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## *Three Trivial Truth Theories\**

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According to Tarski, a theory of truth for a language L is a theory which logically implies for each sentence S of L a sentence of the form:

S is true-in-L if and only if  $p$ ,

where 'S' is replaced by a canonical description of a sentence of L and ' $p$ ' is replaced by that sentence if L is contained in the metalanguage or by a translation of S if it is not so contained.<sup>1</sup> Tarski constructed consistent and finitely axiomatized theories of truth for various formal

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\* An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Western American Philosophical Association meetings in Milwaukee, April, 1981. We would like to thank Donald Davidson, Michael Root, and the editors of the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* for their comments on that draft.

1 A. Tarski, 'The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages,' in his *Logic, Semantics, and Metamathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1956), 152-278

languages and showed how to explicitly define 'is true in L' within these theories. We all agree that Tarski's theories of truth have enormous philosophical significance, but there is much less agreement on precisely what that significance consists in.<sup>2</sup>

The most eloquent and insistent champion of the philosophical importance of theories of truth is certainly Donald Davidson.<sup>3</sup> He has argued that truth theories are important because they can be employed as the core of a theory of interpretation of speakers of a language L; that is, anyone who knew the theory would be capable of specifying, for any indicative sentence in L, the content, or to speak more intuitively, the significance, it would be taken to have by anyone who understands L (RI: 313). He has also claimed that finitely axiomatized truth theories for natural language L will, as a matter of course, exhibit the recursive structure of L, and thereby, both show how the meanings of complex expressions are composed of the meanings of their constituents and provide an account of the logical form of the sentences of L.<sup>4</sup> These claims, if true, would certainly establish the importance of truth theories. Here we want to examine a doubt about these claims which has been voiced by Belnap, Kripke, and Harman, among others.<sup>5</sup> It is that constructing

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2 In work aimed mainly at philosophers, Tarski relates classical philosophical issues to his work in semantics. Cf. A. Tarski, 'The Semantic Conception of Truth,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 4 (1944) 341-75. Cf. also his 'Truth and Proof,' *Scientific American*, 220 (1969) 63-77.

3 Davidson has presented his views on these subjects in many places, e.g., 'In Defense of Convention T,' in H. Leblanc, ed., *Truth, Syntax and Modality* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co. 1973) 76-86 (henceforth referred to as IDCT); 'Belief and the Basis of Meaning,' *Synthese* 27 (1974) 309-23 (henceforth referred to as BBM); 'Radical Interpretation,' *Dialectica* 27 (1973) 314-28 (henceforth referred to as RI); 'Reality Without Reference,' *Dialectica*, 31 (1977) 247-58 (henceforth referred to as RWR); 'Reply to Foster,' in G. Evans and J. McDowell, eds., *Truth and Meaning: Essays in Semantics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976), 33-41.

4 Davidson has made some rather strong claims on this point: 'theories of absolute truth necessarily provide an analysis of structure relevant to truth and inference. Such theories yield a non-trivial answer to the question 'what is to count as the logical form of a sentence,' (IDCT); cf. also (BBM: 319; RI: 314). In 'Truth and Inference,' *Erkenntnis*, 18 (1982) 379-95, LePore argues that Davidson offers no good reasons for his claims about the relationship between a truth theory and a theory of logical form for a language. LePore attempts to provide one by realizing a connection in Davidson's views between truth and inference.

5 N.D. Belnap, Jr. and D.L. Grover, 'Quantifying In and Out of Quotes,' in H. Leblanc, ed., *Truth, Syntax and Modality* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co. 1973), 17-47; S. Kripke, 'Is There a Problem About Substitutional Quantifica-

truth theories is all too easy and so they cannot have the philosophical importance Davidson claims for them. These easy to construct truth theories appear to shed no light on recursive structure or on meaning. They are:

- I.  $(p)$  ( $p'$  is true in L if and only if  $p$ )
- II.  $(\Pi p)$  ( $p'$  is true in L if and only if  $p$ )
- III. The theory whose axioms are the instances of:  
 $p'$  is true in L if and only if  $p$

In (I) the quantifier is objectual, while in (II) it is substitutional. Assuming that sense can be made of these theories, they are trivial in that they hold for any language L irrespective of its structure. It is quite clear that none of these theories says anything about the logical structure of L and it is not easy to see how they can make any contribution to a theory of interpretation for L.

