ZEN & THE ART OF (DAVIDSONIAN) ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Jaroslav Peregrin
www.cuni.cz/~peregrin

> *Hier sieht man, daβ der Solipsismus, streng durchgeführt, mit dem reinen Realismus zusammenfällt. Das Ich des Solipsismus schrumpft zum ausdehnungslosen Punkt zusammen, und es bleibt die ihm koordinierte Realität.*
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> Wittgenstein (1922, §5.64)

Donald Davidson and Contemporary Philosophy

Since the sixties, when Donald Davidson published his first influential papers, his ideas have slowly, but persistently, been infiltrating philosophical discussions; and his views of philosophical problems have been consistently winning increasing number of adherents. Today, Davidson figures as perhaps the most virtuous representative of contemporary (post)analytic philosophy - drawing freely on his analytic predecessors, continuing to philosophize in their rationalist spirit and sharing their passion for correct argumentation, but meanwhile never hesitating to eschew those aspects of the analytic tradition which he finds misguided.

However, Davidson maintains also the air of an *obscure* philosopher. He seems to belong to that line of philosophers, starting perhaps from Heraclitus (for whom *skoteinos*, i.e. *obscure*, became a nickname), whose teaching has been always taken not only as a source of enlightenment, but also (and perhaps even more frequently) as a kind of riddle. This is strange, for Davidson's writings are neither fragmentary (as are those of Heraclitus), nor enigmatic in the style of, say, Wittgenstein. Nevertheless there appear to be almost as many interpretations of Davidson's views as there are interpreters. Some take Davidson as, first and foremost, a great semantician; others see him as an inconsequential prophet of pragmatism[1]; and others compare him to Derrida[2] or Heidegger[3].

In this paper, I would like to point out one aspect of Davidson's position which I think makes his viewpoint especially hard to grasp. I would like to indicate that one of the things Davidson's teaching aims at is the overthrowing of the way we commonly see the world (and

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[1] Notoriously Rorty - see, e.g., Rorty (1998).

[2] Wheeler (1986).

[3] Malpas (1992).

especially the relationship of our thought and our language to the world), at making us abandon a conceptual scheme which „holds us captive"[4]. The trouble is, it seems to me, that his readers often interpret his claims from within the very scheme they are supposed to give up - and this inevitably makes them interpret what Davidson says in a way which is bound to be inadequate (if not absurd).

I think that Davidson's effort to make us abandon the ordinary visual angle is not without precedent. I think that one of the parallels which suggest themselves in connection with it is the parallel with Hegel's effort to dismantle the Kantian dualism of concepts and intuitions (and as far as I know, nobody has yet explored this parallel in depth)[5].

Comparing Davidson to Hegel is, admittedly, weird; and I will refrain. However, not because of the weirdmess, for what I am going to do is to present a comparison which is undoubtedly even weirder - I am going to compare Davidson with a zen buddhist guru. It seems to me that the very weirdness of the comparison may help to pinpoint the radicalness of (what I take to be) Davidson's stance, to help us see that to understand him properly we must, like when becoming adepts of zen teaching, avoid the „mistake consisting in our splitting into two what is really and absolutely one" (Suzuki, 1949, p. 15). And besides this 'therapeutic value', if it is true that, as Rorty (1991, p. 94) suggests, one of the important tasks of philosophy is „the colligation of hitherto unrelated texts", such weird treatment of Davidson might be - should it prove enlightening - might have an independent philosophical value.

The Circle

To illuminate that aspect of zen to which I am going to allude, I shall employ a metaphor of a contemporary Korean zen master living in the USA, Seung Sahn. In his book *Only don't know* (Four Seasons, San Francisco, 1982) he depicts the spiritual way of an adept of zen in terms of going round the following circle:

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[4] If anyone finds it awkward to use the term „conceptual scheme" in connection with a philosopher who has devoted much of his philosophical effort to show us that there are no such things, then I refer him to Davidson's own pronouncements in Borradori (1994).

