Inquiries into the status of truth-claims in religious discourse: some interpretations of the philosophical system of Donald Davidson

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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INQUIRIES INTO THE STATUS OF TRUTH CLAIMS IN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE: SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM OF DONALD DAVIDSON.

This work reflects its title in that it is in two parts. The first two chapters attempt to show that truth is not the property of statements or propositions alone but is directly related to the beliefs or intentions (or other dispositions) which they encode. The role of Christian expectation as a truth-bearer is given some prominence.

The third chapter begins the interpretative aspect of the analysis. The truth-theory of Donald Davidson is outlined against the background of his whole philosophical system. This leads to a new understanding of propositional attitudes, for they are now seen to express a causal relationship with the reality which underlies them. Davidson's method of seeking a correspondence with that reality via a coherence theory of truth is then analysed. This relies upon a so-called 'Convention of Charity' embodying a holistic agreement about what it is to call a thing 'real'. Considerable attention is given to the way that Davidson is continually developing his philosophy in this respect.

The fourth chapter discusses the ways in which the truth-conditional theory of Davidson could be applied to religious discourse. The problems of religious divergence and of figurative or metaphorical language are singled out for special attention.

The final chapter attempts to unite the study by evaluating this interpretation in the light of the claims for truth which theologians might make. This involves outlining the form which a new non-foundationalist theological epistemology might take, given the application of a Davidsonian philosophical system. This study is seen as particularly fruitful in generating areas for future research. A secondary aim of this analysis has been to investigate what sort of realism is possible for religious discourse.

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

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University of Durham

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other university.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

This thesis conforms to the word limit set out in the Degree Regulations for a Master of Arts Research Degree. The total word-count is 39,065 words.

Signed

1 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

The word "status" in the title is deliberately ambivalent. It refers, on the one hand, to the degree of respectability that is afforded to theological discourse in the current philosophic climate, in England dominated by the Empiricist tradition. Due notice is taken of contemporary attempts to remodel religious claims along the lines of conceptual and linguistic relativism. Here we ask what is being lost in this remodelling.

This brings us to the second sense of the word status. What is the nature of a claim to truth, what is its ground and how is it validated? Here '*istemi* (Gr. *I stand*) represents the ontological and epistemological basis upon which much religious affirmation, commitment and discourse is secured. This of course brings into high relief the whole issue of foundationalism and the difficulty of sustaining a correspondence theory of truth upon the *building blocks* of the perceptions. This issue will be dealt with at some length in chapter three where Davidson's alternative program for arriving at a correspondence theory of truth is examined.

It must be recognized that failure to underwrite the second sense of the word *status* has often resulted in a consequent denigration in the first sense and often the apologists for a particular theological discourse have been accused of a lack of rigour in this respect. In particular, the willingness to multiply entities of a mentalistic or abstract nature seems to be the besetting sin of those who attempt to produce a philosophic groundwork for their philosophy. On the other hand, it must be admitted that trying to identify what is going on in truth claims is somewhat akin to analysing the chemistry of the living cell or describing the taste of water.

Because we have to use the apparatus of truth statements ourselves in describing and defining truth theory, it proves very difficult to avoid circularity. This has traditionally been avoided by the use of recursive[1] and meta- language.[2] When such devices have been found to be necessary in describing the truth of simple everyday empirical experience, it is hardly surprising that to analyse truth-claims in a theological language which, in most cases,[3] implies some degree of transcendence as well, the linguistic apparatus available has been often stretched to near breaking point and there is a temptation to find refuge in obscurity.

The nature of the subject and the method of the task is thus indicated by the one word *status*: It is to examine what is meant by a claim to truth. To do this it will be necessary to delineate the connection between the truth and meaning of statements, attempts to secure reference or to express attitudes, and the relation of truth- claims to their checkability.

Because the subject matter is thus so rarefied, it calls for a corresponding discipline in its analysis. It will neither be assumed that truth is the truth of statements[4] nor a relationship between statements and what is the case,[5] nor yet that there is some primal entity called truth.[6] Professor Lash, in a discussion at the 1991 conference of the Society for the Study of Theology, suggested that concepts like *truth* are best considered adjectively or adverbially, and the principle behind

1 for an example of recursion see 4.2.3.

2 e.g. Tarski A. 1956 **The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages** in *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*. Clarendon Press, Oxford. pp.187.ff & Davidson, Donald. 1984. **Truth and Interpretation**, O.U.P., Oxford. p.47.etc.

3 Some, such as Pettinger and Van Buren, have confined meaningful religious language to human religious activity and experience.

4 See especially Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S. 1984. **Language, Sense and Nonsense**, Blackwell, Oxford. pp. 181.ff.

5 See Lonergan, Bernard, J.F., 1983, **Insight**, Magna Graecia's Publishers, London. pp. 503. ff. for a formulation of what is basically a Hegelian position.