In this paper, we will establish that a truth theory for a language L is the core of a theory of interpretation for L only in virtue of satisfying two constraints (BBM: 318; RF:34):

- a. It entails for each (indicative) sentence S of L a true sentence of the form:

(T) S is true in L if and only if  $p$

- b. It is an empirical theory which together with accounts of what speakers of L believe and desire, and theories of rational belief change and action successfully describes the linguistic (and other) behavior of the speakers of L (88m).

We will then argue that because the second of these requirements is neglected in the criticisms implicit in Kripke's, Belnap's, Harman's, etc. remarks, theories (I-III) cannot be used as the core of a theory of interpretation.

Before we take up these theories we want to discuss a remark made by Tarski and repeated by many others concerning:

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tion?', in J. McDowell and G. Evans., eds., *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976), 325-419; G. Harman, 'Meaning and Semantics,' in M. Munitz and P. Unger, eds., *Semantics and Philosophy* (New York: New York University Press 1974), 1-16.

' $p$ ' is true in  $L$  if and only if  $p$ .

Tarski pointed out that as quotes are usually understood this sentence says that the 16th letter of the alphabet is true if and only if  $p$ , and that this is nonsense.<sup>6</sup> This is, of course, correct but we can make sense of the scheme by employing quotes in a slightly non-standard way. There is no reason why we must interpret the quotation of ' $p$ ' as a name of the letter ' $p$ '. We can instead stipulate that an expression consisting of a variable within quotes is not a name of anything, though the expression which results from replacing the variable with a term not containing free-variables is a name. We return now to theories (I-III).

We are not alone in thinking something is wrong with these theories. Mark Platts, in a recent book which is a development and defense of the Davidsonian program, discusses each of these theories and argues, contra Kripke, etc., that they are either incoherent or not really truth theories.<sup>7</sup> If they were in fact incoherent or failed to be truth theories then, of course, they would pose no problem for Davidson's claims that truth theories illuminate meaning. However, we will argue against Platts that (I-III) are truth theories. Platts says about (I) that:

... if we can overcome this first worry – say, by making sense of the idea that a used sentence names a state of affairs or perhaps a truth-value – we shall then encounter the problem of handling the mentioned occurrence of ' $p$ '. If the formula is to be well-formed, there must be one kind of object that both occurrences of ' $p$ ' in the generalized bound formula can be treated as naming. Given the (supposed) way of handling the first worry, this would require that quotation marks be treated as expressing functions from states of affairs (or truth values) to sentences, the items of which truth is predicated; that is, they must be seen as operating upon an expression that names a state of affairs (or a truth value) to produce an expression that names a sentence. But this seems of very doubtful coherence.<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear that this suggestion is incoherent. Let's suppose that the quantifier in (I) ranges over propositions. Sentences are construed as names of propositions and 'if and only if' names a function which maps a pair of propositions onto a proposition which is true just in case the members of the pair agree in truth value;<sup>9</sup> single quotes name a function

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6 Tarski, 160

7 Mark Platts, *Ways of Meaning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1979)

8 Platts, 14

9 In this paper we will let single quotes usually name expressions, but sometimes they will be variously interpreted to make sense of the three trivial truth theories.

which takes a proposition as argument and yields a sentence which names that proposition as its value. The trouble with this suggestion is that as propositions are usually construed, most languages contain many sentences which express the same proposition. If this is so for language L, then not all instances of form (T) will be forthcoming from (I). We can remedy this situation, albeit somewhat artificially, by construing propositions so that each sentence of L expresses a different proposition, say, by identifying propositions with syntactic derivations of sentences. It may be difficult to take this theory seriously but so far as we can see it does satisfy (T). We suppose someone might say that if we are forced to introduce propositions, etc., to make sense of (I) all the worse for it. But in our view what's wrong with (I) is deeper and more interesting than that. We will return to it later.

