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Davidson, Dualism, and Truth

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I aim to establish these three claims. Doing so enriches our understanding of issues central to the history of philosophy concerning how, if at all, to divvy up the mental or linguistic contribution, and the worldly contribution, to knowledge. As we see below, Davidson was right in taking his work to be one stage of a dialectic begun by Immanuel Kant.¹ He was just wrong about what that stage is. Reconsidering Davidson's views also moves the current debate forward, as they reveal a previously unrecognized yet intuitive notion of truth—even if Davidson himself remained largely unaware of it. We begin however with scheme/content dualism and Davidson's argument against it.

Davidson, Dualism, and Truth

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1 Davidson's Argument

Scheme/content dualism is meant to be the dualism between the mind's or language's contribution to our knowledge, judgments, beliefs, or sentences, on the one hand, and the world's contribution to them, on the other. The dualism is central to Kant's (1998) view, whose categories of understanding and forms of intuition, embodied in synthetic a priori judgments, were meant to be constitutive of the scheme; the data of sensation, somehow provided by things in themselves, its content. Examples of Kant's synthetic a priori judgments included truths of arithmetic and geometry (the latter which he took to be necessarily Euclidean), and the fundamental conceptual claims of pure natural science that Kant (2004) correlated with the laws of classical mechanics. For Kant, synthetic a posteriori judgments were in turn the empirical claims constructed within this scheme from sensory data.

In the 20th century scheme/content dualism became central to Carnap's (1988) view. Different sets of analytic sentences were meant to be constitutive of different schemes or, as Carnap preferred, formal languages or linguistic frameworks; evidence or observations, their content. Examples of Carnap's analytic sentences included the axioms of Euclidean geometry, constitutive of the framework of classical mechanics, and the axioms of Riemannian geometry, constitutive of the framework of general relativity. For Carnap, synthetic sentences were in turn the empirical claims constructed within these various schemes from evidence or observations.²

Quine himself, rejecting Carnap's distinction between analytic and synthetic sentences and so constitutive principles and empirical claims, nonetheless distinguished language, embodying concepts, from experience, the raw data of sensation.³ Quine merely insisted that though "science has its double dependence upon language and experience[,] ... this duality is not significantly traceable into the statements of science taken one by one" (2006, p. 42). Instead

scheme and content were interspersed holistically throughout science, which is our best theory of the world.

Davidson, in the *locus classicus* (2001, essay 13) of his argument against scheme/content dualism, describes himself as entering the dialectic here. Like Carnap and Quine, Davidson identifies “conceptual schemes with languages, then, or better, allowing for the possibility that more than one language may express the same scheme, sets of intertranslatable languages” (p. 185). Unlike Carnap or Quine, however, Davidson aims to show that the very idea of a conceptual scheme, and so scheme/content dualism, is unintelligible. He does so by arguing that we could never have evidence of the dualism.⁴ What would count as such evidence? For Davidson, if claims that you make in your language are not intertranslatable into claims that I make in mine, then we each have a scheme that subsumes content relative to our own conception of the world. Davidson thus maintains that the test for the intelligibility of scheme/content dualism is the possibility of non-intertranslatable languages. His strategy is to show that such non-intertranslatability is impossible.

Davidson considers complete and partial non-intertranslatability. He starts with the former by suggesting two ways of explaining how scheme and content might interact. The scheme, understood as a language, could “organize” (“categorize,” “systematize,” “divide up”) or “fit” (“predict,” “account for,” “face the tribunal of”) such content. Regarding the former, Davidson contends that a language can “organize” something only if it already contains parts. When one organizes an office, one organizes books, papers, and furniture. The process of organizing entails that the thing to *be* organized is already organized into parts, here books, etc. Hence if a language can organize its content, then that content must already be organized too. Yet on this construal of scheme/content dualism *language* is meant to do the organizing; before its application content is meant to have no organization, and so no parts, at all. But then for a scheme to organize its content that content must already both be

and not be organized. Davidson concludes that understanding language as organizing its content cannot therefore provide evidence of completely non-intertranslatable languages.

The other way that scheme, understood as language, might interact with its content is by “fitting” it. Davidson decides that a language fits its content only if it is true of it. He then contends that our best understanding of truth is Alfred Tarski’s (1944) semantic conception. Tarski maintained that one could recursively generate a truth theory for a language based on a finite number of axioms and rules. Truth theories are thus compositional. Such a theory would in fact correlate each of the language’s sentences with its meta-linguistic translation. We could imagine such resulting correlations, or T-sentences, as these:

- (T₁) “La nieve es blanca” is true in Spanish if and only if snow and white.
- (T₂) “La hierba es verde” is true in Spanish if and only if grass is green.

According to Tarski, the totality of T-sentences captures what it is for any sentence to be true in the language. A truth theory for a language therefore tells us what truth in that language *is*. Now recall that the idea of a scheme’s “fitting” its content was supposed to explain failure of translatability. But since “fitting” is best understood as implicating truth, which itself implicates translatability, claiming that schemes “fit” their content cannot provide evidence of completely non-intertranslatable languages. We have no way of making scheme/content dualism intelligible here either.

Davidson’s argument against the possibility of complete non-intertranslatability is controversial. We evaluate it after we consider his argument against the possibility of partial non-intertranslatability. Davidson begins by asking what we would require to interpret a language about which we know nothing. He responds by inverting Tarski’s order of explanation. While Tarski assumed that we could devise a truth theory for a language by cor-

relating each sentence with its meta-linguistic translation, Davidson proposes that we can interpret a language (and so determine what its sentences mean) by correlating each sentence of the language with its meta-linguistic truth conditions. Though inverted, the procedure would still recursively generate a compositional theory—not a truth theory but a meaning theory—for a language based on a finite number of axioms and rules.

Now, for Tarski, T-sentences state that mentioned object-language sentences are true if and only if their meta-linguistic translation obtains. Thus Tarski assumed translation (and ultimately meaning) to define truth. For Tarski, because only (T₁) expresses a translation, only (T₁) is legitimate:

(T₁) “La nieve es blanca” is true in Spanish if and only if snow and white.

(T₃) “La nieve es blanca” is true in Spanish if and only if grass is green.

Davidson, however, inverting Tarski’s order, assumes truth to determine translation—or, as he prefers, interpretation. So Davidson cannot help himself to prior facts about translation to count (T₁) as legitimate and (T₃) not. Each is true: each side of each biconditional is true if and only if its mate is. Hence, unlike Tarski, Davidson must find a way to limit the meta-linguistic truth conditions that we correlate with our target sentences, for these T-sentences to exhibit translations (and so interpretations). Davidson does so by constraining T-sentence construction by the principle of charity.