[5] See Pippin (1989, esp. Chap. 2). However, the parallel is most striking if you read Hegel in the way Pinkard (1991) does (Pinkard notes this, on page 303 of his paper, without invoking Davidson's name).

$$180^0$$

$$270^0 \qquad\qquad 90^0$$

$$0^0 = 360^0$$
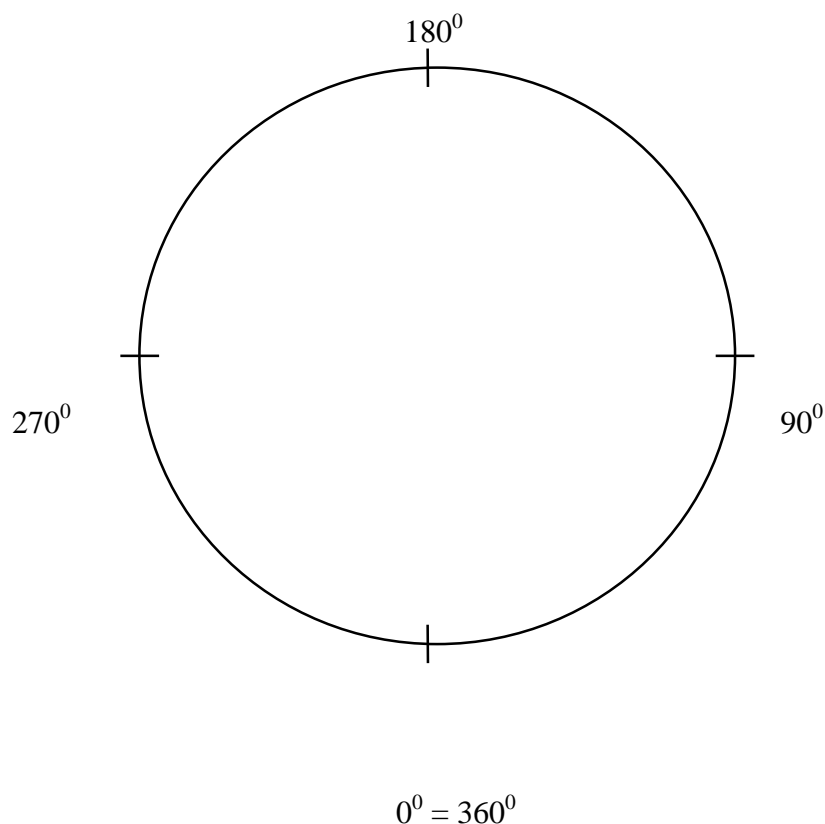
THE ZEN CIRCLE (ACCORDING TO MASTER SEUNG SAHN):

0^0:   Attachment to name & form (1 + 2 = 3)
90^0:   Form is emptiness, emptiness is form (0 = 1, 1= 0)
180^0:   Neither form, nor emptiness (1000 x 0 = 0, 1 x 0 = 0)
270^0:   Freedom with respect to form & emptiness (3 x 3 = 9, 1000 x 100 = 1000 x 9)
360^0:   Form is form, emptiness is emptiness (3 x 3 = 9)

This can be explained, roughly, in the following way. In the zero stage of her development, the adept is bound to name and form, seeing the world 'uncritically' 'as it is'. In the next stage (90^0), she recognizes that form and emptiness are not insuperably separated, that form in fact *is* emptiness, and emptiness in fact *is* form. In the following state (180^0), this results into the denial of the very notions of form and emptiness; and subsequently (270^0) to one's freedom with respect to form and emptiness. In the final stage the adept finds herself back at the starting point seeing the world 'as it is'; however, the actual peregrination of the circle has enabled her to now view the world not with the eyes of a naive adept, but with those of an awakened master.