Next we consider a substitutional interpretation of (II). We suppose, of course, that the substitution class for ' $(\Pi x)$ ' is the class of sentences of L. But this means that L must be contained within ML, the metalanguage of the theory. If we did not make this assumption, then either the sentences named on the left hand side of instances of (II) would not belong to L or the sentences on the right hand side would not belong to ML. We can relax this a bit by appealing to translation:

(S) (S is true in L if and only if S is a sentence of L  
and  $(\Sigma p)$  (Translation (S) = ' $p$ ' and  $p$ ),

where the first quantifier is objectual and the second is substitutional.

Notoriously, substitutional quantification has its attackers and defenders. Attackers have claimed that substitutional quantification is either incoherent or is just objectual quantification in disguise. Defenders, most notably, Belnap, Grover and Kripke, have shown how to provide rigorous semantics for substitutional quantification.<sup>10</sup> Here is what Platts says about (II):

The interpretation of the universal quantification ' $(\Pi x) Fx$ ' is this: all names, when concatenated with the predicate 'F' produce a *true* sentence. The problem is clear: substitutional quantification is defined in terms of truth, and so cannot itself be used to define truth.<sup>11</sup>

But this is wrong. Substitutional quantification is no more 'defined' in terms of truth than is objectual quantification. A truth definition for a

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10 Belnap and Grover; S. Kripke

11 Platts, 15

language containing substitutional quantification does include a clause like:

For all terms  $t$  in the substitution class ' $\text{At/x}$ ' is true.

But this no more defines substitutional quantification in terms of 'true' than the objectual quantification clause:

$s$  satisfies ' $(x)A$ ' if and only if every sequence  $s'$ ,  
 $S'_x = s$ ,  $s'$  satisfies ' $A$ ',

defines objectual quantification in terms of 'satisfaction.' In both cases the clauses are part of a definition of 'true-in-L' and not a definition of quantification. It is the case that a truth-theory for a language containing substitutional quantification contains as its basis clauses a characterization of truth for the language minus the substitution quantifier. But this doesn't show that substitutional quantification is defined in terms of truth either. It shows only that to give a truth definition for a language containing substitutional quantification truth must be characterized for sentences not containing the substitutional quantifier.

Even if (II) were defective as a *definition* of truth, because of some circularity, it still satisfies (T).<sup>12</sup> Davidson's position apparently is that truth theories do all the wonderful things mentioned at the beginning of this paper; being a non-circular definition of truth was not one of these wonderful things. So (II) is still problematic vis-à-vis Davidson's claim since it is a truth theory, but seems completely uninteresting as a theory of meaning. If it is to be rejected by Davidson, it must be for reasons other than those urged above:

What about (III)? Platts says:

What of the residual possibility of treating " $p$  is true if and only if  $p$ " as a schema? Again this can be of no help in the enterprise of defining truth, for the appropriate notion of schema cannot be explained except in terms of truth. The claim would have to be that the result of replacing ' $p$ ' in both its occurrences by one and the same sentence  $p$  is a *true* sentence of English.<sup>13</sup>

It is difficult to determine what Platts has in mind. Is he claiming that the notion of an axiom schema cannot be explained except in terms of

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12 Davidson himself seems confused about this point. In IDCT, he says, 'theories of truth based on the substitutional interpretation of quantification do not in general yield the T-sentences demanded by convention T' (79-80).

13 Platts, 15

truth? Does this mean that the presentation of Peano's axioms which employs an axiom schema presupposes a notion of truth? Which notion? Truth in arithmetic? Of course, Peano (and other mathematicians) believe that the axioms are true in arithmetic but the axioms do not presuppose the notion of truth. Platts seems to claim that to explain the way an axiom schema is used to describe axioms one must make use of the notion of truth. But this is not so. The explanation is that the axioms of a truth theory are each of the instances of " *p* is true if and only if *p*." The expression 'true' occurs nowhere in the explanation (though it occurs, of course, in the schema).