In his mature (2002b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) writing Davidson formulates the principle of charity something like this: “In basic cases we assume that the speaker believes roughly what we would in the speaker’s spot.” Basic cases are those in which a speaker’s utterances vary systematically according to what we interpreters believe to be salient features of her environment. Suppose that the speaker’s uttering “La nieve es blanca” is a basic case, and that it generally occurs when and only we believe that the speaker is in the

presence of snow that is white. We would then assign the sentence the meta-linguistic truth conditions that snow is white. In non-basic cases—those in which a speaker’s utterances do not so vary—we would assign utterances truth conditions based compositionally on those assigned in basic cases. Davidson’s thought is that the principle of charity helps us determine not only that (T₁) is legitimate but also that other T-sentences constructed recursively from its parts would be too. Hence the principle of charity combined with the recursive nature of T-sentence construction is meant to minimize the number of non-interpretive T-sentences.⁵

How does this establish the impossibility of partial non-intertranslatability? Davidson surmises that since relying on the principle of charity is a necessary condition on interpretation: “Given the underlying methodology of interpretation, we could not be in a position to judge that others had concepts or beliefs radically different from our own” (2001, p. 197). In basic cases our interpretations of a speaker’s utterances match our beliefs, while in non-basic ones they are based on those beliefs. Now without the possibility of recognizing radically different concepts or beliefs, we could not be in a position to judge that any significant part of anyone’s language fails to be intertranslatable with ours. There could never be evidence of anyone’s conceiving of the world relative merely to her way of thinking. There could be no evidence of scheme/content dualism.

Since Davidson claims to have disqualified the possibility of completely and partially non-intertranslatable languages, he claims to have disqualified the possibility of having evidence of the dualism. So the very idea of a scheme and its attendant dualism becomes meaningless. In the next section we evaluate Davidson’s arguments. Here we note three further points about his account of interpretation.

First, Davidson is emphatic that relying on the principle of charity is a necessary condition on not only interpretation and but also languagehood. He starts with interpretation:

[C]harity is not an option, but a condition of having a

workable theory. . . . If we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communication [and *a fortiori* interpretation]. Nothing more is possible, and nothing more is needed (2001, p. 197).⁶

In fact, for Davidson (2001, essay 14; 2002, essay 10), even omniscient interpreters are bound by the principle of charity. But Davidson moves on: “What a fully informed interpreter could learn about what a speaker means is all there is to learn; the same goes for what the speaker believes” (2002b, p. 148). That is because “there can be no more to meaning than an adequately equipped person can learn and observe; the interpreter’s point of view is therefore the revealing one to bring to the subject” (2005a, p. 62). He adds: “That meanings are decipherable is not a matter of luck; public availability is a constitutive aspect of language” (2005b, p. 56). And the principle of charity is central to all this. Now, for Davidson, since interpretation involves seeing speakers as believing roughly what we would in their spot—and there can be no more to meaning or belief than an adequately equipped person can learn and observe—all speakers must believe roughly what we would in their spot. But then, for Davidson, not only could we not be in a position to have *evidence* of partially non-intertranslatable languages; there could not be any such languages. Anything that is a language is necessarily intertranslatable into ours and, via intertranslatability, into any other language. All languages are then necessarily interpretable by us and, via intertranslatability, by any other interpreter. But then all languages are languages only if the principle of charity can be used to interpret them.

Second, all this is consistent with Davidson’s claim that “there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed” (2005b, p. 107). Davidson does not reject the existence of languages *per se*. Nor could he, since so much of his work explicitly explores constructing truth and meaning theories for languages, interpreting languages,

translating between languages, and learning languages. Davidson instead rejects the existence of languages as fixed abstract entities constituted by fixed abstract conventions. As I have explained elsewhere (2009b, pp. 266–7), Davidson thinks of languages as evolving idiolects.⁷ If his argument against scheme/content dualism is right, then all such evolving idiolects are necessarily intertranslatable.

And third, for Davidson, though the principle of charity requires that we assume that the speaker believe roughly what we would in her spot, we ourselves believe many things when we are in such spots. Which particular belief that we think a speaker is believing at the moment that she makes her utterance could be any of these if we are creative enough with our overall interpretation. The principle of charity limits but does not uniquely determine interpretation. Interpretation is thus indeterminate. Two interpreters could in principle interpret the same utterance differently. Regardless such indeterminacy “does not represent a failure to capture significant distinctions” in our interpretation of a speaker’s utterances; “it marks the fact that certain apparent distinctions are not significant” (2001, pp. 153–4).⁸

2 *Illustrating a Way to Hold the Dualism*

Davidson’s (2001, essay 13) arguments against the possibility of complete and partial non-intertranslatability face several objections. Perhaps the starkest is that Davidson’s argument against the complete kind is merely an argument against two ways in which scheme and content might interact. Maybe there are ways in which they might interact *besides* organizing and fitting. Maybe the dualism is otherwise salvageable. We should not take Davidson’s, or the dualist’s, failure of imagination to entail failure of fact.⁹

Fortunately for Davidson, he does not need this argument. Disqualifying the possibility of partial non-intertranslatability disqualifies the possibility of the complete variety also. If we could not be in a position to judge that others have concepts or beliefs rad-

ically different from our own, then we could not be in a position to judge that others possess languages partly or completely non-intertranslatable into our own. We could have no evidence of partial or complete non-intertranslatability. So let us bracket this and other objections to Davidson's argument against the possibility of complete non-intertranslatability and consider his argument against partial non-intertranslatability directly.

Suppose that Davidson is right. We could not be in a position to judge that others have concepts or beliefs radically different from our own. Languages still seem to contribute *something* to our knowledge. Say that we read in a textbook: "China has over one billion people." If the textbook is written in American English, then it says that China has over one thousand million people, since in American English "one billion" means one thousand million. In this case it says something true. If the textbook is written in British English, then it says that China has over one million million people, since in British English "one billion" means one million million. Now it says something false. If the textbook is written in Chinese, then "China has over one billion people" says nothing. This is not a legitimate Chinese sentence. Considerations of language are therefore essential when considering what we know.

