speech behavior. If this were right, we probably ought to hold that a form of activity that cannot be interpreted as language in our language is not speech behavior. Putting matters this way is unsatisfactory, however, for it comes to little more than making translatability into a familiar tongue a criterion of languagehood. As fiat, the thesis lacks the appeal of self-evidence; if it is a truth, as I think it is, it should emerge as the conclusion of an argument. (OVICS, pp. 185-6)

Argument from rejection of analyticity to a plurality of conceptual schemes

1. If there is no analytic/synthetic distinction, all sentences are synthetic.
2. If all sentences are synthetic, then there is no meaning held constant through variation in theory.
3. If there is no meaning held constant through variation in theory, theory change entail meaning change.
4. Radical theory change entails radical meaning change.
5. Radical theory change is possible.
6. Radically different conceptual schemes are possible.

But this provides no *criterion* for intelligibility. Still we retain the idea of the content of a theory and the experience that it helps to organize or explain. This suggests two metaphors for making sense of differing conceptual schemes: (a) Different schemes organize differently the same world; (b) Different schemes account different for the same evidence.

- (a) One this view what makes for a difference in conceptual schemes is a different set of categories under which a common subject matter is organized. But as it requires a common subject matter, the non-overlap must be only partial, and there would seem to be the resource in either scheme to talk about the other's classifications.
- (b) There is here a shift from thinking of a scheme as a language to thinking of it as a true theory. Two assumptions required: (1) Sensory evidence is to be understood as "the totality of possible sensory evidence past, present, and future" (p. 193); (2) "for a theory to fit or face up to the totality of possible sensory evidence is for that theory to be true" (p. 193).

The question whether this is a useful criterion is just the question how well we understand the notion of truth as applied to language, independent of the notion of translation." (p. 194)

But (the claim is) we do not, for our best understanding of truth is given by Convention T, and for another's theory to be true, there must be a truth theory for its sentences which entails T-sentences in which the sentence used on the right translates that mentioned on the left.

To tell that another's theory is correct, we need T-sentences for his theory: but then we are in a position to translate his sentences.

Remarks: (i) Both arguments require the Identification Criterion. (ii) The view that the concepts of the theory of interpretation are, in the sense we earlier considered, purely theoretical can be seen as a motivation for the requirement: for it requires us to say how to apply the concepts on the basis of behavior evidence in a way that does not require translatability into our language, as behavior is all that is relevant to their application.

Evaluation: Why say true theories are conceptual schemes? Different theories can be stated in the same language. Even if we accept meaning change with theory change, surely there can be false theories? (If we accept Davidson's view that belief is by its nature veridical, then we can reject this idea.) We can think of different sets of concepts, though, as enabling different classes of theories about experience, and shift attention to the question whether they are truth-evaluable.

Is there an internal contradiction? Davidson himself holds we can identify hold true attitudes independently of interpreting the sentences held true. If so, then translation is not required for identification of a language; if not, then Davidson's description of RI is undermined. Response: require the initial identification of hold true attitudes to be backed up by a working theory.

The argument from common evidence. Though Davidson does not make the point, one might urge that just as the metaphor of organizing differently one world seems to presuppose a common language for what is organized, so the idea of explaining different the same evidence presupposes a common language for its description. In both cases we might invoke the idea that it is really different bits of the world that are organized or explained, though now the idea shifts. In any case, the Identification Criterion would still require we be able to tell.

Conclusion: The success of the arguments depends on accepting the identification criterion. It is not obvious that to make sense of something we must be able to describe a procedure that would enable us to tell that it was so. The requirement would be buttressed by the assumption that the concepts of the theory of interpretation are purely theoretical concepts. We've seen some reason to think this is not so; and we will return later to consider arguments for the claim.

The Impossibility of Massive Error and Externalism

Ironically perhaps, my starting point is the same as Descartes': what I know for certain is that thought exists, and I then ask what follows. Here, however, the similarity with Descartes ends. "The Problem of Objectivity" (1995)

Two Arguments

- 1) The Omniscient Interpreter Argument
 - Invokes Charity interpreted as Agreement
- 2) The Argument from Interpretation
 - Invokes Charity interpreted as Grace

The Omniscient Interpreter Argument

- 1) Necessarily, to interpret another correctly requires finding him largely in agreement with oneself.
- 2) It is possible that one be interpreted correctly (other things being equal) by an omniscient interpreter.
- 3) Therefore, one must have largely true beliefs, i.e., one cannot be in massive error about the world.