My conjecture is that, analogously we can imagine a model adept of the Davidsonian philosophical stance - aiming at liberation from scheme/content dualism - as peregrinating a similar kind of circle. In the beginning, she sees the world as consisting of things, which we somehow manage to mean with our words (0^0). Then she first experiences the linguistic turn (90^0): she recognizes that there are no things save things-as-meant, that „to be is to be the value of a variable", and hence that *thingishness* and *meaningness* are two inseparable sides of the same coin. This knowledge is likely to lead her (180^0) to doubt whether there are indeed any 'real' things (beyond fabrications of our language), and whether there are any 'real' meanings (for meaning was supposed to be a kind of 'linguistic reaching' to 'real', language-external things). This may give rise to the following stage (270^0), in which she realizes that if there are no things over and above things fabricated by a language, then she is free to set up the world according to her liking, that it is enough to choose a suitable language. However, the ultimate step (360^0) brings her to the realization that if there are no things over and above those fabricated by a language, then these things are as 'real' as things can ever be and hence it makes no sense to see them as 'not thingish enough' (And, like in zen, this ultimate step is the vital crux).

This can be depicted as the following 'semantic circle':

THE SEMANTIC CIRCLE

0^0:   There are things and we mean them by words
90^0:   Thingishness is meaningness, meaningness is thingishness
180^0:   There is no thingishness, and hence no meaningness
270^0:   What *I* want is thingish, hence what *I* want is meaningish
360^0:   Thingishness is thingishness, meaningness is meaningness

Continuing to toy with transmutation of the circle, we may come to draw also the ontological and the epistemic versions of the same circular path:

THE ONTOLOGICAL CIRCLE

0^0:   There is *the* way the world is (and there are ways in which it *appears* to us from various parochial viewpoints)
90^0:   Each way the world is is the way it is from a viewpoint
180^0:   There is no way the world 'really' is (in itself)
270^0:   We are free to choose how the world is
360^0:   The world is as it is

THE EPISTEMIC CIRCLE

0^0:   There is the God's Eye view of the Universe (and there are our parochial views)
90^0:   There is no God's Eye View, only the plurality of parochial views

180^0:   No view is really the view of the Universe
270^0:   Whatever view I want is a view of the Universe
360^0:   There is the view of the universe which sees it as it is

My present purpose can perhaps be best illustrated with the help of this epistemic variant of the circle: the crucial step from 270^0 to 360^0 can be seen as consisting in the realization of the fact that if there is no God's Eye View, then there is no way to *deny* the God's eye view - but this does not mean that, after all, there *is* a view which would be absolute and transcend every parochial view. It means that the whole problem of the absolute vs. parochial viewpoints is, so to say, *aufgehoben*.

Let us try to find some illuminating labels for the 'ideological' positions corresponding to the individual stages of the circle. The ideology of the zero stage, 0^0, corresponds to what is often called *metaphysical realism* claiming that „things are as they are (in their absolute and for us maybe forever indiscernible way)". In the first stage (90^0) we fall into *relativism*, we see that „things can be seen to be in various different ways". The second stage (180^0) can be dubbed *nihilism*, claiming that „there are neither things, nor a way how they are" (in contrast to the other ones, this does not seem to be a stage in which many adepts would acquiesce). The third stage (270^0) is the stage of *idealism* urging that „things are in whichever way I make them be". The final stage (360^0), claiming that „things are as they are (namely as they are for us)", can then be labeled *naturalism*.

Hence the 'ideological' version of the circle:

THE IDEOLOGICAL CIRCLE
0^0:   Realism
90^0:   Relativism
180^0:   Nihilism
270^0:   Idealism
360^0:   Naturalism

Two Ways of Viewing Language

One of the ways to approximate the wisdom which should be gained by going round the circle is in terms of the distinction between two essentially different ways of viewing language, which I have discussed elsewhere (see Peregrin, 1995; 1996). The distinction is that among (i) viewing language as a 'nomenclature', i.e. as a means of representing things of the world; and (ii) viewing it as a toolbox, as a means of *interacting* with the world. (I called the first view the *nomenclatural* view, and the second view, perhaps unhappily, the *structural* view;

and I have insisted that the dividing line between philosophers accepting the first and the second view cuts across standardly recognized philosophical schools).