Of course Davidson would respond that "China has over one billion people" can be *translated* from American English into British English and Chinese. There would be no evidence that speakers of any of these languages conceive of the world differently, only that they use different words to express the same thing. So my worry seems irrelevant. Nonetheless this response suggests a different worry. Why has Davidson shown that we have *no* scheme not the *same* scheme? We asked in §1 what would count as evidence of scheme/content dualism. Davidson's answer was completely or partially non-intertranslatable languages. But if a conceptual scheme is meant to be the mental or linguistic contribution to knowledge, then non-intertranslatable *or* intertranslatable languages should be sufficient evidence of its intelligibility. After all speakers contribute

language, intertranslatable or not. And, recall, Davidson himself claims: "We may identify conceptual schemes with languages . . . , or better, allowing for the possibility that more than one language may express the same scheme, sets of intertranslatable languages" (2001, p. 185). Davidson thinks that he has shown that all languages are intertranslatable. We saw an example of intertranslatability just now. Why should we not take Davidson at his word? Why has he not shown that there is a single conceptual scheme—universally shared by all speakers and interpreters?

Davidson later responds:

If I am right, then there never can be a situation in which we can intelligibly compare or contrast divergent schemes, and in that case we do better not to say that there is one scheme, as if we understood what it would be like for there to be more (2002a, p. 243).

If we cannot know what it would be for schemes to differ, then it makes no sense to say that all those whose languages we can interpret have a scheme that is the same. We would have no contrast to there being only one conceptual scheme.

But is that right? Consider all the ways that reality could logically be. These comprise the set of all logically possible worlds. This is true even though there could be no *other* set of logically possible worlds. The set is exhaustive of all possible worlds yet is specifiable. Now consider all the intertranslatable languages. If Davidson is right, then all languages are intertranslatable, so the set of all intertranslatable languages just is the set of all languages. This is true even though there could be no *other* set of languages. The set is exhaustive of all languages yet is specifiable too. Further, if a contrast is required to identify the set of all languages *as* a set, then it need not be the set of non-intertranslatable languages. If all languages are intertranslatable, then anything that contrasts with languages works. The set of noises that are not languages can contrast with and thus allow us to identify the set of languages that are

intertranslatable. So contrasted, why would the set not comprise a scheme?

One reason why it might not is if, as Davidson later suggests, we build into the very idea of a conceptual scheme the idea of a possible plurality of schemes. Since Davidson (let us assume) disqualifies the idea of a possible plurality, we could take him to disqualify the very idea of a scheme.

There are two reasons to be suspicious of this. First, building the plurality idea into the scheme idea seems *ad hoc*. Having announced that there are no schemes yet offering a view on which there is one, Davidson only afterward appeals to the plurality point. Should we believe Davidson's original argument or not?

Second, Davidson is explicit that a scheme, even if single, is still a scheme: "Even those thinkers who are certain there is only one conceptual scheme are in the sway of the scheme concept; even monotheists have religion" (2001, p. 184). Disqualifying the plurality point would on Davidson's own terms not disqualify the very idea of a conceptual scheme. Now Davidson has Kant in mind as his monoschemer.¹⁰ Kant thinks that all human beings have the same categories of understanding and forms of intuition, embedded in the same set of synthetic a priori judgments, and in this sense the same conceptual scheme. Yet Kant does not think that we thereby have no scheme. But then Davidson, who thinks that all language users have intertranslatable languages, and so in this sense have only one conceptual scheme also, does not show that we thereby have no scheme either. Even monotheists have religion; even monoschemers, like Kant *or* Davidson, have a scheme.

Nonetheless similarities between Davidson and Kant might seem to break down on one key point: only Kant countenances things in themselves. And, however we understand them, things in themselves are meant to provide empirical content, the data of sensation or "matter" for empirical intuition, that the categories (via synthetic a priori judgments) conceptualize. So Kant is committed to something that, even if conceptualized in only one way, could in

principle be conceptualized in others. Davidson, conversely, countenances no such "things" and no such content. There is nothing that a conceptual scheme could conceptualize, and so nothing that a possible plurality of schemes could conceptualize differently. Absent content, the very idea of a scheme might seem untenable. So then would go the dualism.

Now regardless of Davidson's not countenancing content, we might still argue that because the set of intertranslatable languages would for him count as a scheme, he is committed to content nonetheless. As Davidson puts it, "[c]ontent and scheme . . . come as a pair" (2002b, p. 46). So, on Davidson's own terms, if he is committed to there being a scheme—which, by being committed to a set of intertranslatable languages, I believe that he is—then he is committed to content. Of course Davidson would not acknowledge commitment to content. But he would not acknowledge commitment to a scheme either.

There are two objections to my reasoning. First, even if Davidson is committed to the dualism as described, the very idea of *conceptual relativism* loses its bite. According to my understanding of Davidson's view, everyone's beliefs would be relative to the same scheme. But then for practical purposes we could treat them as relative to none. So nothing interesting seems to follow from Davidson's view. In fact Davidson begins his discussion of scheme/content dualism with the thought that "[t]he trouble is, as so often in philosophy, it is hard to improve intelligibility while retaining the excitement" (2001, p. 183). Perhaps, by showing it a form of monoschematism, I have improved the intelligibility of Davidson's own view but cost it its excitement.

Nonetheless I for one remain unpersuaded by this objection. While philosophical predilections vary, I myself find such a monoschematism quite exciting. It says *not only* that all language users can in principle understand one another *but also* that what language users think and say ultimately fails to describe the world independent of their scheme. Davidson's view is then a boon for those

worried about interlinguistic communication. All such communication is possible. But it is simultaneously a bane for those worried about our having knowledge of the world in itself—the totality of things in themselves. No such knowledge is possible. As both boon and bane, the view certainly seems exciting.¹¹

There is a second objection to my reasoning that by being committed to a set of intertranslatable languages, which I am urging would be a scheme, Davidson is committed to content. The response appeals to Davidson's dictum that content and scheme come as a pair but argues contrapositively. Since Davidson does not countenance content, one might argue, the set of intertranslatable languages cannot for him be a scheme. He is committed then to neither.

Now merely observing that Davidson does not countenance content is insufficient to establish that he is not committed to it. We often fail to countenance our commitments. Nonetheless Davidson might argue that the *very idea* of empirical content is unintelligible. Since (on his view) content and scheme come as a pair, the *very idea* of a conceptual scheme would be unintelligible also. In fact up until this point in my analysis Davidson's argument against scheme/content dualism has taken the form of an argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme. I am now suggesting that Davidson could attack the dualism by attacking the very idea of empirical content directly. If successful then he would not be committed to scheme/content dualism itself, regardless of his commitment to a set of intertranslatable languages. The set would then be only a set and not also a scheme.

In fact in later articles (2002b, essays 3, 10, 11; 2005a, essay 4) Davidson does attack the content idea directly. Though they have not received as much attention as his landmark (2001, essay 13) article against scheme/content dualism, which attacks the scheme idea, the main thrust of these later articles is worth considering. For only if his argument against content succeeds can he be free of his commitment to a scheme and their consequent dualism.