Remarks: Limitations on omniscience: doesn't extend to thoughts and meanings because they have to be constructed from the evidence. The agreement has to be not just in general but in particular beliefs, i.e., charity in application to (L) sentences has to be invoked. Does it make sense to say, from Davidson's point of view, there could be an omniscient interpreter?

Two Objections.

1) For premise 2 to be true, do we not have to assume that the world is such that there would be evidence available to an omniscient interpreter that would support interpretation? If so, would we not have to already have established that we know something about the external world?

#2) If the possibility of an omniscient interpreter must be invoked, then it is in order to rule out that when we interpret another we agree on mostly false beliefs. But is it not prima facie at least as intelligible as an omniscient interpreter that there be one that is largely wrong about things in the world?

The Argument from Interpretation

- 1) To be a speaker is to be interpretable by other speakers.
- 2) To be interpretable by other speakers, one must be largely right, not only in one's general beliefs, but in one's beliefs about one's environment.
- 3) Therefore, to be a speaker is to be largely right, not only in one's general beliefs, but in one's beliefs about one's environment.

What is the relation to coherence theories of truth and knowledge?

What we get is a transcendental guarantee (in the sense of its being a condition on the possibility of thought) that most of our beliefs about our environments are true. If this is true, then our beliefs cohere with one another. But this is not to say that their coherence is what makes for their truth. Coherence with other beliefs though becomes an indicator of likelihood of truth, given the transcendental guarantee that most of our beliefs are true. But this is not to say that what makes for justification is coherence per

se. So there is no sense in which Davidson endorses a traditional coherence theory of truth or of knowledge.

Evaluation: There is an ambiguity in premise one.

- 1) For any speaker s , and any environment e , and any possible speaker s' , s is (or would be) interpretable by s' in e .
- 2) For any speaker s , and any environment e , it is possible for there to be a speaker s' , such that s is (or would be) interpretable by s' in e .
- 3) For any speaker s , it is possible for there to be a speaker s' , and an environment e , such that s is (or would be) interpretable by s' in e .

Can the strong interpretation be supported?

Language is a device or institution whose purpose is to enable intersubjective communication. Hence, to possess a language is to be outfitted so as to be interpreted. Yes, but we do not expect a tool designed for certain users under certain conditions to be work no matter what the conditions or who the users are. We do not expect a sledgehammer to be usable by children and we do not expect a plumb line to work in outer space. This shows additionally that the public nature of meaning is not adequate to support the view that semantic concepts and concepts of the attitudes are in the relevant sense purely theoretical.

First Person Authority

It is long out of fashion to explain self-knowledge on the basis of introspection. And it is easy to see why, since this explanation only leads to the question why we should see any better when we inspect our own minds than when we inspect the minds of others. "First Person Authority" (1984)

The Challenge:

- 1) How is an externalist theory of thought content compatible with the non-inferential knowledge we seem to have of at least many of our thoughts?
- 2) How is Davidson's adoption of the third person standpoint as fundamental in investigating thought and language compatible with our authoritative position with respect to what we think and mean?

Terminology

An ascription is a thought whose content would be pressed would be expressed with a subject predicate sentences. A self-ascription is a thought about the thinker. A reflexive self-ascription is a thought one would attribute to oneself with a sentence of form [1] or which would be attributed to you with a sentence of form [2], as illustrated in [3] and [4] respectively.

[1] I believe I F

[2] x believes that he (or she or it) Fs

[3] I believe I was born in Tulsa

[4] Ludwig believes that he was born in Tulsa

Observations

First person knowledge or authority extends only to reflexive ascriptions of mental states – call these first person ascriptions. Central to our special knowledge and warrant about our mental states is our special warrant or knowledge with respect to our conscious mental states. That we have first person knowledge of our own conscious mental states explains both our special warrant about them and our knowledge and special warrant about our dispositional mental states.

Four Explananda

[E1] Necessarily, no one is in as good an epistemic position to ascribe conscious or occurrent mental states to a thinker as the thinker is himself.