What I now want to suggest is that what one may (or should) gain going round the circle amounts, besides any other benefit, to abandoning the representational view - for it is this abandonment which brings us, into the 360^0 stage, dissolving the apparently irreconcilable dualisms in which we are trapped - it frees us from the dualism of the representing and represented and thereby rids us of many philosophical troubles. This is to say that whereas the point of zen training, resulting in *satori*, is to overcome the dualisms normally present with our making sense of the world and coping with it, the point of the Davidsonian analytic philosophy, resulting into *naturalism*, is very similar: to overcome harmful dualisms, in this case those which are likely to create philosophical (pseudo)problems.

Now just as there are different and mutually independent ways of reaching *satori*, there are, I think, various, more or less, independent ways of reaching naturalism. One such way, which I am not going to discuss here, was suggested by the late Wittgenstein (leading to the notion of language as a „form of life" and to the therapeutic treatment of philosophical questions). The American philosophers accepting the analytic tradition chose a different path - for they were not only followers of Carnap and Wittgenstein, but also - at least latently - followers of Dewey and William James. Their way was to expel meaning from human minds and relocate it into human behavior. I think that within this path we can further distinguish two partly independent 'subpaths', the first of which starting with the Quinean rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction, while the second issued from the Sellarsian rejection of the 'Myth of the Given'[6] (I think that Rorty, 1980, is right counting Quine and Sellars as the most significant initiators of current 'post-analytic philosophy'.) In my opinion, while it is the 'Quinean' path which culminates in the philosophy of Donald Davidson, the 'Sellarsian' path comes into full fruition in the teaching of Sellars' disciple Robert Brandom. And Brandom's recent book (1994) also provides an as yet unmatched analysis of the distinction between the two approaches to language mentioned above (although in place of the terms *nomenclatural* and *structural* Brandom employs the terms *representational* and *inferential*.

The crucial element, both in zen and in Davidsonian (post)analytic philosophy, is the completing of the *whole* circle. For it is tempting to come to rest on the heady doctrine of relativism or idealism; and it is not always easy to see that they are *not* that which the masters and Davidson urge. True, when Davidson, e.g., praises coherentialism and says such things as „nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" (1986, 123), one may easily get the impression that he *is* urging a version of solipsistic idealism; but to think so is to mistake the 360^0 stage for the 270^0. The point of the 270^0 stage is that we cannot get outside (of our mind or our language); whereas the point of the 360^0 stage is that if there is no getting outside, then there is no outside (for „outside," we can say with Wittgenstein, 1953,

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[6] See Sellars (1956).

§103, „you cannot breathe") and hence also no inside. This is what Davidson urges e.g. in the last sentence of his *On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme:* „In giving up the dualism, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinion true or false" (Davidson, 1984, 198) And the same point is made, even more vividly, by Brandom: „Discourse practices incorporate actual things. ... They must not be thought of as hollow, waiting to be filled up by things; they are not thin and abstract, but as concrete as the practice of driving nails with a hammer. ... According to such a construal of practices, it is wrong to contrast discursive practice with a world of facts and things *outside* it, modeled on the contrast between words and the things they refer to" (332). „Thus a demolition of semantic categories of correspondence relative to those of expression does not involve 'loss of the world' in the sense that our discursive practice is then conceived as unconstrained by how things actually are. ... What is lost is only the bifurcation that makes knowledge seem to require the bridging of a *gap* that opens up between sayable and thinkable contents - thought of as existing self-contained on their side of the epistemic crevasse - and the worldly facts, existing on their side" (333).