3 Davidson's Separate Argument against Content

According to Davidson, empirical content, as the alleged data that conceptual schemes conceptualize, is meant to be non-conceptual and so causal. But, Davidson adds, content is also meant to justify perceptual beliefs. My belief that this patch of snow is white is on this view meant to be justified by sense-data, sensory stimulations, or some other causal contribution from the patch of white snow.

Now Davidson asks whether anything non-conceptual can justify beliefs. He answers that each time some alleged empirical content seems to justify a belief, *awareness* of it justifies the belief instead. But awareness, Davidson insists, is just another belief.¹² Hence the alleged content never itself does the justifying. In fact sensation and other candidate kinds of content are the wrong logical kind to do any such justifying:

The relation between a sensation and a belief cannot be logical, since sensations are not beliefs or other propositional attitudes. What then is the relation? The answer is, I think, obvious: the relation is causal. Sensations cause some beliefs and in *this* sense are the basis or ground of those beliefs. But a causal explanation of a belief does not show how or why the belief is justified (2002b, p. 143).

Instead Davidson counters that “nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief” (p. 141) and that “all that counts as evidence or justification for a belief must come from the same totality of belief to which it belongs” (p. 155). This is just as true for perceptual beliefs, which are supposedly justified by empirical content, as for any other. The problem with the very idea of empirical content, Davidson concludes, is that because content is meant to be non-conceptual, it *cannot* be justificatory, yet because it is also meant to justify perceptual beliefs, it (obviously) *must* be justificatory. Its very idea is therefore unintelligible.

Perhaps Davidson's argument against the content idea has received less attention than his argument against the scheme idea because it is so direct.¹³ It appeals to nothing as colorful as metaphors or complicated as truth theories. In fact Davidson's argument is so direct that one might simply find it wanting. Here are four reasons to do so.

First, *contra* Davidson, awareness is not just another belief. Grammar already suggests a mismatch. 'Awareness' is a mass noun (some people possess *more* awareness, or are *more* aware, than others); 'belief', a count noun (the only *thing* that can justify one belief is *another* belief). More importantly, awareness need not be propositional, while, for Davidson, belief does. I can possess awareness of a patch of white snow without necessarily being interpretable as bearing a certain attitude toward an intentional object analyzable in subject/predicate form. Yet, for Davidson, my belief that there is a patch of white snow precisely involves my being so interpretable. Presumably penguins and polar bears can possess *awareness of* patches of white snow, and so can I. Nonetheless it is likely that only I can *believe that* there are such patches. Awareness is simply not a belief. But then, if Davidson is right that awareness justifies some beliefs, he has shown that beliefs can be justified by something other than other beliefs. His argument against content is thereby blocked.

Second, awareness instead seems structurally similar to Kant's empirical intuition. For Kant, empirical intuition is a representation of the world unmediated by concepts. Empirical intuition therefore is not propositional. Beliefs, conversely, for Davidson, seem structurally similar to Kant's empirical judgments. Empirical judgments are representations of the world mediated by concepts. Empirical judgments are propositional. Now, for Kant, empirical intuition contains empirical content. It contains the non-conceptual matter, or data of sensation, that the categories of understanding and forms of intuition, embedded in synthetic a priori judgments, conceptualize. So, if awareness is like Kant's empirical intuition, then awareness is

itself a candidate conduit for empirical content. In fact, while I think that on Kant's view empirical intuition *contains* empirical content, Davidson (2002b, p. 40) himself classifies Kant's empirical intuition as a species *of* empirical content. Hence Davidson's invoking awareness seems to commit him—indirectly on my view, directly on his—to empirical content itself.

Of course Davidson contends that awareness is conceptual while empirical content is merely causal. He would not himself connect awareness to content. Yet, and this is the third reason to find Davidson's argument wanting, it is unclear that something cannot be causal and justificatory in the first place. David Hume (1999, §2; 2000, I.i.1–2) maintained that concepts (his "ideas") were faded sensations ("impressions"). *Qua* conceptual, concepts would be justificatory; yet, *qua* faded remnants of something causal, they would presumably themselves be causal. Concepts do double-duty for Hume. Where is the problem?

Davidson himself discusses Hume on what amounts to the same issue. According to Davidson, Hume identified basic beliefs about the world with sensations. Now Davidson rejects such a view for two reasons:

first, if the basic beliefs do not exceed in content the corresponding sensation, they cannot support any inference to an objective world; and second, there are no such beliefs (2002b, p. 142).

The first point is that Hume's view cannot be used to prove the existence of a world beyond our beliefs. This is an odd point for Davidson to make in the context of Hume, who I do not think cared about supporting any such inference. More importantly, it is an odd point for Davidson to make in the context of his own argument. It is to say that we should reject a view because it has a separate consequence that Davidson does not like: the view does not let us counter the skeptic. Yet this does not show the view false. If anything Davidson begs the question against the skeptic.

The second point that Davidson makes about Hume is that there are no basic beliefs. Yet Davidson's reason for this just is his reason for thinking that only beliefs can justify beliefs. Sensations (and other candidate kinds of content) are the wrong logical type. But then this second point adds nothing to Davidson's argument. Davidson therefore has yet to provide a non-circular reason why content cannot be causal and justificatory. He therefore has yet to show that its very idea is unintelligible.

The fourth and final reason to find Davidson's argument against the content idea wanting is this. Suppose that Davidson is right. Empirical content cannot be causal and justificatory. Suppose also that what he thinks follows does follow. The only thing that can justify beliefs are other beliefs. Regardless something still *causes* those beliefs. For Davidson, there are still "causal intermediaries" (2002b, pp. 144) between us and the world. These intermediaries are just not justificatory. Davidson in effect replaces content with causal intermediaries. The problem with the replacement however is that it fails. Davidson's commitment to causal intermediaries entails his commitment to content itself.

For starters, we should note that Davidson actually offers two different notions of content. In his argument (2001, essay 13) against the scheme idea—where a conceptual scheme is meant to be the mental or linguistic contribution to our knowledge, judgments, beliefs, or sentences—empirical content is just meant to be the content of our conceptual scheme. It is what the scheme allegedly organizes or fits, and so what makes our knowledge *about* something (or perhaps what our knowledge *is* about). It is meant to be the worldly contribution to our knowledge, judgments, beliefs, or sentences. Now nowhere in the notion of being organized, being fit, being about, or being a worldly contribution, is there any notion of justification. Something can be the content of something else without justifying it. Davidson's landmark argument against scheme/content dualism makes no appeal to the allegedly justificatory nature of content at all. In fact Davidson requires a separate

argument to show that content must be justificatory to count *as* content. Absent such an argument, this, Davidson's initial notion of content, is of something causal but not justificatory.