It is worth noting that Davidson gives passing attention to (III). About it he says:

Such a theory would yield no insight into the structure of the language and would thus provide no hint of an answer to the question of how the meaning of a sentence depends on its composition. We could block this particular aberration by stipulating that the non-logical axioms be finite in number; in what follows I shall assume that this restriction is in force, though it may be that other ways exist of ensuring that a theory of truth has the properties we want.<sup>14</sup>

So Davidson apparently uses brute force to reject (III), and perhaps he would reject theories (I) and (II) by brute force as well. But it would be interesting to see if there are reasons for rejecting these theories which flow naturally from Davidson's reasons for holding that truth theories can be used to interpret sentences of L. To do this we will need to sketch Davidson's conception of interpretation.

According to Davidson a theory of interpretation for a language L is a description of what an interpreter of L might know in as much as he understands L. But what does Davidson have in mind by such a theory? The project of interpretation is to construct a theory such that given a suitable non-interpreting description of any possible utterance in L the theory would enable anyone who knew it to assign correct interpretative descriptions to this utterance; that is, such knowledge would enable an interpreter to say, on a given occasion, what another's words from L meant.

In addition, a statement of the theory should not presuppose in anyway an understanding of the language L. This requirement is quite important since the theory will fail to be empirical, i.e., satisfy requirement (b), if it presupposes an understanding of L. For example, if the

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14 D. Davidson, 'Semantics for Natural Language,' in D. Davidson and G. Harman, eds., *The Logic of Grammar* (New York: Dickenson Publishing Co. Inc. 1975), 19. Cf. also BBM: 348.



theory of interpretation of L used the concept of meaning-in-L unanalyzed, it would be quite useless. This is why Davidson rejects Tarski's condition of adequacy, Convention T, that an adequate theory of truth for a language L is one which entails for every (indicative) sentence of L, sentences of the form:

S is true-in-L if and only if  $p$ ,

where  $p$  is a *translation* of S (RI:316,321). The problem with this requirement is that it presupposes translation rather than providing an account of when  $p$  translates S. Davidson's solution is to drop the requirement that  $p$  translate S and add the requirement that any theory which satisfies requirement (a) to be empirical (i.e., satisfy requirement (b)) must be supported by certain evidence. Davidson is not crystal clear concerning how a theory which entails S is true if and only if  $p$ , for each sentence S of L, is supposed to account for the data, or even which data is supposed to be accounted for, but we assume he has something of the following sort in mind.

Esa, a German speaker, looks out the window and sees that it is snowing. He comes to believe that it is snowing and his belief is warranted, in ordinary circumstances, because he sees it is snowing. Blondie, our Interpreter, has her back turned to the window, but she too comes to share Esa's belief as a result of hearing Esa utter to her in German 'Es schneit.' What Blondie heard was some sounds, and this alone does not warrant her belief about snow. This scenario points to an important empirical condition on the interpretive project as Davidson conceives it: whatever set of propositions the Interpreter accepts, they must warrant (in part) certain specified beliefs acquired on the basis of hearing a speaker's utterance.

We might try to spell out Blondie's justification for her belief as follows:

1. Esa utters and holds true the sentence 'Es schneit'.<sup>15</sup>  
It is snowing.

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15 We use the expression 'utters' in the present context (in contrast to 'says that') in such a way that a speaker may utter (on a particular occasion) some words without his or our knowing what these words mean. On 'holds true,' Davidson says: 'a good place to begin is with the attitude of holding a sentence true, of accepting it as true. ...' It is an attitude an interpreter may plausibly be taken to be able to identify before he can interpret, since he may know that a person intends to express a truth in uttering a sentence without having any idea what truth. Not that sincere assertion is the only reason to suppose that a person holds a sentence to be true. Lies, commands, stories, irony, if they are detected as at-

One demand we make of justification is that proffered justifications make reasonable that the conclusion obtains: (1) by itself does not do this. *At best*, on the basis of her belief that (1), it would be reasonable for Blondie to believe that 'Es schneit' is true, assuming she believes Esa reliable. One way we might try to strengthen the bridge between Esa's words and Interpreter's mind is to ascribe knowledge to Blondie of the conditions under which Esa's utterance is true:

2. 'Es schneit' is true-in-German when uttered to me if and only if it is snowing at the time of utterance.

Given (1)-(2), and the assumption that Esa is reliable, it is reasonable for Blondie, our Interpreter, to believe it is snowing.