6 Examples are legion, for instance references to "revealed truth".

this statement, not to create too many abstract entities, will be followed here. In practice, as a shorthand, the word *truth* is sometimes used. It should generally be understood as something, be it a belief or a statement, being true. To make any such definition, it will be necessary to examine what is involved in the preference of one delineation as against any of the others. It is because of a failure to define what is being claimed by the use of the word "truth" that many articles in the philosophy of religion have failed to claim a wider acceptance.

> "The merit of the method of truth is not that it settles such matters once and for all, or even that it settles them without further metaphysical reflection. But the method does serve to sharpen our sense of viable alternatives, and gives a comprehensive idea of the consequences of a decision. Metaphysics has generality as an aim: the method of truth expresses that demand by requiring a theory that touches all the bases. Thus the problems of metaphysics, while neither solved nor replaced, come to be seen as the problems of all good theory building. We want a theory that is simple and clear, with a logical apparatus that is understood and justified, and that accounts for the facts about how our language works."[1]

One result, then, of such a clarification will be that the interpretation and, indeed, whole hermeneutic process which is involved in the study of source documents and dogmatic pronouncements will come under a very careful scrutiny. If a claim to truth is based upon the intentions of an author, then the question that must be asked is "How can we determine what are the intentions of the author?". If, on the other hand, truth is that which satisfies an author's expectations, the question that we ask is "What sort of actions, beliefs, statements, or behaviour would satisfy the expectations associated with such a statement?"

The programmes are thus entirely different. In the first, we are attempting to understand mental attitudes or mental states, in the second we have a more objective semantic programme in operation. The analysis will focus on such lexical questions as why one word, phrase, or statement is chosen as against another

1 The Method of Truth in Metaphysics, Davidson, Donald. 1984. p.214.

which is a near semantic neighbour; what special denotative or connotative characteristics differentiate the one from the other. In other words, the exercise belongs to the discipline of linguistic philosophy rather than social psychology or even psycho- linguistics.

Similarly, such a clarification assists in establishing connections between verification procedures and truth criteria. If the criterion of a truth claim is coherence - e.g. with a source or norm of authority, such as a sacred book, a dogmatic pronouncement or a theological system - it does not follow logically from such a *verification* that it will necessarily correspond to a particular state of affairs as well. In such a manner, if the appeal is to correspondence, the degree of success in such a procedure does not, of itself, verify, modify or falsify a claim to coherence, unless there are other implicit ontological claims as well which could unify the world of reason with the world of perception or that of *reality* (in the same way that underlying the use of analogical language in talking about God there is an implicit ontological under-structure in an *analogia entis*).[1]

But an analysis of the relationship between truth, truth-conditions[2], belief and knowledge can have even more profound implications. A modification in one's truth theory can lead to a wholesale overturning of epistemological procedures and a revision of what counts as knowledge. For instance, adopting the system of Popper meant abandoning a concept of verification or even confirmation in favour of corroboration (the ability to have withstood the best attempts at falsification).[3] This

1 See Ferre, Frederic, 1961. Language, Logic and God. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. p.69. Ferre outlines this position which he derives from Austin Farrer which he later criticizes p.146.ff.

2 To specify truth-conditions is to state the situations which need to obtain in order that the truth relationship may be sustained

3 See Popper, Karl, 1963 Conjectures and Refutations R.K.P., London. pp.57-58.

resulted in the substitution of *verisimilitude* for truth. Verisimilitude is a semantic concept describing how classes of statements may show, in comparison, a greater approximation to the truth. In other words verisimilitude is a matter of degree.[1] The attempt to apply such a system to theological discourse meant abandoning the method of truth in a search for knowledge. The result was a relativising of knowledge and its distinction from belief made difficult to define.

A corresponding, though totally different in kind, upheaval in deciding what counts as knowledge may be expected from adopting the truth-theory advocated by Donald Davidson. To anticipate the results of this: it is hoped to show a closer connection between knowledge and truth, with the former dependent upon the latter. Both will be rationally derived from beliefs (rather than gleaned from experience) and those beliefs will be shown to be caused by an underlying reality. Thus Davidson's theory is a causally based semantic theory with a central place for the disposition of belief.

Some assumptions have been made. It is implicit in the title of this analysis that it is taken for granted that truth may be claimed and that one of the loci for that claim is theological discourse. It will also be noticed that the general goal of this work is to arrive at some form of realism.

The remainder of the title defines the scope of the task. Because the background of the author is that of the Christian tradition, it will be largely to that tradition that reference will be made, though most of what is said will doubtless be relevant to religious discourse from other sources as well. It will not be the claim of this

1 See Popper, op.cit. pp.232-235., where the concept is worked out in a Tarskian fashion.

thesis that there are theories of truth which are specific to religious discourse for I shall argue that the problems of theological discourse are merely special cases of the problems of natural language as well.