We may speak about the 'world of things' governed by causal laws; and we may also speak about the 'world of beliefs' governed by inferential relations. However, once we take this talk at face value and see the two as literally distinct worlds, especially if we see the former as being 'outside' while the latter as being 'inside', we must face the unsolvable problem of putting them together, of linking the 'inside' to the 'outside'. We have to invent some relations of correspondence which would guarantee that the inside somehow *mirrors* the outside (hence the perennial idea of a man as a 'mirror of nature'[7]); but in fact we can never succeed in answering the haunting questions of the kind *What if, after all, there is NOTHING outside?* We may succeed (in the sense that we prohibit the problem from arising) only when we realize that things differ from thoughts not in that they inhabit a different world (or a different part of the world), but rather in that they inhabit the same world *in a different way*. The 'world of things' is *the same* world as the 'worlds of thoughts', just as a 'land of Eskimos' may be *the same* land as a 'land of low temperatures': beliefs are not shadowy reflections of facts; facts are simply true beliefs. And once we thus see that beliefs are not 'inside', the claim „nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" turns out to be wholly uncontroversial.

What is Wrong with the Idea of Correspondence?

The representational model of language is based on the intuitive idea that the working of language can be explained by talking about language as picturing the world similarly to a set of photographs picturing, e.g., members of one's family. The powerful picture elaborated in

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[7] *Viz* Rorty (1980).

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* views the network of true propositions as reflecting the network of facts. The obvious trouble is the lack of any perceptible similarity between a sentence and a fact which the sentence is said to picture; hence to be able to put the picture to work we have first to explain what we mean by saying that a sentence pictures a fact. And this is arguably not possible without recourse to what we were supposed to be explaining, *viz* the working of language. To say that a sentence is true iff it corresponds to a fact would be a genuine explanation only if sentences pictured facts in some 'natural', self-explicating way; but as this is not the case, we have still to say what we mean when talking about this notion of picturing, and this we cannot do without essentially exploiting the concept of truth.

Hnece the trouble is not that the correspondence view of language is necessarily wrong, but that it says nothing worth being said. As Davidson (1984, pp.193-194) puts it, „the trouble is that the notion of fitting the totality of experience, like the notions of fitting the facts, or of being true to the facts, adds nothing intelligible to the simple concept of being true." It is not wrong to talk about language corresponding to the world or about its sharing its structure with the world; but doing so we only invent obscure ways of saying things which are otherwise straightforward. So the trouble with saying that words and sentences reflect things and facts is not that one could deny it - on the contrary, the trouble is precisely that this is a triviality *no one* could deny[8].

Let us illustrate this by the following two stories.

First, imagine Mr. X, who has taken a set of photographs of a certain landscape; suppose that the photographs were taken from a plane, from constant height (so that each depicts a rectangular area of the same dimensions), and suppose that the photos link up with each other in such a way that if we put them side by side in the appropriate way we gain a continuous picture of the whole area of landscape in question. Now Mr. X claims that the set of photographs and the area **share a certain structure**, namely that the set consists of rectangular snaps analogously to how the depicted landscape consists of rectangular pieces of land. Is he right? Well, in a sense he clearly is. The trouble is that nobody would ever think of such a rectangular structure in connection with that piece of land were it not for the set of photographs. As we normally speak, the area does *not* have such a structure (by itself) - true, it can be *seen* as so structured, but it can be seen as structured also in a myriad of other ways. To say that the area and the set of photos share a structure is thus trivial (a more reasonable description of the situation might be that the set of photos causes us to see the area as in a certain way structured) - it is to say nothing, but in a high-spirited way. Similarly, to say that

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[8] As Blackburn (1984, p. 248) puts it, „there is not really a correspondence 'theory' of truth: there is rather an invitation to think of the relation between true belief and whatever it is in the world that makes it true. This invitation can lead to bad developments: to the idea of the mind's awareness of fact as something which, favourably, is uncontaminated by judgement, and purely passive; or to the idea that each individual judgement has its own identity regardless of its associations with any others in a body of belief, and is in turn made true by one isolated, self-subsistent state of afairs."

reality (as we see it) shares a structure with our language is to state nothing but a high-spirited truism.