As many have argued, we have the potential as speakers of a language to produce indefinitely many sentences. This fecundity prevents a general description of Interpreter's linguistic competence with Esa's language comprised solely of a list of truth conditions for each sentence she potentially interprets:

Blondie knows that 'Es schneit' is true if and only if it is snowing.

Blondie knows that 'Es regnet' is true if and only if it is raining.

Blondie knows that 'Es ist Montag' is true if and only if it is Monday.

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We simply could never complete this list. But if we are to state explicitly what an Interpreter might know which would enable her to interpret another's words we must put it in finite form. In this respect interpretation is no different than any other subject matter where we want not only a beginning but an end as well. One strategy which suggests itself is to construct a theory which has as consequences sentences using the words 'is true if and only if' as a link between a description of a sentence and a sentence. An Interpreter's knowledge consists of what is expressed by the theory, in particular, she knows the truth conditions for each sentence of the language. Such a theory enables us to characterize an

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titudes, can reveal whether a speaker holds his sentences to be true. There is no reason to rule out other attitudes towards sentences, such as wishing true, wanting to make true, believing one is going to make true, and so on, but I am inclined to think that all evidence of this kind may be summed up in terms of holding sentences to be true' (RI: 322).

infinite competence by finite means. Davidson intends truth theories to do this job. In proving with a truth theory sentences of the form (T) we make use of finitely many axioms which together with familiar rules of inference licence a series of substitutions, engineering a step by step shift from words and structures mentioned on the left hand side of the material bi-conditional to words and structures used on the right hand side. In so doing, we derive for each sentence of the language a statement of the conditions under which it is true.

In addition, Davidson envisions a theory of truth for L qua theory of interpretation as empirical and testable. It is empirical since the hypothesis that the T-consequences of the truth theory correctly characterize the linguistic competence of speakers of the language under investigation plays a role in interpreting their linguistic behavior (and other behavior and their propositional attitudes). The theory is tested by seeing how good the description is. Our little story about Speaker Esa and Interpreter Blondie shows how the assumption that Blondie knows the truth conditions of 'Es schneit' in German explains why she is warranted in interpreting Esa's words and, therefore, under the right conditions, in believing that it is snowing when she hears this sentence uttered by Esa. However, there is something puzzling about the claim that these T-consequences are empirical. Consider the famous:

(A) 'Snow is white' is true in English if and only if snow is white.

Looked at one way, (A) seems to be analytic, true in virtue of its form alone. One need not know the meaning of 'Snow is white' to recognize that (A) is true. On the other hand, it seems to report a fact that easily could have been otherwise, namely, that the sequence of letters 'S' 'N' 'I' 'O' etc. is true if and only if snow is white. The resolution is that (A) does report an empirical fact but it does so in a way that is bound to appear trivial to anyone who can interpret English. This is not at all surprising since interpreting English consists in part in knowing the fact reported by (A). It is trivial because English is assumed to be contained in the metalanguage: anyone who can interpret English will not only recognize (A) as true, but believe what it expresses. If this assumption is dropped then (A) is not at all trivial, it might even be false.

If the theory of truth is supposed to be part of an empirical theory of interpretation for a language actually used by a group of people it cannot be assumed that the language in which the theory is expressed contains the language under study (IDCT: 83-84). Of course, it may be contained, but that cannot be assumed before hand. This point can be expanded: if a truth theory is to be a theory of interpretation for a language L, then understanding the articulation of the theory should not itself

assume an understanding of L. We will see that this is the sin of the trivial truth theories. They satisfy requirement (a) all right, but they do so at a cost of sacrificing their empiricity.

This is quite obvious with regard to (III), the specification of an infinite of T-sentences by the axiom schema. One could, of course, know which sentences are axioms of a truth theory for some language L without understanding L. The specification of the axiom schema might be given in some other language. But one could not use T-sentences derived from (III) to interpret sentences of L, that is, know what the T-sentences express, without already understanding L. Why? Because (III) cannot be used to specify the T-sentences for L unless we articulate these sentences in L. An example should help.