However, these problems are exacerbated by the nature of the subject- matter of theological language. Similarly, because of the close connection between truth and meaning (the latter is here understood in both connotative and denotative activity) and the acceptance of Searle's arguments[1] that the literal meaning of any sentence can only have application when understood against the background of the *utterance meaning* and a whole network of assumptions, many of them unconscious, the application of the truth of a particular discourse (in this case, religious discourse) may well be specific and indeed unique to that area of discourse. Claims to truth occur in formulations of dogma and in apologetic. They also occur in authorities or source documents within the Christian tradition. Other instances of claim to truth will be found in accounts of religious experience and in the affirmations of worship and liturgy. It will be important to ask whether they are talking about the same kind of truth. Often the situation in which a claim to truth is made carries with it its own implication with regard to truth conditions or truth values. It is not only data that are theory laden!

Truth theory as a philosophic discipline is an area of study where a certain amount of fruitful progress is being made. This has meant that many of its exponents have either changed or at least refined their own commitments in the course of their investigations. One need only cite Hilary Putnam's modification

1 See Searle 1979 **Expression and Meaning**. C.U.P. Cambridge. pp. 117-8 & 130

to his stance on realism[1] or indeed Donald Davidson's recent finesses in his paper on *malapropisms*[2] as examples of this. The present work is no exception to this rule. Throughout this research there has had to be, perforce, a rearguard battle resulting in a moderation upon the stance of realism which had been bravely upheld at the beginning.

Going along with this has been an increasing sophistication into what can be meant by *referring*. To some extent this reflects the ambivalence of Davidson towards reference. He denies the need for a theory of reference whilst preserving it as a term within semantic theory.[3] Whilst both of these terms have been saved from utter extinction, much less is claimed for either than would have been the case at the beginning of this study. The easy-going assumptions of a way into a correspondence theory of truth through reference understood in terms of foundationalist epistemology have had to be abandoned and reference redefined in terms of a relationship of terms in linguistic usage and the world. It is important that no more than this is ascribed to it, especially important that it is not understood to be making any epistemological claim (for reasons that will be better understood in the light of chapter three).

A brief interpretation of recent trends in the understanding of theological discourse may be in order here. The unanswered questions arising from positivist challenges to Christian truth claims such as the request to specify what would count as verification or falsification of those claims[4]; the reductionist accounts

1 See Putnam, H. 1988. Representation and Reality, Open Court.

2 A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs in LePore, Ernest. 1986. ed. Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson. Blackwell, Oxford.

3 See 3.4.

4 See Flew, Anthony, 1966. God and Philosophy chapters 6-8 and Wisdom J. 1965 Paradox and Discovery pp. 43.ff.

of religion[1]; the new insights in comparative religion gained by using the methodologies of social anthropology[2], combined with a new demand occasioned by increasing convergences in understanding and mutual appreciation within the ecumenical movement for a less intolerant account of traditional propositional differences: all these had provoked the necessity for a new formulation of the role of religious discourse in the sixties and seventies.

Within linguistic philosophy and the philosophy of science new moves were afoot. It became possible to give new accounts of the place of religious discourse which took account of the nature of language in the thinking of the later Wittgenstein, linguistic determinism, conceptual relativism, the inscrutability of linguistic reference, the role of paradigmatic determinism and hypothetico-deductivism in scientific inquiry, and holistic theories of meaning within language. In all these the central position of a linguistic community became important. It had become possible to rewrite theology as an expression of the culture of a religious linguistic community[3]. Truth theory was regarded as "a slippery subject"[4], was confused with semantics, was considered a meta-language[5], or else became a matter of affirmation and expression. It all seemed so easy. A new status for religious discourse had been assured. It shared with natural language in its

1 For the connection between *what constitutes truth* and a reductionist programme, see the discussion in Crispin Wright 1987. **Realism, Meaning & Truth**, Blackwell, Oxford. pp. 276-8.

2 See Mary Douglas, "**Religious sanctions on Village Unity and the Organisation of Village Cults**", in Mary Douglas 1963. **The Lele of the Kasai**.

3 The role of the language of a community in determining what are the truth conditions of the truth of any statement (and hence of the propositional attitude behind such a statement) is discussed in Chapter 3. There is, though, no tolerance for incommensurability in this exposition. The definition of incommensurability will be shown to be a matter of some controversy. For the moment, though, it may be taken to indicate a failure or breakdown in the possibilities of inter-translation between two groups of language users.

4 This has been particularly the case with those writers who have been influenced by Karl Popper, e.g. Stanesby D. 1985. **Science, Reason & Religion.** Croom Helm.

5 See Lindbeck, G.A. 1984. **The Nature of Doctrine.** S.P.C.K., London.

dependence upon a culture. Some went further along this road and centred upon behaviourist and phenomenological accounts of religion. Hebblethwaite has shown that one of the casualties in such an account is a claim to realism[1] . Hand in hand with this goes the surrender of claims for objective truth. Also the claims of religious discourse had become invulnerable - and one tends to be very suspicious of invulnerability.

However, all was not as secure as it seemed. The work of Donald Davidson had produced serious questions for structuralist accounts of language[2]; these in turn had serious implications for the advocates of the different forms of relativistic truth theory. The old ghosts of the empirical challenge had not been entirely laid to rest. The time was not yet right for a new "summa".