Second, imagine Mr.Y who is learning to play golf. He has a set of clubs, and before each strike he chooses that club which he considers the most appropriate. The criteria according to which he chooses are manifold: they concern the quality of the surface on which the ball rests, the distance of the hole, the weather and perhaps some other aspects. Each club is useful in certain conditions for certain achievements; and Mr. Y qualifies as a true golfer when he is able to select and employ the appropriate ones. Now suppose that Mr. Y describes the situation in terms of **correspondence** between clubs and strange abstract entities which consist of all those aspects of the environment which are relevant for choosing the club and which Mr. Y proposes to call *golfacts* - thus, a golfact is some kind of sum of such features as the quality of the surface, the distance of the actual hole, some aspects of the weather etc. Mr. Y says that the reason why a club is appropriate in a certain situation is that it corresponds to an obtaining golfact. Is what he says reasonable? Well, given his explanation, what he says may be right, but in any case it is an immensely awkward way to put things. Why say that a club corresponds to a golfact, when the natural way is to say that, in the current situation, it is the right one, or the most appropriate one, to use? And why say that a statement corresponds to a fact, when the natural way is to say that, in the current situation, it is true?

A common way to try to rescue the idea of correspondence is to say that although sentences may not resemble facts in any self-explicable way, propositions do - and, after all, philosophers should be interested in propositions and leave sentences to linguists. And propositions can be simply *defined* as certain pictures or imprints of facts: whatever facts may be, propositions are to facts as pictures are to what they picture. However, this is a mere sleight of hand: it makes the correspondence relation straightforward only by shifting all the problems to the relation between the sentence and the proposition it expresses. Thus, it is tantamount to saying that although I do not know how far Prague is from Stockholm, I do know the precise distance between Prague and a place Z, which I stipulate to be 400 km north of Prague, and the remainder, namely discovering how far Z is from Stockholm, is not my business.

Language without Correspondence

Having eschewed correspondence, we are left with an 'interactive' conception of language. However, is this conception not trivial? Does it allow us to illuminate the workings of language in any nontrivial sense? Does it allow for a substantial explication of such traditionally central concepts as *meaning* and *truth*?

To find out, we should look at language with our new, 'awakened' eyes, and see whether (i) we still need the old concepts; and, if so, (ii) which role they now play for us. A

good starting point might be to put oneself into the shoes of somebody who is confronted with an utterly unknown language and to observe what kinds of concepts she might helpfully employ 'making sense' of what the natives say. This engages us in the thought experiment of radical translation or radical interpretation, proposed by Quine (1960) and elaborated by Davidson (1984).

Now the concept of *truth* appears to be, according to Davidson, essential to the enterprise of (radical) interpretation from the start. The point is that we cannot, from Davidson's viewpoint, *interpret* somebody - i.e. take him to have *beliefs* and to make *utterances expressing* the beliefs (and other things) - unless we take him to be in possession of the concept of truth, in the sense that is capable of taking some sentences to be true, to wish some were true etc. So the essentiality of truth is yielded by almost a 'transcendental argument' - truth is, in a sense a *precondition* of interpretation, and in this sense of language[9]. This, however, implies a certain 'elementarity' of the concept of truth. You cannot define the concept or explicate it in such a way that you could teach it to somebody who lacks it - for if she did not have it, if she did not (implicitly) *know* what truth is, then no explaining to her would be possible; she, in fact,. would not be a thinking creature. This means that if we see linguistic expressions as *tools*, then they are tools peculiarly different from other kinds of tools - different in being susceptible to truth (which is according to Davidson, not a species of usefulness[10]). Thus, for Davidson, to find out how an expression is used (and hence what it means) is to find out when it is held for true.

The situation with the concept of *meaning* is a bit more complicated. It is clear that meaning loses the central place it assumes within the representationalistic theories - the nature of language is no longer considered to consist in 'grabbing things and making them into the meanings of words'[11]. However, does it follow that we can dispense with the concept of meaning altogether? Quine seems to be inclined to say yes (see, e.g., Quine 1992, Chapter III); but I think this is premature and I also think Davidson's notion of radical interpretation does have room for a nontrivial concept of meaning. Let me explain why.