Let L be English. We want to show that if we are to use (III) to articulate a truth theory for L, then we must state (III) in English. Suppose we try to use German, so that (III) becomes the theory whose axioms are the instances of:

*'p' ist wahr, wenn und nur wenn p.*

What can replace 'p'? If we use English sentences we derive nonsense like the following:

*'It is snowing' ist wahr, wenn und nur wenn it is snowing.*

If we use German sentences, then we succeed in specifying T-sentences for German and not for English.

*'Es schneit' ist wahr, wenn und nur wenn es schneit*

does not translate:

*'It is snowing' is true if and only if it is snowing,*

but instead the English sentence:

*'Es schneit' is true if and only if it is snowing,*

a sentence which purports to give truth conditions for the German sentence 'Es schneit' and not for the English sentence 'It is snowing.'

The upshot is that if we employ specification (III) to describe the knowledge Interpreter might have, then we must state this theory in the language we are investigating. If we want to interpret German speakers, we must state (III) in German, and so on. This is the reason that (III) is useless as a specification of a theory of Interpretation for L. What we

want, supposing we are German speakers, is a German specification of T-sentences in which the left side contains a name of a sentence of the language we are investigating, while the right hand side contains a German sentence. What a French speaker would want is a French specification of T-sentences in which the left hand side contains a name of a sentence of the language under investigation, and the right hand side contains a French sentence, and so on. But the trivial (III) does not succeed in doing this.

The situation is similar with respect to theory (II). Theory (II) satisfies (T) only on the assumption that L is contained in the language in which (II) is expressed. The reason is, obviously, that we must substitute the same sentence for both the occurrence of *p*' in and out of quotes to obtain an instance of (T) for (II).

Analagous remarks apply to the objectual version (I). Let's suppose that the quote function assigns to a proposition a sentence of English. Then if (I) is formulated in English it is not empirical since the object language is contained in the metalanguage. But even if (I) is formulated in another language, say, German, it can be understood only by someone who already understands English (if (I) is to be a theory for English). The reasons for this is that to understand instances of (I) we will need to know which English sentence is *p*', for propositions *p*. For example, let (B) be an instance of (I):

(B) 'Es schneit' ist wahr, wenn und nur wenn es schneit,

where 'Es schneit' has as its value an English sentence (cf. footnote 9). In order to understand (B), we will need to know which English sentence is assigned to the proposition expressed by the German sentence 'Es schneit.' But to know that this sentence is, e.g., 'It is snowing,' we need to know that this sentence and 'Es schneit' name the same proposition. This is tantamount to assuming that we need to know a translation from German into English. If we know German, then this amounts to supposing that we understand English.

We cannot test the hypotheses that (I), (II), and (III) correctly characterize knowledge Interpreters of L might have since the assumption that they do is presupposed by their being meaningful. If our account is correct, then the trouble with the three trivial truth theories is not that they fail to satisfy Tarski's Convention T but that they presuppose the truth of what they express. This is what makes them trivial and non-testable. In this way they are like the utterance 'I exist'; a boring triviality since it presupposes what it expresses though what it expresses is contingent, and, for the utterer at least, an important fact.

We want to conclude with a few remarks concerning first the relationship between truth theories and translation, and then on the rela-

tionship between recursion and the principle that the meaning of the whole sentence is comprised of the meanings of its constituents.

We earlier observed that we can formulate a truth theory for L as follows:

(S)  $\Pi p$  ( $p'$  = Translation(S)  $\supset$  S is true in L if and only if  $p$ )

If we assume that each S in L has a truth preserving translation in the metalanguage then this theory satisfies Tarski's Convention T. This theory is not at all trivial, but it may appear that its non-triviality is due entirely to the translation function. It has been claimed that it is the workings of this translation function which will show the meanings of the sentences of L depend on structure. The move from ' $p'$ ' to  $p$  is quite trivial. This has suggested to Harman and Fodor that Davidson's insistence that a theory of meaning for L must satisfy Tarski's Convention T is unwarranted.<sup>16</sup>

A translation from L into ML will serve to explain the meanings of the sentences of L as well as a truth theory for L stated in ML. But this is to forget that the aim of a theory of interpretation for L is to characterize the knowledge Interpreters of L might have. And, whatever it is that they might know that enables them to understand L it is clearly not how to translate L into ML. What they might know, or part of what they might know, as we argued earlier, are the truth conditions of the sentences of L. The move from a translation of S into ML to a truth condition appears trivial to us, the speakers of ML, precisely because our understanding of ML consists in part in knowing the truth conditions of the sentences of L. The move from a translation of S into ML to a truth condition appears trivial to us, the speakers of ML, precisely because our understanding of ML consists in part in knowing the truth conditions of L.