In addition, recent publications issued from the Bishops and Synod, in an attempt to produce unanimity, have resulted in ambiguous usage of the word truth which can only produce a lack of clarity. What, for instance, is the reference of the words "revealed truth" in the report "We Believe in God" of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England?[3] Is it simply an expression of the doctrine proclaimed by the church in accordance with its commitments and authorities? Or is such language making other existential or even ontological claims as well?

There are certain problems involved with a theory of truth in which the truth conditions are to be satisfied only by examining the one uttering the statement rather than in an objective referent. An attempt will be made to show the difficulties

1 Hebblethwaite, B. 1988. **The Ocean of Truth**. C.U.P., Cambridge. pp.106-109.

2 See Davidson,D. pp.183.ff and the discussion in art. by Kraut in LePore, E. (ed.) 1986. **Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson**. pp.399.ff.

3 op.cit. p.6. Et seq.

which occur when one now attempts to use a notion of *expressive truth* to justify a veneration of the Turin Shroud without claiming any historical authenticity, now that it has seriously been called to question.

The method of making truth a matter of experience, has been used with regard to the resurrection stories. Why should we feel that it seems like obscurantism when it is used with regard to the Turin Shroud? Perhaps there are as yet unidentified implicit undisclosed ontological claims underlying expressive theories of truth. It is because of the importance, indeed centrality, of finding exactly what the status of truth claims are, in this context, that the present study is essayed.

The subject, to a large extent, designates the programme for its study. First the thing that entertains truth, be it belief, utterance or statement - the so-called *bearer* of truth - must be identified. This provides the major task of chapter two. The next chapter is to a large extent the raison d'etre of the study. Under the general heading of **Truth and Realism**, it attempts to summarise the linguistic philosophy of Donald Davidson and to evaluate the consequences of making a general application of his methods to religious discourse.

A note of caution should be expressed here. What is advocated in this thesis is a critical application rather than a blind approval of Davidson's system,[1] and so the warning of H.L. Mansel is no less relevant today than when he gave it over one hundred and fifty years ago.

> The so-called free-thinker is, as often as any other man, the slave of some self-chosen master; and many who scorn the imputation of believing anything merely because it is found in the Bible would find it hard to give any better reason for their own belief than the *ipse dixit* of some infidel philosopher.[2]

1 Several attempts to apply Wittgenstein's thinking to religious language have appeared to be un-critical.

2 Mansel, H.L. 1858. The Limits of Religious Thought, Oxford University Press, Oxford. These are the printed version of the Bampton Lectures for that year.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the interpretation of religious language in accordance with linguistic theory described in Chapter Three. It attempts to delineate two separate though related questions: "how far can Davidson's Theory of Truth be applied to religious language?" And "what are the consequences for our understanding religious language, given such an application?".

According to Kuhn, one of the classic reasons for preferring one theory to another (apart from its simplicity and elegance) is its fertility - the prospect of it generating yet further lines of research.[1] In Chapter Five, some possibilities will be indicated, especially one that can be only noticed in passing in this work: namely Davidson's distinction between causes and causal explanation.

1 See Kuhn, Thomas S. 1977. The Essential Tension. University of Chicago Press. pp 322

2 THE BEARERS OF TRUTH

2.1 Dispositions and Sentences

In traditional truth theory, there are three factors which are of great, if not paramount importance, the truth-bearer, the referent and the context. To some extent these are interdependent though each for the sake of clarity must be clearly identified and isolated. Since these are, to some extent, technical terms, it will be as well, at an early stage, to clarify what is intended by each.

A truth-bearer is the sort of thing that entertains a claim to truth.[1] The validity of what counts as a truth-bearer is the contentious issue. The answer traditionally given in, say, Wittgenstein, was that it was the proposition (which may, or may not, be true), though some writers have held that beliefs, other dispositions, world views, models, paradigms, allegiances, even things may all be truth-bearers.

The referent is that about which the claim has been made; it may be a particular thing, a class of things, a juxtaposition of things, a relationship between things, or a relationship between things and certain qualities or quantifiers. It must be mentioned here that Donald Davidson largely abandons the role of reference in his theory of truth, seeking to find correspondence with the world in a slightly different way. This will become more apparent in the next chapter.

The context is the situation in which the claim is made. This may well help to show what the bearer and referent are. For instance, if the context is some acclamation or judgement, such as "Searle is a fine philosopher!", the truth-bearer

1 Mackie identifies several candidates for the title of truth-bearer including statements, sentences, predicate expressions, subject expressions and belief. See Mackie, J.L. 1973. Truth, Probability and Paradox, Clarendon, Oxford. pp. 17.ff.

might be shown to be an illocutionary speech act. Context-sensitive analysis is particularly important when discussing the truth theory of religious language, as will be demonstrated.