Now, given this initial notion, it is unclear why Davidson's causal intermediaries would not *themselves* be instances of empirical content. They certainly seem to satisfy everything that Davidson says about content when he (2001, essay 13) introduces the idea of scheme/content dualism. In fact the causal intermediaries that Davidson thinks exist when he (2002b, essays 3, 10, 11; 2005a, essay 4) argues argument *against* content are perfectly suited to play the role *of* content when he (2001, essay 13) argues against schemes.

Admittedly in these later articles Davidson does bundle the justificatory idea into the content idea. In this, his later notion, content is now meant to be causal *and* justificatory. But, besides the bundling's coming late, there is another reason to prefer Davidson's initial notion. Davidson holds up Kant as an archetypal scheme/content dualist,¹⁴ and we would be hard pressed to find disagreement. Yet Kant's candidate content, the data of sensation, is meant to be *neither* causal *nor* justificatory. It is meant not to be *causal*, because **cause and effect** is a category and so itself conceptual. Nothing non-conceptual can be causal for Kant. It is meant not to be *justificatory*, because it is the wrong kind of thing to justify anything. Consider my judgment that there is a white patch of snow. If justified directly, Kant would presumably say that my judgment is justified by the appearance of white snow. And appearances, for Kant, are already conceptual and intuitive—already subject to Kant's conceptual scheme. If justified indirectly, he would presumably say that my judgment is justified by other appearances and inferences—all also already subject to Kant's scheme. One thing that Kant would not say is that the data of sensation themselves justify my judgment. Kant would never say that such data justify anything, since they play no epistemic role for him. Experience itself, for Kant, operates at the level of appearance. The data of sensation are merely

the necessarily posited yet non-epistemic contribution from things in themselves; and things in themselves are merely the necessarily posited yet non-epistemic source of such content, about which, Kant (1998, A255/B310–1) is clear, we can say nothing positive.

Kant's content is therefore neither causal nor justificatory. Nonetheless we might charitably count it as causal of a peculiar sort. On the one hand, Kant requires that things in themselves somehow *affect* us. Though such "affectation" cannot be (conceptual) causation, it must be a means by which content is contributed by things in themselves to judgments. Commitment to content would itself then commit Kant to something *like* causal intermediaries. On the other hand, Davidson often uses "causal" simply to *mean* non-conceptual. For him, causal intermediaries just are non-conceptual contributions from the world in itself to beliefs and sentences.

Kant's data and Davidson's intermediaries are therefore both non-conceptual and in at least some sense causal. Neither however is justificatory. Neither can justify anything. Hence Kant's notion of content can at most satisfy Davidson's initial notion of content. It can at most be non-conceptual and in some sense causal. Kant's notion cannot however satisfy Davidson's later notion of content. It cannot be causal (in any sense) and justificatory. But then Davidson must privilege his initial notion of content, lest on his view Kant not be a scheme/content dualist at all. Put differently, Kant's not being a dualist according to Davidson's later notion is a *reductio ad absurdum* of that notion.

So only Davidson's initial notion of content must be operative. Now this is my point. Davidson's initial notion of content is indistinguishable from his notion of causal intermediaries. For him, both content and causal intermediaries are meant to be the causal, non-conceptual contribution from the world to our beliefs and sentences. Neither is meant to be justificatory. But then, not only are the causal intermediaries that Davidson thinks exist when he argues argument against content perfectly suited to play the role of content when he argues against schemes, as we saw above. Davidson, by replacing

content with causal intermediaries, ultimately replaces content with itself.

We may now conclude our analysis of Davidson's separate argument against content. Not only does Davidson's invoking awareness reveal that beliefs can be justified by things other than beliefs. Not only does that invocation seem to commit him (indirectly or directly) to empirical content. Not only does he fail to present a non-circular reason why the content idea is unintelligible. But Davidson replaces content with itself. For all these many reasons Davidson's separate argument against content fails.

4 *Another Similarity with Kant*

Recall where we have been. In §1 we reviewed Davidson's classic argument against scheme/content dualism, which attacks the scheme idea. In §2 we saw that the argument commits Davidson to there being a set of intertranslatable languages, which by his own lights would be a scheme. We then concluded that Davidson could get out of his commitment to a scheme and with it scheme/content dualism only if his separate argument against content succeeds. In §3 we reviewed that separate argument and found that it fails. Hence the set of intertranslatable languages would for Davidson be a conceptual scheme, ultimately paired with empirical content. Along the way we also saw various similarities between Davidson's and Kant's views. Here we consider another similarity. It concerns Davidson's principle of charity and Kant's synthetic a priori judgments.

For Kant, recall from §1, the mind contributes synthetic a priori judgments, principles constitutive of the framework in which empirical knowledge is possible, to empirical knowledge. For him, because all human beings employ the same framework, these judgments are constitutive of a universal conceptual scheme. Now Davidson is interested not in empirical knowledge as Kant understood it but in knowledge about meaning and with it belief. For him, what the mind or language contributes to our knowledge of

what speakers' utterances mean and what they believe would be the apparatus and presuppositions that the interpreter herself brings to the interpretive table. The principle of charity, recall from §2, is among them. Further, since the principle would in turn be constitutive of the meanings of all the sentences that we take others to hold true, and these sentences would collectively be constitutive of their language, the principle would ultimately be constitutive of the set of intertranslatable languages. And the set of intertranslatable languages just is a conceptual scheme. The principle of charity would therefore be a constitutive principle of a scheme in Davidson's own sense. Nonetheless, rather than being true in virtue of the structures of the human mind, as constitutive principles of Kant's conceptual scheme were meant to be, the principle of charity would be true in virtue of the rules of interpretation. Moreover those interpreted meanings and beliefs, constituted by the principle of charity in light of observations of speakers' behavior given their environment, would then be empirical claims true in virtue of this interpretive (or ultimately linguistic) contribution plus empirical content from the world.

Hence, for Davidson, the principle of charity is a principle used to constitute meanings and beliefs given experience—in particular a speaker's observable behavior given her observable environment. It therefore correlates with Kant's synthetic a priori judgments. Interpreted meanings and beliefs, as empirical claims construed via the principle of charity in light of the speaker's observable behavior given her observable environment, correlate with Kant's synthetic a posteriori judgments.