Some readers might think that there is a rather easy and straightforward way to reject theories (I)-(III). After all, since these theories are not recursive they can shed no light on the structure of language L. But then

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16 J. Fodor, *The Language of Thought* (New York: Crowell 1975); G. Harman, 'Meaning and Semantics,' in M. Munitz and P. Unger, eds., *Semantics and Philosophy* (New York: New York University Press 1974), 1-16, and G. Harman, 'Three Levels of Meaning,' in D. Steinberg and I. Jakobovits, eds., *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1971), 66-75. A number of other authors have agreed with Harman and Fodor in seeing little difference, if any, between specifying meaning by translation and specifying meaning in terms of truth conditions. For example, H. Field, 'Logic, Meaning and Conceptual Role,' *Journal of Philosophy*, 74 (1977) 379-402; Hilary Putnam, 'The Meaning of 'Meaning',' in K. Gunderson, ed., *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. VII (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1975), 131-93.

how can they show how the meanings of complex expressions are composed of the meanings of their constituents and provide an account of the logical form of the sentences of L? Several authors have, in fact, interpreted Davidson as requiring that an adequate theory of interpretation for a language L must make use of recursion clauses.<sup>17</sup> Once such a requirement is introduced then it becomes possible that the sentences of L will be articulated into singular terms, quantifiers, predicates, connectives, as well as the linking expressions with entities in the characterization of satisfaction (IDCT:84). As plausible as this rejection of theories (I)-(III) may seem, it is one not open to Davidson.

Davidson does not come armed with a picture of how language is fragmented and therefore, how his solution for (T) is to go (IDCT:79; RWR:84). He comes armed with intuitions about what it is to have an account of interpretation. His own solutions involve utilizing theories which in fact include recursion clauses, but this is a convenience and not a requirement. If there were a way of satisfying requirements (a) and (b) without employing recursion, that would be perfectly acceptable.<sup>18</sup>

It may turn out, as Davidson has intimated he believes in several places (IDCT:81), that there is no way to satisfy Convention T without shedding light on the logical and semantic structure of the language under investigation through the recursive structure of the theory. But this is something we would need to demonstrate, or come to reasonably believe, at least, inductively through repeated failure of truth theories (like (I), (II), and (III)) to satisfy requirements (a) and (b), and is not something we can assume beforehand.

In this paper we have defended Davidson's position that a sound theory of interpretation for L should satisfy (T) against charges of triviality. The moral we drew from this exercise is that although Davidson intends theories which satisfy (T) to do a particular job, nothing he says implies that every such theory must do this job. We have seen that certain trivial theories are not testable and that the difference between

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17 For example, N. Tennant, 'Truth, Meaning and Decidability,' *Mind*, **86** (1977) 368-9, and R.J. Haack, 'Davidson on Learnable Languages,' *Mind*, **87** (1978) 234.

18 Convention T, in skeletal form I have given it, makes no mention of extensionality, truth functionality, or first order logic. It invites us to use whatever devices we can contrive appropriately to bridge the gap between sentence mentioned and sentence used; restrictions on ontology, ideology, or inferential power find favor, from the present point of view, only if they result from adopting Convention T as a touchstone. What I want to defend is the convention as a criterion for theories, not any particular theories that have been shown to satisfy the convention in particular cases, or the resources to which they have been limited. (IDCT: 79)

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truth theories and translation theories are not trivial. We suspect that the illusion of triviality is engendered by our taking our own language and our own understanding of it for granted. We have a tendency to take our own existence for granted, appreciating it only once it is threatened. Perhaps the threats to truth theories posed by the charges of triviality we have canvassed will lead us to appreciate them.

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