The basic setting of the enterprise of radical interpretation is that we see the natives making their utterances and try to grasp the functions of their sentences (and then possibly find their equivalents or approximations among our own sentences[12]), which, according to Davidson, means that we try to find out when they hold which sentence for true. Now if we do this, there is little hope that we are going to manage to capture all the details of the native employment of an expression (let alone find an expression of our language which is employed in *exactly* the same way as the alien one) - what we can reasonably expect is some kind of

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[9] See the helpful discussion of this point given by Ramberg (to appear).

[10] And it is this that separates Davidson from all kinds of pragmatists, especially from Rorty, but, it seems, also from Quine.

[11] See Peregrin (1999).

[12] If we not only grasp the functions, but also see some equivalents, then our radical *interpretation* yields a radical *translation*.

capturing (or agreement) 'in essential points'. We may figure out that the natives hold *gavagai* for true usually when there is a rabbit around (and when *we* hold *there is a rabbit around* for true), but it is hard to believe that we would encounter no exception, that we will, e.g., never encounter a situation when someone obviously holds *gavagai* for true where there is - as far as we can see - *no* rabbit.

It should be stressed that the reason for distrusting the likelihood of exact capturing (and/or exact matching) is not only that radical interpretation involves drawing conjectures from restricted empirical evidence and is thus fallible in the way any empirical theory is. *In addition to this*, it seems to be simply a plain fact that no expression is likely to be employed in *exactly* the same way by different speakers (nor are any two expressions of different languages likely to be employed in *exactly* the same way by corresponding communities). If we want to speak about meanings, then what seems to be necessary is to isolate something as 'substantial parts' of the ways expressions are employed. However, here we must be careful: this way of presenting the problem may easily lead us to a disguised version of the notion of language as a set of labels simply stuck to meanings - only with meanings now conceived of as 'substantial parts of their employments'. Any sharp boundary between the substantial aspects of an expression's functioning (which determines its semantics) and the remainder is nothing but the old analytic/contingent boundary in disguise - for if such a boundary existed, it would again divide language into the meaning-determining ('analytic') part, and the facts-stating ('synthetic' or 'empirical') part of language.

Could we then simply take the *entire* employment of an expression as constitutive of its meaning (even at the cost of accepting that we could then rarely learn a whole meaning)? Clearly not, for this would imply that every single attitude of every single speaker would co-constitute meaning; hence that there would be no room for the concept of error within our interpretation of the natives. Having relinguished the analytic/contingent distinction, a follower of Davidson cannot accept that there is a *principal* division of language into the meaning-determining and facts-expressing parts. One possible reaction to this is the Quinean one, namely assigning the concept of meaning into the philosophical junkyard; but this would render much of what we really do with language nonsensical. It seems to be obvious that he who tries to understand an unknown language is bound to engage in the process of sorting out the 'central' and 'substantial' aspects of others' linguistic behavior from the 'peripheral' and 'casual' ones - i.e. those amounting to *meaning* from those amounting to mere peculiar standpoints of individual utterers. Is this not inseparable from the very concept of interpretation? It is one thing to recognize that there is no such *absolute* boundary, and another thing to realize that people do indeed posit such a boundary when they want to „make sense" of what their fellow humans say.

When a speaker *X* utters a statement *s*, then the 'normal' way to perceive this is that *X* has a belief *b* and that this belief is expressed by *s*, it is the meaning of *s*. However, Davidson warns us before considering beliefs as something which could be found by opening *X*'s head or indeed by any other move available to a 'natural scientist' - for the belief is something we stipulate to 'bring an order' into *X*'s utterances, analogously to a natural scientist using meters

or kilograms to bring an order into what *she* wants to understand[13]. We start from the facts about speakers' utterances and we 'decompose' the body of these facts into a theory of what the speakers believe and a theory of what their words mean - and we use meanings as our 'measuring units' to account for our findings in a similar way as a natural scientist would use hers. This engenders that the decomposition is, in fact, stipulated by the *interpreter*, although she is surely not *free* to posit it wherever she wants. She is to draw it so as to create a *Gestalt* as helpful as possible for the enterprise of *seeing* what the natives are saying .