[E2] Necessarily, no one is in general in as good a position to ascribe dispositional mental states to a thinker than the thinker is himself.

[E3] Necessarily, no one is in general in as good a position to ascribe mental states to a thinker as the thinker is himself.

[E4] Necessarily, a speaker's sincere first person reports about his mental states have more evidential weight than reports about the speaker's mental states by others.

Davidson aims to explain the first/third person asymmetry in knowledge of mental states by explaining in the first instance a version of [E4]: "[w]hen a speaker avers that he has a belief, hope, desire, or intention, there is a presumption that he is not mistaken ... that does not attach to his ascriptions of similar mental states to others" (FPA (1984), p. 3)

Conditions on a successful explanation:

[C1] The explanans must entail the explanandum.

[C2] The explanans must not contain explicitly a statement of the asymmetry to be explained, or any asymmetry which stands in need of an explanation at least as much as the original asymmetry.

[C3] The explanans must be conceptually prior to the explanandum.

Davidson's explanandum and auxiliary assumptions:

Davidson's explanandum officially is the special authority that attaches to our reports of our beliefs. He therefore needs three assumptions to explain [E3].

- 1) If we explain the difference in the warrant we each have that one of us is right when that one states what he believes, then we will have explained the difference in warrant between first person ascriptions of beliefs and other ascriptions of beliefs.
- 2) If we have explained the difference in warrant between first person ascriptions of beliefs and other ascriptions of beliefs, we will be in a position to explain the difference in warrant between first person ascriptions of propositional attitudes and other ascriptions of propositional attitudes.
- 3) If we are in a position to explain the difference in warrant between first person and other ascriptions of propositional attitudes, we will be in a position to explain the difference in warrant between first person and other ascriptions of sensations and other non-propositional mental states.

The Master Argument

- 1) A knows that B holds true s.
- 2) B knows that he holds true s.
- 3) There is a presumption that B knows what he means by s, while there is no presumption that A knows what B means by s.
- 4) For all x, if x holds true s, and x knows the meaning of s, then x believes what s expresses.
- 5) For all x, for all y, if x knows that y holds true s, and knows what y means by s, and x knows (4), then x knows or is in a position to know what y believes in holding true s, i.e., to know that y believes that p, where 'p' is replaced by s.
- 6) A and B both know (4).
- 7) Therefore, by (1)-(6), there is a presumption that B knows or is in a position to know what he believes in holding true s, while there is no presumption that A does.

Generalizing

- 1) For all x, if x believes that p, then there is a sentence r which expresses what x believes, and which x holds true.
- 8) For all sentences s, if B holds true s, then B knows that he holds true s.
- 9) For all sentences s, if B holds true s, then there is a presumption that B knows what s means, while there is no presumption that A knows what B means by s.
- 10) For all sentences s, if B holds true s, then there is a presumption that B knows what he believes in holding true s, while there is no presumption that A does ((4)-(6), (9), (10)).
- 11) Therefore, for any belief of B's, there is a presumption that B knows what he believes, while there is no presumption that A knows what B believes ((8) and (11)).
- 12) Therefore, B's sincere reports of his self-ascriptions of beliefs should be accorded special evidential weight in attributions of beliefs to him (12).

Initial suggestion:

A hearer interprets (normally without thought or pause) on the basis of many clues: the actions and other words of the speaker, what he assumes about the education, birthplace, wit, and profession of the speaker, the relation of the speaker to objects near and far, and so forth. The speaker, though he must bear many of these things in mind when he speaks, since it is up to him to try to be understood, cannot wonder whether he generally means what he says. ...

[Thus, t]he asymmetry rests on the fact that the interpreter must, while the speaker doesn't, rely on what, if it were made explicit, would be a difficult inference in interpreting the speaker. (FPA (1984), pp. 12-3)

But: As Davidson himself remarks in an earlier passage, "claims that are not based on evidence do not in general carry more authority than claims that are based on evidence, nor are they more apt to be correct" (FPA (1984), p. 5). The asymmetry in what we go on does not show that there is an asymmetry in warrant or that it goes in the right direction.

Two arguments for premise 10.

- 1) The argument from disquotation.
 - I can always state my meanings correctly by saying 'snow is white' as I use it means snow is white; but you can't.
- 2) The argument from consistent application.
 - To be interpretable, I must use words consistently, which amounts to displaying competence in their use, and hence knowledge of what they mean.