2.1.1 Truth and Knowledge

There is a fairly obvious relationship or connection between truth and knowledge. On first sight it seems natural that, before knowing that something is true, I should have the acquaintance of the thing that I am talking about. Some philosophers have started with this assumption as a truism. Amongst modern-day philosophers of religion, Brian Hebblethwaite may be cited as an upholder of such a position. To date, the best outline of his Truth Theory is to be found in the Paper "**God and Truth**" given as the Presidential Address to the Society for the Study of Theology, Oxford, April 1989.,[1] though it is understood that there is a much larger study on this subject, as yet unpublished, and in the throes of preparation.

Brian Hebblethwaite claims that his truth theory stands in the Analytic - as opposed to the Idealist - tradition, arguing, for instance, against the Neo-Hegelianism of Pannenburg. It will be argued here that the claim to analyticity is, however, somewhat tendentious

Hebblethwaite essays a definition of Truth:-

> That relation between mind and reality that obtains when some past, present, or future reality is correctly apprehended by some mind as being what it was, is or will be.[2]

This raises several questions. Part of Hebblethwaite's claim is that it is a function of mind.[3] Yet it can be argued that the concept of mind is redundant in

1 The papers of this Society are preserved at the library of Leeds University.

2 Ibid

3 "Rational minds" in earlier essays.

this definition. It is suggested that his definition of truth could be re-written, eliminating mental entities, without seriously impairing the relationship between what Hebblethwaite calls the apprehension and what is the case, regardless of whether or no there is any entity called a mind which may or may not do the apprehending. Hebblethwaite's definition boils down to the conclusion that truth is a right knowing of reality.

This definition is, however, vulnerable to further criticism. Hebblethwaite suggests,

> When I put on my coat and hat, my dog may believe, quite truly, that I am going to take him for a walk.

In Hebblethwaite's definition of Truth, is was suggested that Truth was a function of mind, or at least of its "apprehending". Yet in this example which he presents, truth is presented as a function of the belief of a dog! There is no mention of minds here, or of knowing. Indeed it may be a moot point whether or no a dog has a mind or can *know* in any way analogous to human knowledge! All that is necessary is a disposition - or even dispositional behaviour like *was disposed to expect*- and some statement or proposition following the relative pronoun *that* which expresses the content of the attitude.

Thus Hebblethwaite's requirement for right knowing to secure truth has been shown to be superfluous. His definition is not borne out by the examples which he gives. From his own example, it is more apparent that truth is a function of what are termed *propositional attitudes* - dispositions, such as belief or hope, which relate to a proposition or statement.

There are yet further problems with regard to Hebblethwaite's definition. There is a certain circularity involved in "rightly apprehending" to arrive at truth. It can

be better demonstrated by re-writing rightly apprehending as *truly knowing*. In other words, truth is being smuggled, probably unconsciously, into the definition under the description "rightly". Such a problem, given Hebblethwaite's desire to start with knowledge, is indeed unavoidable because of the relationship which obtains between truth and knowledge, as will be shown later.

A natural consequence of making truth a function of mind it that it raises a whole series of very difficult epistemological questions. What is it to apprehend something about reality? Is not the concept of Truth already being assumed in the word *real* as against, say, appearance or illusion? The problems of recognizing the content of perception will be dealt with in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that attempts to say what counts as perception of Divine Reality run into many difficulties. Still further is it extremely onerous to define what would count as an apprehension of the Divine Reality. Even "Hearing the Divine Word" raises questions of recognizing it for what it is and the problems indicated by those who do not - those problems used in earlier times to be gathered into the term "effectual call" which summarised the problems without explaining them.

To summarise the argument so far, it has been seen that whilst dispositional elements seem naturally to play an early and important part in truth theory, cognitive features and entities produce avoidable circularities and difficulties. To cite another of Hebblethwaite's illustrations, it is not necessary to the truth of the statement:-

there is some milk in the 'fridge

to extend it to include one's apprehension of it. The statement is true or no, independently of one's knowledge of it, though, for its truth to be established, its reality must be demonstrated.

This brings us to the problem of the anti-realism of Michael Dummett,[1] who argues strongly against the position taken in the previous sentence. Because it will be argued in this chapter that *expectation* is the most suitable disposition to be regarded as a primary bearer of religious truth, it is necessary to take some account of Dummett's anti-realism. This simply states that no statement can make any claim to realism until its truth has been substantiated. This means that the future verification of John Hick[2], for instance, or the proleptic realisation of Pannenburg[3], can make no claim to realism in the interim until their truths have been justified. As far as this goes, it may be regarded as just a way of defining word usage. The point to be made here is, first, that it contradicts our natural sense of what is a right use of language. It may be remembered that an old and somewhat tedious question used to be asked of us as children:-

"What was the largest island before Australia was discovered?"

The answer was of course "Australia" - but this could not be claimed according to Dummett's truth theory. For this reason, such anti-realism may be regarded as an artificial and un-natural use of language.

The second reason is that it fails to give due weight to the provisional character of truth which is part of its feature in both theological and scientific arenas of discourse. A further reason, discussed later, is that it fails to function retroactively.