Seen from this perspective, the character of the pronouncement 'the meaning of *s* is such-and-such' is similar to that of 'the (real) price of X is such-and-such'. Just as 'the price of X is such-and-such' is to be understood as a shorthand for 'the position of X within the selling-and-buying relations among people is such-and-such', 'the meaning of *s* is such-and-such' should be construed as saying 'the way S gets employed within the language game to which it belongs is substantially such-and-such'. Both meaning and price may sometimes be fixed by some explicit act (and in such a case the meaning or the price becomes something which *is* discoverable by natural-scientific methods); however, in the typical case both are the matter of finding an 'equilibrium' of a number of intersecting relationships, i.e. of an interpretation. Thus we can talk about meaning only from the viewpoint of an interpreter, of someone who observes the relevant environment and 'calculates' the relevant value out of it[14].

This vantage point can also help to illuminate Davidson's often discussed, and for many people controversial, claim that it is impossible to interpret someone as having *overall* false beliefs. For what does it mean, from this viewpoint, for a speaker *X* to have a false belief? It means to hold a sentence *s*, meaning something false, for true. However, to say that a sentence *s* of a foreign language is false is to say that the sentence *s'* which we would see as its equivalent in our language is false - that *we* hold *s'* for false. So we employ *s'* in the 'substantially same way' as *X* employs *s* (in general, this need not mean direct matching of employment, it can also mean that *s'* consists of parts we employ in the 'substantially same' way as *X* uses the parts of *s*), but in this particular case we differ. In this sense, to have a false belief means to use certain words in a way which we see as deviant, which does not seem to us to cohere with the way they are used otherwise. This implies that we simply cannot interpret someone's beliefs as overall false - this would be tantamount to claiming that something *always* looks otherwise than *usually*.

Thus, for Davidson, meanings are not things labeled by expressions; they are rather the measures of the peculiar kinds of roles the expressions play within the 'economy of truth'. Hence Davidson resolutely rejects the picture on which expressions are essentially mere substitutes for things of the world, mere labels through which we see the things. Indeed,

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[13] Cf. Wittgenstein (1953, §132): „We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order."

[14] Cf. Willfrid Sellars' (1974) notion of „meaning as a functional classification".

Davidson stresses that the only reasonable way in which we can talk about 'seeing the world through language' is „seeing the world *by dint of having* language" (see Davidson, 1997, p. 18). Language is not a prism through which we see, but it *is* a part of our habiliments without which we would not see what we do.

Conclusion

The aim of zen is „the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically-trained mind" (Suzuki, 1956, p. 84). From a more practical point of view, the aim is to do away with one's striving, which is considered to be the source of all suffering. However, the point of zen, which makes it so different from other spiritual doctrines, is that the aim is to annihilate the whole *framework* of striving - not to replace one kind of striving by another, say the striving for money and power by striving for some spiritual values. For zen, to strive for non-striving is as bad as to strive for anything else. Similarly, it seems to me, the naturalistic turn of analytic philosophy, as represented especially by Davidson, does not aim at a change within the traditional representational paradigm - at saying that words do *not* represent things. It rather urges us to forget about representing and look at language from a wholly different angle. I think that we should follow this advice.

Zen masters often help their disciples by making them contemplate *koans*, short riddles which are apparently unsolvable, but which get dissolved (i.e. cease appearing riddlesome) once the disciple undergoes a required change of mind. The most famous of such conundrums seems to be the task to clap a single hand; but *koans* are often presented also in the form of a yes/no question supplemented by the comment that both possible answers are bad and will lead to punishment. Thus, for an adept of the Davidsonian analytic philosophy I would like to propose the following *koan*:

> *Do words represent things?*
> *If you say 'yes', you will get thirty blows with a rod;*
> *but if you say 'no', you will also get thirty blows with a rod!*

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