Textual support for the first (I) and second (II)

- (I) The speaker, after bending whatever knowledge and craft he can to the task of saying what his words mean, cannot improve on the following sort of statement: 'My utterance of "Wagner died happy" is true if and only if Wagner died happy'. An interpreter has no reason to assume this will be his best way of stating the truth conditions of the speaker's utterance. (FPA (1984), p. 13)
- (II) [Imagine] a situation in which two people who speak unrelated languages, and are ignorant of each other's languages, are left alone to learn to communicate Let one of the imagined pair speak and the other try to understand. ... The best the speaker can do is to be interpretable, that is, to use a finite supply of distinguishable sounds applied consistently to objects and situations he believes are apparent to his hearer [I]t is ... obvious that the interpreter has nothing to go on but the pattern of sounds the speaker exhibits in conjunction with further events (including, of course, further actions on the part of both speaker and interpreter). It makes no sense in this situation to wonder whether the speaker is generally getting things wrong. His behavior may simply not be interpretable. But if it is, then what his words mean is (generally) what he intends them to mean There is a presumption—an unavoidable presumption built into the nature of interpretation—that the speaker usually knows what he means. So there is a presumption that if he knows that he holds a sentence true, he knows what he believes. (FPA (1984), p. 13-4)

The argument from Disquotation

- 1) A speaker can always correctly state the truth conditions of his sentences by using on the right hand side of the biconditional which he uses to state its truth conditions the sentence which he names on its left hand side.
- 2) An interpreter of the speaker cannot be sure that disquotation in the interpreter's language will yield a correct statement of the truth conditions of the speaker's utterance.
- 3) Therefore, a speaker is always in a position to correctly state the truth conditions of his sentences, while the interpreter is not.
- 4) Therefore, there is a presumption that a speaker knows the meanings of his words, while there is no such presumption that his interpreter does.

The argument from consistent application

- 1) A speaker is interpretable only if he can apply words consistently to objects and events in his environment with the intention of stating what he believes about them.
- 2) If a speaker can apply words consistently to objects and events in his environment with the intention of stating what he believes about them, then he knows the meanings of his words.
- 3) Therefore, if a speaker is interpretable, the speaker knows the meanings of his words.

- 4) It is an assumption of the project of interpretation, then, that the subject of interpretation knows the meanings of his words; no such assumption must be made about anyone else's knowledge of the speaker's words.

Evaluation: Master Argument

Davidson's official explanandum is the following:

There is a "difference in the sort of assurance you have that I am right when I say 'I believe Wagner died happy' and the sort of assurance I have."

This is not sufficient to establish first person authority because it is compatible with my not knowing what I mean. On the other hand, showing I know what I mean does not suffice to show this. But both are required to explain first person authority.

Asymmetry in knowledge of meaning is not enough.

Imagine shared mastery of a common language (twins raised together). There is still an asymmetry between the knowledge each has of his own thoughts and the knowledge the other has. Because (to put it in Davidson's terms) there is an asymmetry in their knowledge of what sentences they hold true. So the asymmetry explained (if it is explained) explains what we want explained only if we assume another asymmetry as much in need of explanation. So we violate either [C1] or [C2].

A Second Problem

The Master Argument assumes that knowledge of our thoughts rests on an inference between knowledge of meaning and knowledge of sentences held true. But it is clear that this is not so. In fact it is the other way around: we know what we believe and what we mean, and we may therefore come to hold that the sentence that we know to express what we believe is true, and this is what Davidson assumes in the account of RI. Moreover, if knowledge of what we believe relied on such an inference, we could not know what we believed, since we'd have to know what sentences we believed to be true by the same method.

On to argument (I).

That I can state what my words mean using them would explain the asymmetry in knowledge of the meanings only if

- (I) it were not possible for the interpreter also to use the speaker's language to state the truth conditions of the speaker's sentences, and
- (II) the speaker's stating the truth conditions of sentences in his language were sufficient for him to know the meanings of them in his language.

Neither of these is so.

A (in L): s is true in my idiolect [i.e. L] iff p

B (in L'): s is true in A's idiolect [i.e., L] iff p

B (in L): s is true in A's idiolect iff p.