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1 See Dummett, Michael. 1978. **Truth and Other Enigmas**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. e.g. p.24. where he identifies his own anti-realism as against realism by maintaining "that a realist interpretation is possible only for those statements which are in principle effectively decidable (i,e, those for which there is no serious issue between the realist and the anti-realist.)"

2 Hick suggests that our notion of a future destiny colours our interpretation of our present journey. "..the theist does, and the atheist does not expect that when history is completed it will be seen to have led to a particular end state and to have fulfilled a specific purpose, namely that of creating *children of God.*" See Hick, John, 1990. **A John Hick Reader**, Macmillan, Basingstoke. pp.68.ff cf. pp,126.ff. See also section 4.2 of this thesis.

3 Pannenburg believes that the final vindication of God's purpose has been anticipated, and brought forward into time, in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The coming of the end of time...in the event of the Resurrection..has broken through everything we can conceive of." See Pannenburg, Wolfhart, 1970. **Basic Questions in Theology**, S.C.M., London e.g. pp.36-37.

The relationship between knowledge and truth may be looked at in another way, which preserves the connection between them. This is to be found in the definition of knowledge as *justified true belief*[1]. What is being said here is that when a belief is true, and has been demonstrated as being true, then it passes into knowledge. In theological language, this will at first sight present some curtailment upon claims to knowledge. Perhaps this is all to the good, our knowledge is in any event partial. What is suggested here is that an additional term *knowledge-by-faith* is used for religious ways of knowing which may pass into fuller knowledge at the *eschaton.*

2.2 Expectation as the Primary Truth-Bearer

What are the bearers of truth? What is it to which truth relates? Is it some sort of belief or judgement, or is it a function or property of a proposition or statement? This is one of the classical problems of truth theory and its relevance to truth claims in religious discourse soon becomes apparent. We make truth claims about all sorts of things: true encounters, true experiences, true beliefs, true creeds, true dogma, true friends, true brew, true Scotsmen, doing the truth, truth as personal - the list is quite large. Some of the expressions might be better re-written: *authentic* encounters and experience; *authenticated* dogma, and so on. (Very often, in biblical usage, the word truth is used adjectivally in this fashion - "You alone are the true God" etc). Thistleton,[2] in **The Two Horizons**,[3] argues that truth in the New Testament is a "polymorphous term". Its usage extends from denoting a

1 See for example Hamlyn, D.W., 1970. **The Theory of Knowledge**, Macmillan, Basingstoke. p.101. "If belief is the state of mind appropriate to truth,....its failure to be present with regard to a proposition that is true must equally rule out knowledge. One might say, in sum, that someone knows that p. if he is in the appropriate position to certify or give his authority to the truth of p."

2 See Thistleton A. 1980 **The Two Horizons**, Paternoster Press, pp.411.ff

3 See Thistleton, A.C. 1980. **The Two Horizons**, Paternoster Press, Exeter.

correspondence with facts, through that which is real as opposed to counterfeit, taking in notions of reliability, openness, validity and faithfulness, to a corpus of revealed doctrine. This wide spread of uses (and even grammatical function) raises many questions. What is it *to bear* truth? Is it a simple matter of linguistic usage: that certain words or groups of words happen to be associated with the word "truth"? If so the notion of truth-bearing, though perhaps of use analytically, becomes trivial.[1] Tarski's use of the notion of *satisfaction* gets us somewhere along the way. For him a statement is satisfied if what is said to be true is the case. The formal definition of satisfaction, involving a distinction between natural and meta languages (the languages which formalise the object language so that it can be interpreted) makes the definition of satisfaction the task of the meta-language. This is achieved by describing a relationship between objects, or sequences of objects and well-formed-formulas.[2]

However, I do not find this altogether *satisfactory*. For satisfaction to occur, there must be a prior *expectation*. One of the purposes of this chapter will be to explore the concept of expectation and to investigate how it can be used to circumvent some of the difficulties indicated by Anscombe in the use of the concept of intention in semantic theory.[3] A great deal of modern philosophy can be regarded as footnotes to Anscombe's work. Davidson is openly influenced by it,[4] and carries out a programme in which the relation between voluntary action and cau-

1 3. This is the argument of Wittgenstein 1972. **Philosophical Investigations**, Blackwell, Oxford. 136-137

2 See Tarski, A. 1956. pp.152-278 and 401-408 also Tarski, A., 1944. pp.341ff.

3 See Anscombe, G.E.M. 1959. **Intentions**, Blackwell, Oxford.

4 See LePore, E. & McLaughlin, B. 1985, **Actions and Events, Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson**. pp. 12,14,etc. And Passmore, J. 1988, **Recent Philosophers**, Duckworth, London. pp.64.ff.

sation is explored. He is prepared to talk about mental events and even about mental states understood as prolonged mental events, but not about mental entities. Searle[1] prefers to talk about "expressed psychological states". These are indexed by such words as believes, suggests, insists, commands, promises, asks, regrets. In other words, the choice from the options that are available within a linguistic system is sufficient to give an indication or expression of the attitude. He goes on further to show that linguistic choice within a given convention is adequate to give connotation to the particular intention which is so expressed.