Perhaps this is unsurprising. Davidson himself at one point (2002a, pp. 220–1) suggests that the principle of charity is synthetic a priori. His reason is that the principle of charity is a principle constitutive of mentalistic descriptions—where at that point Davidson contends that mentalistic and physicalistic descriptions amount to two different schemes. Davidson soon (p. 243) counts these not as different schemes but as sentences expressing irreducible con-

cepts expressible within a single language.¹⁵ Nonetheless his claim that the principle of charity is synthetic a priori is consistent with his treatment of it. Just as, for Kant, relying on the categories and forms of intuition, embedded in synthetic a priori judgments, is a condition on the possibility of knowledge, for Davidson, relying on the principle of charity is a condition on the possibility of interpretation: recall that “charity is not an option, but a condition of having a workable theory” (2001, p. 197). Just as Kant maintains that “[w]e cannot **think** any object except through categories” (1998, B165) in particular, which are epistemic rules applied to empirical intuition, containing sensory content, Davidson maintains that we cannot *interpret* any utterances except through the principle of charity, which is an interpretive rule applied to utterances, containing interpretive content. Thus we can understand Kant's synthetic a priori judgments as providing the categorical and intuitive form that our knowledge must take: it must be consistent with arithmetic, geometry, and the fundamental conceptual claims of pure natural science. We can similarly understand Davidson's principle of charity as providing the interpretive form that the meaning of a speaker's utterances must take: it must be consistent with a speaker's believing in basic cases roughly what we would in her spot.

In fact the Kantian connection is closer still. Suppose that we make good on the claim that the principle of charity provides interpretive form to a speaker's utterances, which would themselves provide interpretive content. It follows that interpretive form is by itself insufficient for interpretation. Absent interpretive content, the principle of charity would lay fallow. Interpretation would be impossible. Likewise, absent interpretive form, whatever content were offered would remain uninterpreted utterances, raw material from which interpretation could emerge. Without the principle of charity we would be unable to figure out what a speaker means. Hence, for Davidson, interpretive form without content is empty, while interpretive content without form is mute.¹⁶

5 *Truth Revisited*

Let us take stock. Though Davidson argues against scheme/content dualism, he is committed to it. Further, though Davidson uses the principle of charity to argue against the scheme idea and with it the dualism, he ironically treats the principle as constitutive of a scheme—not too dissimilar to how Kant treats synthetic a priori judgments.

Now Davidson's arguments against scheme/content dualism form the backdrop of subsequent work. Given all that we have unearthed, what should Davidson do? I am less sure about Davidson than I am about us. Once we recognize that Davidson is committed to the dualism and to the principle of charity's being a constitutive principle of a conceptual scheme, we can also recognize that he is committed to a revolutionary notion of truth—even though he does not fully realize it. To appreciate this, consider what Davidson (especially 2005b, ch. 3) already says about the topic. On the one hand, he is committed to Tarski's semantic conception, which defines truth in a language. On the other hand, Davidson maintains that truth more generally—what all the various truths in their respective languages share—is undefinable. It must simply be taken as primitive, though Davidson does say that truth understood in this more general way is connected to meaning, belief, desire, and rationality.

Now Davidson is right to embrace Tarski's notion of truth in a language. He is also right to maintain that a more general notion of truth is undefinable, while simultaneously connecting it to meaning, belief, desire, and rationality. Nonetheless Davidson's surprising commitment to scheme/content dualism and the constitutive status of the principle of charity allows us to flesh out this more general notion of truth further. More can be said than Davidson himself does, regardless of whether Davidson himself retains his arguments against scheme/content dualism.

To see this, reconsider Davidson's place in the historical di-

alectic with which we began. Kant's synthetic a priori judgments were meant to be the only possible, and therefore universal, constitutive principles available to us, constitutive of the only possible, and therefore universal, conceptual scheme available to us. Further, for Kant, because constitutive principles were meant to encapsulate norms of correctness, these norms were themselves meant to be universal. Though empirical claims of classical mechanics were true merely relative to the classical-mechanical "conceptual scheme," because we have no other scheme, that scheme was universal for all humans. Thus while Kant's project was to explain the possibility, not the truth, of our judgments, Kant might be understood as having offered principles definitive of universal truth for humans. That $5 + 7 = 12$ would be true for not merely one human being but us all.

Carnap, reacting to general relativity made possible by the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries, rejected Kant's contention that there was a single conceptual scheme and set of constitutive principles. Instead there were different linguistic frameworks, constituted by different analytic sentences. Though Carnap's notion of truth in a framework was a variant of Tarski's notion of truth in a language, Carnap went beyond Tarski. According to him, while questions asked relative to a set of constitutive principles, and so internal to their scheme, could have answers that were true in a relativized way, questions asked independent of any constitutive principles, and so external to any scheme, could have answers that at best were pragmatic. Such "external questions" at best concerned the pragmatic worth of adopting one set of constitutive principles over another. Relative to the scheme of classical mechanics, Euclid's parallel postulate was true. Relative to the scheme of general relativity, it was false. Moreover, deciding whether the sentence "really" was true or false, which involved deciding in which scheme we choose to work, was itself a matter not of truth or falsity but of convenience. So while Carnap's truth in a framework was a variant on Tarski's truth in a language, Carnap's discussion of truth more generally commit-

ted him to a hybrid view. Truth was relativized internally, while pragmatism replaced truth externally.

Quine engaged Carnap on just that point. *Contra* Carnap's hybridism, Quine proposed a "thoroughgoing pragmatism" (2006, p. 46), a consequence of his rejecting Carnap's analytic/synthetic distinction. For Quine, all questions became external. Truth relative to a set of constitutive principles yielded to pragmatic considerations generally:

Each man is given a scientific heritage plus a continuing barrage of sensory stimulation; and the considerations which guide him in warping his scientific heritage to fit his continuing sensory promptings are, where rational, pragmatic (p. 46).¹⁷

The only "rational" evaluation that one could give a claim was whether affirming it was more or less pragmatic than denying it. For Quine, Euclid's parallel postulate was not, as it was for Carnap, true relative to the framework of classical mechanics and false relative to the framework of general relativity. The parallel postulate was false overall but only in the sense of being less pragmatic than its denial. For the falsity of the parallel postulate led to views that more accurately predicted physical phenomena. Though Quine, like all the others, talked about truth in a language, there was no epistemically significant internal/external distinction in his work. Truth in a language just was truth generally, and truth generally just was pragmatic. Gone were relativism and hybridism. Gone too was any substantive notion of truth.

Now if Carnap was right to reject Kant's view that there were universal constitutive principles, and Quine was right to reject Carnap's view that there were relativized constitutive principles, then *no* constitutive principles remained. All that was left to inquiry were pragmatic considerations. Truth itself went pragmatic. Knowledge in turn reduced to something like the set of convenient beliefs.