(3) is possible, hence (i) is not met; and since (3) is possible but not sufficient for B to know the meaning of s, (ii) is not met either. If you insist one can state truth conditions only with understanding, you presuppose what you wanted to explain.

Final point about the Master Argument: One cannot in general state adequate truth conditions for natural language sentences using disquotation. 'I am hungry' is true iff I am hungry
'Anyone can do it' as spoken by me now is true iff anyone can do it.

On to argument (II)

A shorter argument:

- 1) One speaks a language only if one is interpretable.
- 2) One is interpretable only if one is mostly right about the meanings of one's words.
- 3) Therefore, one speaks a language only if one is mostly right about the meanings of one's words.

But this is not an explanation: one is interpretable or has a language because one knows the meanings of one's words, not the other way around. The proposed explanation violates constraint [C3]. Furthermore, the assumption that the speaker is using his words with the intention of being interpretable and using them consistently presupposes already that he knows what he thinks, because this is the basis of what he says. In addition, the argument gives no place to our special epistemic position with respect to our own conscious mental states and the role that this plays in first person knowledge. And finally it gives us no purchase on how we know mental states that are not propositional attitudes, and yet it looks as if whatever explanation we give in the one case we should give in the other.

An alternative argument for first person knowledge designed to defend externalism about thought content.

An interpreter must discover, or correctly assume on the basis of indirect evidence, what the external factors are that determine the content of another's thought; but since these factors determine both the contents of one's thought and the contents of the thought one believes one has (these being one and the same thought), there is no room for error about the contents of one's own thoughts of the sort that can arise with respect to the thoughts of others. (EE (1991), pp. 197-98)

What's the Argument?

- 1) Another can make a mistake about what the content of your belief is by misreading the evidence.
- 2) When you have a belief about your belief that p, you cannot make a similar mistake, because the content of the second order thought is given by the first order thought, and its content is fixed by the facts that genuinely determine its content.
- 3) Therefore, one is in a better position with respect to one's thoughts than others.

Problems

The fact appealed to has nothing to do with externalism or the view that the concepts of interpretation theory are purely theoretical. So this doesn't explain first person knowledge from a third person standpoint. The doesn't explain why we generally get what we believe right, for the immunity to error is

guaranteed only if we form a belief about a belief we have. But it does not offer any explanation for why we do in fact come to correctly form beliefs about what beliefs we have. The argument assumes furthermore that to form a belief *about* a belief that p that one has is to believe that one believes that p . But this isn't correct. One may believe of a belief one has that its content is q when its content is p . Of course, we cannot make sense of massive error about our beliefs, but that still stands in need of explanation.

The Challenge Again

- 1) The justification for believing that something falls under a theoretical concept must be inferential.
- 2) We have non-inferential knowledge of the contents of our psychological states and of the meanings of sentences in our language.
- 3) Therefore, (these) psychological and linguistic concepts are not theoretical concepts.

If there is no explanation of first person knowledge of our mental states from the third person point of view, then we must admit a second fundamental perspective on those states. This then opens up a potential gap between the R 's evidence and what he is trying to establish, and it undercuts the assumption that the concepts of interpretation theory are purely theoretical concepts whose sole purpose is to sort behavior into intelligible patterns.

Fundamentally, the trouble is this: the fact that we must assume that someone knows the meanings of his words in order to interpret him no more explains why he knows the meanings of his words than the fact that we have to assume that he is rational to interpret him explains why he is rational. It is rather that these are features that are constitutive of agents.

Inscrutability of Reference

What no one can, in the nature of the case, figure out from the totality of the relevant evidence cannot be part of meaning.

... there is no way to tell what the singular terms of a language refer to, or what its predicates are true of, at least no way to tell from the totality of behavioural evidence, actual and potential, and such evidence is all that matters to questions of meaning and communication.

“The Inscrutability of Reference” (1979)

The idea restated:

Everyday linguistic and semantic concepts are part of an intuitive theory for organizing more primitive data, so only confusion can result from treating these concepts and their supposed objects as if they had a life of their own. “Belief and the Basis of Meaning” (1974)

There are some concepts whose role is exhausted in inducing a certain organization on some other concepts. The role of these special concepts is to bring to the surface of language a potential for structure already present in those other concepts. To give an implicit definition of such a concept is to state axioms which tie it together with the concepts it organizes, and which make explicit all such ties.