In what sense can an experience be said to be true? It is surely better to describe an experience as real or illusory rather than true or false. What is the relationship of truth to behaviour? Though it may be a satisfactory biblical or Semitic construction to talk about "doing the truth", the expression is not one of the neatest or most elegant to western ears. In what sense can a proposition (an abstract entity) be satisfied by a state of affairs?. Is there not a species of anthropomorphism implied by the use of such a term? Does not satisfaction imply some prior expectation, if so who or what is doing the expecting? - or is this pushing an analogy too far? When we talk about "true religion", are we by that making a comparison or a judgement of value and, if so, according to what criteria?

One move open to us is to say that one of the bearers, say propositions, has a legitimate claim to be a bearer of truth. The other usages become then a matter of looseness of speech or of analogy. There are two problems with this approach. One is that the language that we are left with, after filtering it through this

1 See Searle, J. 1979 p.4 See also Searle, J. 1983 **Intentionality**, C,U,P., Cambridge. p.6 and passim for the propositional content within intentional states - termed *Propositional Attitudes*.

procedure, is no longer ordinary language - it is an abstraction. The pure language that remains may be ideal for use in a particular philosophical system, indeed it will be tailor-made for it.

Though the results of such an endeavour may tell us something about one area of language use, they can tell us nothing about those areas that have deliberately been filtered out. In particular a pure philosophical language of this type bears little or no relation to much of the language of religious discourse in which truth, as has been shown, is a multi-functional word. The second difficulty is that it is difficult to demonstrate by what criteria a particular usage has been selected for favour over against the others. The justification for using a particular filter needs clear definition and, in most cases, seems arbitrary or supported by arguments which are, in the final analysis, circular.

Perhaps it might be possible arbitrarily to take, say, belief as a bearer, providing it was clearly specified that this was being done. This would mean, however, that the findings that came out of that application could not, without other justification, be extended to encompass other usages as well. The sort of thing that might count as such a justification would be to demonstrate that other usages could be derived from such a primary use. I shall hope to do this using expectation as a primary bearer.

An example of the way in which this method could be counter- productive is to be found in the Tractatus. For Wittgenstein (at least early Wittgenstein) truth is borne by propositions.[1] Is it surprising then, that when he comes to discuss the nature of false belief, it is apparent that all statements involving *saying that* -

1 Op.cit. 4.022

believing that, asserting that, holding that, etc.- become reduced to the original proposition?[1] That reduction had already been entailed by the original definition of truth as that which was borne by propositions. This is germane to this issue for a number of reasons, not least because, since the **Tractatus**, expressions involving belief have often been regarded as being candidates for a reduction to a proposition along the lines that Wittgenstein suggested.

A closer examination of the **Tractatus** reveals that propositions bear truth as they express or signify thoughts[2]; that thoughts, which are defined as logical pictures of facts[3], may be true or false,[4] just as representational pictures may be true or false in that the sense of a picture (what it represents) may agree or disagree with reality (the existence and non-existence of states of affairs,[5] and that is what makes it true or false.[6] Thus, even in the **Tractatus**, the truth-bearing properties of a proposition are derivative, for Wittgenstein, upon his picture theory of propositions, and the thought that gives them sense.[7]

It is of considerable interest to those of a Christian persuasion that they should be able to include non-propositional elements (such as relationships) together with credal statements within their schema of belief. It seems therefore to be of some importance to avoid the reductionist programme. There is a whole

1 Op.cit. 5.54 - 5.542

2 Op.cit. 3.1 and 3.12

3 Op.cit 3

4 Op.cit. 3.04-05

5 Op.cit. 2.06

6 Op.cit. 2.21-2.222

7 Wittgenstein later replaced his picture theory of propositions, by a form of linguistic solipsism which I find unacceptable since it abandons a real relationship between language and the world. cf. Rorty, R. 1982. **Consequences of Pragmatism**, University of Minnesota Press, Mineapolis. pp 33-34 who regards some of the output of the later Wittgenstein as "pure satire".

package of empirical theory which includes such other typically empiricist manoeuvres as to be suspicious of mentalist language of any sort, including the notion of a continuing ego: to avoid private language (referring to pain etc.): and to discount a recognition of other minds. All such language is reduced to public, empirically checkable discourse. However, those who use Cartesian analyses and assert rational minds,[1] should at the same time give some attention to Anscombe and Ryle and answer the Logical Behaviourist challenge. The assertion of such mental entities is not itself a necessary condition for a truth-theory involving beliefs and intentions. Still less is this so, as will be demonstrated, for one involving expectation.