Enter Davidson. Davidson, recall, endorses Tarski's notion of truth in a language, while also maintaining that truth more generally

is connected to meaning, belief, desire, and rationality. Now I maintain that Davidson is also, and surprisingly, committed to more such connections—regardless of whether he himself should pursue them. As I have argued, Davidson's principle of charity, like Kant's synthetic a priori judgments and Carnap's analytic sentences, is meant to be a constitutive principle.¹⁸ But then it is meant to provide not only a rule for interpreting meanings and beliefs but also norms of correctness when interpreting them. These norms, like those established by Kant's and Carnap's constitutive principles, would be definitive of truth in their respective conceptual scheme, here the set of intertranslatable languages. And these norms are of correctness not mere convenience. For Davidson argues that to the extent to which interpretations veer from respecting the principle of charity they are incorrect or in error: "the residue of sentences held true translated by sentences held false (and *vice versa*) is the margin for error (foreign or domestic)" (2001, p. 26). He adds: "I can interpret your words correctly only by interpreting so as to put us largely in agreement" (p. 200). While, like Carnap, Davidson has his truth in a language, unlike Carnap's, Davidson's more general notion of truth is substantive, concerning correctness, not pragmatic, concerning convenience.

Moreover, while Carnap maintained that there were different sets of constitutive principles in science, Davidson maintains that there is only one set of constitutive principles in interpretation. While Carnap allowed claims of classical mechanics to be true relative to the postulates of Euclidean geometry and those of general relativity to be true relative to the postulates of Riemannian geometry, Davidson allows claims about what classical and relativistic physicists alike *mean* and *believe* to be true relative to the principle of charity: it is true that each means and believes what she does relative to our ability to interpret her charitably. Moreover, recall from §1, for Davidson, any interpreter could in principle interpret what these physicists mean and ascribe to them beliefs. The principle of charity is a constitutive principle for all interpreters, and is

itself a constitutive principle of a universal conceptual scheme—the scheme in which all interpretation takes place. So while Carnap’s substantive notion of truth was relativized to different conceptual schemes in science, Davidson’s substantive notion is relativized to a universal scheme in interpretation. But relativity to a universal scheme grants the principle universality.

In fact Davidson’s ultimate view is (again) closest to Kant’s. Davidson, like Kant, has a single, and so universal, conceptual scheme, with a single, and so universal, set of constitutive principles—Kant’s in science; Davidson’s, interpretation. For Kant, it was universally true that force equals mass times acceleration. All human beings have to experience reality in a way capable of recognizing that, whether or not they ever actually engage in scientific work. Likewise, for Davidson, it is universally true that Newton’s “Force equals mass times acceleration” in English means that force equals mass times acceleration. All human beings have to interpret in a way capable of recognizing that, whether or not they ever actually interpret English sentences. Moreover, just as, for Kant, the parallel postulate was universally true, so, for Davidson, it is universally true that the parallel postulate in English means what it does. For Davidson, truth in a language still plays a role when interpreting particular languages. Some sentences are true in some languages, false in others, and meaningless in others still, as our example from §2, “China has over one billion people,” illustrates. But interpretive truth more generally is, like Kant’s scientific truth, universal. All human interpreters are capable of interpreting all languages. Moreover, to the extent that it is true that particular sentences have the interpretations that they do, this truth is relative to the universal scheme of interpretation.

Nonetheless Davidson’s universalism differs from Kant’s in two ways. First, it is broader. Kant’s synthetic a priori judgments were meant to be constitutive principles only for beings employing our forms of intuition, limiting them to humans. Davidson takes the principle of charity to be a constitutive principle for all interpreters,

human or otherwise. Insofar as all rational beings employ some kind of language, the principle of charity is a constitutive principle for all of them. Any rational being could interpret Newton’s words and Euclid’s claims. Moreover, because all languages are necessarily intertranslatable into ours, any resulting interpretation, if constructed charitably and recursively as Davidson describes, would be correct.

The second difference is that only Davidson’s universalism admits of indeterminacy. For Kant, every question in science had a determinate answer.¹⁹ The force, mass, and acceleration of objects have unitary values. For Davidson, every utterance in a language has an indeterminate meaning. Sentences interpreted as being about the force, mass, and acceleration of objects are in principle equally interpretable to be about something else, as long as compensatorily different interpretations occur elsewhere. On Davidson’s view, while all interpretations are universally *determinable*, insofar as all rational beings can interpret a speaker’s language, no interpretations are *determinate*, insofar as no rational beings must interpret a speaker’s language the same way. Interpretations can differ without there being any fact of the matter about which is true. Indeterminacy of interpretation builds indeterminacy into Davidson’s notion of truth.

6 *Why We Should Care*

Thus while Davidson remains committed to Tarski’s notion of truth in a language, he is also committed to a more general notion with the following features. On the one hand, as he explains, this more general notion is connected to meaning, belief, desire, and rationality. On the other hand, as we have revealed, it is substantive not pragmatic, universal not relative, broad not narrow, and indeterminate not determinate. Davidson’s being committed to such a rich notion is no small feat, especially without his realizing it. Nonetheless Davidson’s views, explicit and implicit, remain contested. Nor have I said anything to defend them. In fact I have remained agnostic as

to how Davidson should himself proceed given that his arguments against scheme/content dualism have failed. So what reasons are there to pay attention to his views on truth? Why should we care about Davidson's notion, as we have analyzed it?

There are two reasons. First, paying attention to Davidson's notion of truth means paying attention to how Davidson and his predecessors relate. It means paying attention to how the histories of modern and analytic philosophy are continuous, and so how understanding one enriches understanding the other. Quine remarked that there are two kinds of philosophers: those interested in the history of philosophy and those interested in philosophy (Hanna 2001, p. 8). Yet Quine failed to realize that appreciating the historical antecedents of contemporary views often helps appreciate those views. It can accentuate their strengths and weaknesses, clarifying what is at stake in accepting or rejecting what is currently on offer. It can also show what motivated those views, and suggest what views they themselves might motivate.

Put differently, one need not read history for historical reasons. In fact history is itself not merely historical. "The past," and here I mean the specifically philosophical past, "is never dead. It's not even past" (Faulkner 1994, I.iii). History bleeds forward. Davidson is neither the first nor last to investigate how mind or language, and the world, contribute to knowledge. As I have suggested, each competing investigation has implied a competing notion of truth, Davidson's only the most recent. Paying attention to Davidson's notion therefore allows us to take in the historical progression. It thereby also permits us to get a better grip on its various stages and to decide for ourselves concerning each one's merits.