With axioms in hand we can say: any concept of X conforms to all of these requirements; and any concept which conforms to all these requirements is a concept of X. "Only in the Context of a Sentence Do Words Have Any Meaning," John Wallace (1977)

The difference between indeterminacy and inscrutability:

Indeterminacy: when all the evidence is in, there are intuitively incompatible interpretation theories which capture the facts equally well, and there is no fact of the matter which is correct.

Inscrutability: there are different reference schemes for any speaker's language which assign the same true values to object language sentences and which are therefore equally correct. A reference scheme for a language is given by the non-recursive satisfaction and reference axioms of a truth theory for the language.

Terminology

A truth theory T employs a reference scheme R iff R gives the non-recursive semantic axioms of T ; we abbreviate this as ' T employs R '. Let ' $T(s)$ ' represent the canonical theorem for T for a sentence s . Let ' T ' and ' T' ' range over Tarski-style truth theories, and ' R ' and ' R' ' range over reference schemes. We use ' true-T ' and ' $\text{true-T}'$ ' to translate the truth predicates characterized by T and T' , respectively.

For any R, R' , and any T, T' , such that T employs R , and T' is obtained from T by replacing R by R' , for any $T(s), T'(s)$, R and R' are equivalent iff $T(s)$ is true-T iff $T'(s)$ is $\text{true-T}'$.

For any R, R' , R is non-identical with R' iff R and R' do not assign the same referents to singular terms or do not assign the same extensions to predicates.

The argument for inscrutability of reference.

- 1) For any T, R , and speaker S , if T is an interpretive truth theory for S which employs R , then there is a truth theory T' for S which is like T except for employing a reference scheme R' equivalent to but non-identical with R .
- 2) For any R, R' such that R is equivalent to R' , for any T, T' , such that T employs R and T' is like T except for employing R' , if either T or T' is interpretive, both are.
- 3) For any speaker, there is at least one interpretive truth theory.
- 4) Every interpretive truth theory employs a reference scheme.
- 5) Therefore, for any speaker S , there are at least two correct reference schemes for S 's language which assign different referents to his singular terms and different extensions to his predicates, i.e., reference is inscrutable.

Premise 2 is the crucial one, but we will take 1 and 2 in turn.

A permutation non-identity function that is a one-to-one mapping of objects in the universe onto themselves: every object is mapped on to just one object and every object has something mapped onto it, but it is not the case that every object is mapped to itself.

How to construct different equivalent reference schemes:

[1] For all a, x , if $\text{Ref-R}(a) = x$, then $\text{Ref-R}'(a) = \text{Perm}(x)$.

[2] For all $P, f, x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, if $\text{sat-R}(P, f) \text{ iff } F(f(x_1), f(x_2), \dots, f(x_n))$, then $[\text{sat-R}'(P, f) \text{ iff } F'(f(x_1), f(x_2), \dots, f(x_n))]$.
[3] For all $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, F(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \text{ iff } F'(\text{Perm}(x_1), \text{Perm}(x_2), \dots, \text{Perm}(x_n))$.

$\text{Perm} = \{ \langle A, B \rangle, \langle B, C \rangle, \langle C, A \rangle, \langle D, E \rangle, \langle E, F \rangle, \langle F, D \rangle \}$
 $\text{Ext}(F) = \{A, B\}, \text{Ext}(G) = \{C, E, F\}, \text{Ext}(H) = \{D, B, E\}$
 $\text{Ext}(F') = \{B, C\}, \text{Ext}(G') = \{A, F, D\}, \text{Ext}(H') = \{E, C, F\}$

Context Sensitivity

Relativize the permutation function to time: $\text{Perm}(x, t)$.

For any x, t , x is snow at t iff $\text{Perm}(x, t)$ is snow' at t .
For all x, s, t , if $\text{dem}(x, s, t, \text{'that'})$ then $\text{ref}(\text{'that'}, s, t) = x$.
For all x, s, t , if $\text{dem}(x, s, t, \text{'that'}) = x$ then $\text{ref}'(\text{'that'}, s, t) = \text{Perm}(x, t)$.
For all s, t , 'That is snow' is true iff $\text{ref}(\text{'that'}, s, t)$ is snow.
For all s, t , 'That is snow' is true iff $\text{ref}'(\text{'that'}, s, t)$ is snow'.
For all s, t , $\text{ref}(\text{'I'}, s, t) = s$.
For all s, t , $\text{ref}'(\text{'I'}, s, t) = \text{Perm}(s, t)$.
For all s, t , 'I am tired' is true iff s is tired.
For all s, t , 'I am tired' is true iff $\text{Perm}(s, t)$ is tired'.

Premise 2

First, equivalent reference schemes are not guaranteed to preserve more than truth value, and so they guarantee only truth theories that are true; but Davidson conceded that a theory's being true is not enough for interpretation. If we require that the generated reference scheme generate theorems that are laws, then it becomes much less clear that the trick can be executed. This would, in any case, as we have noted before, still fall short of interpretiveness. Furthermore, in the case of context sensitive referring terms, the reference clause gives the referent in terms of what the speaker demonstrates; but the generated scheme would have the referent be something other than what the speaker demonstrates, which is absurd. In addition, a permutation can take the demonstrative to an object that the speaker has no perceptual or causal contact with, and that is not compatible with making the speaker right and sensible so far as we can do so.

Rejoinder: for demonstrates we should not say the demonstrative refers to the image of the demonstrated object on the mapping but that the speaker demonstrates the image of the demonstrated object on the first scheme.

Reply: 'demonstrates' is a term of the metalanguage, not of the object language. A new reference scheme does not generate a new assignment of demonstrata to the agents acts of demonstrations. Demonstration is not relative to a reference scheme but is input to determining referents on a scheme.

Reply: Okay, but what is really wanted is not demonstration but demonstration* understood as follows.

- 1) For any x, s, t , x is demonstrated* by s at t iff $x = \text{Perm}(\text{the object demonstrated by } S \text{ at } t)$.
- 2) $\text{ref}'(\text{'that'}, s, t) = \text{the object demonstrated* by } s \text{ at } t$.

Rejoinder: This is fatuous as a response to the original problem because it presupposes that there is something that the speaker demonstrates other than what is assigned as the referent on the generated scheme. It just attempts to bury it in the fine print.

Problems for First Person Authority

As we must systematically shift the extensions of predicates, the same goes for all singular terms including the first person pronoun. Then an acceptable interpretation of 'I am hungry' may turn out to involve something other than me falling in the extension of a non-psychological predicate. This is (a) absurd, (b) would not make sense us as rational agents, and (c) would make mysterious how I could be in a position of special authority with respect to what is said by such sentences. Yet rationality and first person authority are supposed to be constitutive of the interpreter's subject matter.

Back to confirmability

Confirmability from the standpoint of a radical interpreter was supposed to help solve the problem of the merely extensionally correct truth theory. It does so presumably by implicitly imposing various constraints in the process that rules out many theories and which leaves only theories whose theorems have the status of laws. But none of these features will attach to theories generated from those confirmed in this way by the use of a permutation function. From standpoint of Davidson's own theory, it is a mistake to say any such theory could be used to interpret a speaker.

And the earlier lessons still apply: We concluded in the discussion of indeterminacy that the interpreter cannot treat different conditions in the world as providing equivalent interpretations. They can be equally good only if the object language draws fewer distinctions than the metalanguage. But this requires an asymmetry between the interpreter's language and every other, including his own, which is impossible.

Relativity to a language

Davidson's picture is this: a reference scheme is not relative to anything but a language. What is empirically open is what language within a range of languages someone speaks. Thus, there is no relativity of ontology or of reference to anything beyond the ordinary.

But we have to be able to understand what choice we are making, and this requires us draw distinctions Davidson says can't be drawn. Connected with this: it is no help with the interpreter's dilemma. To make sense of there being no fact of the matter he has to take his own language to be essentially richer than any language that can be interpreted.

Conclusion

Inscrutability of reference does not make sense. Inscrutability of reference does not make in Davidson's own terms. There is no new argument here that avoids the earlier objections to indeterminacy. Granting that reference and satisfaction are understood only in relation to truth conditions, inscrutability does not follow because it is interpretative truth conditions we are interested in.