Second, paying attention to Davidson's notion means paying attention to a notion with intuitive appeal. Though I have not defended it or any of Davidson's views, and remain agnostic on the right move for Davidson himself in all this, I would like to suggest in closing that the more general notion of truth to which Davidson is committed conforms to our own best pre-theoretical intuitions about what

truth should be like. While we might disagree with Davidson on the details, it would be strange to disconnect truth from meaning, belief, desire, and rationality. Truth, no matter what else it is, is a semantic property, and so at home with meaning. And meaning, no matter what else it is, is expressed by creatures with beliefs and desires, and therefore rationality.

Then there are the implicit properties of Davidson's notion, arising from his commitment to a universal conceptual scheme with a universal constitutive principle, that we have revealed. It makes intuitive sense, I want to suggest, that truth be substantive not merely pragmatic, as Quine would have it. We want a notion that captures the full sense of correctness above and beyond convenience. Likewise it makes intuitive sense, I want to suggest, that truth be substantive and universal, which Carnap could not himself allow. We want truth to be fixed regardless of any particular point of view. Opinions as to the truth of what sentences mean should be shareable (even if not necessarily shared—more momentarily) by any language user. In fact it makes intuitive sense, I now want to claim, that truth be broader than even our shared human perspective. Kant sought to limit the legitimate reach of human reason; we have a felt need for truth to transcend even this universally anthropocentric purview. Whatever turns out to be a true claim about the interpretation of some bit of language should be knowable by any interpreter, human or otherwise. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, it makes intuitive sense, I now want to venture, that true interpretations be universally determinable yet indeterminate. Multiple competing interpretations should all have a chance at being correct, even simultaneously. Interpretation should to some extent be in the eye of the interpreter. But we should also be able to agree about whether some interpretation is incorrect. We should collectively be able to decide when an interpretation is simply wrong. Interpreters should to some extent be able to see eye to eye.

This is not to say that truth *is*, on the one hand, connected to meaning, belief, desire, and rationality, *and*, on the other hand, sub-

stantive, universal, broad, and indeterminate. To say that the notion is intuitive is not to say that it is correct. But it is to say that there are reasons to see whether truth admits of further description than Tarski gave it, and one good place to start is with Davidson's unrecognized yet serendipitous result.²⁰

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Notes

¹Davidson (2001, essay 13) suggests that scheme/content dualism starts with Kant. He later explains that he is himself next in “a sequence that starts with Kant ... and ends with Quine” (2004, p. 237).

²Carnap (2003) anticipates his (1988) analytic/synthetic distinction. See Goldberg (2009a), Coffa (2008), Friedman (2001), and Hanna (2001) for connections between Kant and Carnap.

³Davidson (2001, essay 13; 2002b, essays 3, 10, 11; 2005a, essay 4) takes Quine's “experience,” “extralinguistic fact,” “nerve irritations,” “sense-data,” and “sensory stimulations” to characterize empirical content. Quine (1981) agrees.

⁴I agree with Lepore and Ludwig that Davidson's argument proceeds by searching for “identification” (2007, p. 307) conditions on schemes.

⁵Nonetheless, as I explain below, it would not limit to one the number of T-sentences that could be generated from each object-language sentence. Interpretation remains indeterminate. See Goldberg (2008b, pp. 369–70; 2009b, pp. 267–8) for the role that triangulation plays in limiting indeterminacy. Also see Goldberg (2004), Goldberg and LeBar (2012), and Lepore and Ludwig (2007, pp. 185–92), for more on the principle of charity.

⁶See also Davidson (2001, p. 137; 2004, pp. 35–6, 69–70; 2005a, pp. 318–9).

⁷See Davidson (1993, p. 117; 2001, pp. 276–7; 2002b, pp. 88–9, 114–5; 2005a, p. 52; 2005b, essay 7) for his understanding of languages as idiolects. See Davidson (2001, essay 11; 2002b, p. 89; 2005b, essays 7, 8) for his understanding of idiolects as evolving. Moreover, Lepore and Ludwig (2007, ch. 17) question whether anyone actually holds the view of language that Davidson rejects. When discussing it, they print ‘language’ as ‘*language*’ to emphasize that what Davidson says pertains, not to language as commonly if not universally understood, but to language as Davidson (2005b, p. 107) perhaps idiosyncratically takes his opponents to understand it.

⁸See Goldberg (2008b, 2009b, 2012) and Goldberg and LeBar (2012) for more on Davidson on interpretation.

⁹See Rorty (1979, p. 99) and Goldberg (2004, p. 420).

¹⁰Davidson (2002b, p. 40) is explicit.

¹¹See Goldberg and Rellihan (2008) where I call this view “Kantian skepticism,” and Goldberg (2008a) where I call it “noumenalism.” In fact, as I (Goldberg 2008a) explain, Pettit (2003, chs. 1–3) is himself committed to such a view, and he and Smith and Stoljar (1998) find it exciting enough to discuss at length.

¹²“[J]ustification seems to depend on awareness, which is just another belief” (2002b, p. 142).

¹³See Goldberg (2004, p. 432, n. 2) and surrounding text for comparative bibliographies.

¹⁴Davidson does so implicitly (2001, essay 13) and explicitly (2002b, p. 40;

2004, p. 237).

¹⁵Davidson's decided view is that the principle of charity is constitutive of mentalistic descriptions (2002, essay 12, 13), while the principle of causality is constitutive of physicalistic descriptions (2005a, essay 14), where both kinds of descriptions employ concepts irreducible to one another yet expressible within a single language. See Ramberg (1999) and Davidson (1999c).

¹⁶See Goldberg (2009c, pp. 74–5).

¹⁷See Glock (2003, ch. 1, §2) for the extent to which this makes Quine a pragmatist.

¹⁸Davidson, persuaded by Rorty (1995), first (2002b, p. 154) claims that he is a pragmatist, later (2005b, ch. 3) rightly recanting. While Quine also relies on the principle of charity, for him, the principle functions as a regulative ideal: translations should whenever possible but need not be charitable. This supports Allison's (2004, pp. 421–2) claim that pragmatists can accommodate regulative ideals but not constitutive principles. In fact, for Allison, that Davidson treats the principle of charity as a constitutive principle suffices to establish that Davidson is no pragmatist.

¹⁹This is true at least in physics (Kant 1998, 2004).

²⁰Thanks go to Matthew Burstein, Wayne Davis, Mark LeBar, James Mattingly, Linda Wetzel, and several anonymous referees for helpful comments. Thanks also go to Washington and Lee University for a generous Lenfest Summer Grant to support this research.

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