It is not an adequate manoeuvre to make the time-honoured distinction between absolute and relative truth. The very phrases used hide the begging of a multitude of questions . Is absolute truth some abstract entity - un-get-at-able and unrealisable in terms of everyday experience? Or does the word absolute refer to the ability to say, precisely, what is the case in a state of affairs? Or is absolute truth, an evaluation according to some fixed criteria, say, a record of a revelation, or a papal encyclical? Similarly does relative truth relate to a state of knowledge, or to a particular situation, or to the particular encapsulation of the belief of a selected linguistic community? It is soon apparent that these expressions with their multiplicity of reference, are very crude tools indeed: they belong more to the field of rhetoric than to the method of systematic analytical logic which must be deployed in this study.

1 See Hebblethwaite, B. 1987. The Incarnation, C.U.P., Cambridge p.141. "Truth is the disclosure of reality to the mind and the expression of how things are to be for rational minds." See also Hebblethwaite, B. 1988, The Ocean of Truth pp. 109, 111.

Are sentences, statements or propositions the proper candidates for bearers of truth? It is important, first of all to clarify that by sentence is not meant a particular physical piece of writing or vocalisation (which is an *inscriptive* interpretation of sentence), this means that we must, if we are going to go along this path, at least follow the conventional pattern of taking *type-sentences* as the bearers of truth and meaning. By *type-sentences* are meant sentences which, though they can be repeated, spoken or written any number of times, they form a group, and are all of the same type.

Against the tradition that type-sentences are bearers of truth, Baker and Hacker[1] produce several telling arguments. Truth is not ordinarily predicated of sentences; it is connected by a relative clause. e.g. It is true *that* swans are white. The only other way of getting round this obstacle is to put the sentence in quotation marks: viz - "Swans are white" is true. This however takes the sentence out of the realm of ordinary semantics. Czeslaw Lejewski suggested in a seminar that it virtually put it in a picture frame and made a picture out of the quoted sentence. Secondly, sentences are made in many circumstances and may be ironic in character. This tends to make the nature of the truth-bearing less than clear. It is not easy to single out truth as a particular property of sentences.

> To characterise truth as a property of sentences is not merely unclear, but also implausible. "True" and "false" are commonly employed as adjectives modifying such nouns as "statement", "assertion", "belief", "conjecture", "wish", "conviction", etc., and also as adjective complement of indirect statements (e.g. "That *grass is green* is true") or indirect questions (e.g. "What he suspects of Smith's motives is true"). In these roles, true and false are merely two out of a family of closely related expressions which include "accurate", "right", "wrong", "exaggerated", "exact", "clear", "certain", "refuted", "well-founded", "vague", "obscure", and "definite" as well perhaps as "faithful" (e.g. of descriptions or accounts), "literal" and "metaphorical" (e.g. of statements or

1 Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S. 1984. Language, Sense & Nonsense, pp 183.ff. Refer also to Davidson's celebrated article, On Saying "That". See Davidson, D., 1984. pp. 93.ff.

> descriptions). If a theorist affirms the utility of treating "true" and "false" as predicates of sentences, does he mete out the same treatment to all their cousins? [1]

Similarly attempts to treat truth as an attribute of sentences result in something less than clear.

> Truth is internally related to belief, assertion, knowledge, certainty, proof, evidence, etc. To honour those relations requires a denial that truth is a property of sentences. Yet to turn our backs on them would be to make our new "technical concept" of truth both vacuous and pointless. Truth-conditional semantics here confronts an insoluble dilemma.[2]

Davidson's scheme, as will be seen in section 3. is to show that the proposition, which underlies a sentence, is combined with the belief to form a propositional attitude, which cannot just be reduced to a sentence. I shall attempt to show that because there is a convention associating the items listed above with certain particular forms of sentences, those sentences may indeed encapsulate the requirements for satisfaction (truth-conditions and illations [3] which belief needs to be credible; which knowledge needs to be true; and which proof needs to be valid.

The hypostatization of the sentence to make it some form of abstract entity having attributes may be even more exaggerated by a Tarskian theory of truth which allows the sentence to be *satisfied.* (I propose later in this chapter to offer a modified application of Tarski's approach which avoids this particular problem). One may note in passing how language and socialisation have not only been entified but personalised as well in much current social and socio-linguistic theory!

1 op.cit pp.184.ff.

2 op.cit.p.187.

3 v.i. for Newman on Illation

One form of argument already discussed suggests that, since any belief or disposition may be reduced to a proposition, which, indeed, gives it its rational content, the prime bearer of truth is the proposition. This view does not, in my view, do justice to what may be lost in such a reduction. The penchant for re-writing any form of "private language" in a public form results in a translation of indicative statements such as "I have a pain" as a request for sympathy or help. Indeed, it may be either of these things - but it is just as likely to be neither.

The reductionist would be particularly extended in re-writing the answers one would give to someone who asked for a further description of the pain in terms of "stabbing", "dull-ache", "throbbing" etc. and still further extended when the localising of the pain was discussed as it might be in "referred" pains in a heart condition! Attempts to re-write beliefs as dispositional, conditional or counterfactual statements run into great difficulty even when a thing is believed to be "fragile" or "irritable".[1]

The view above bears more similarity with the paradigms of Kuhn[2] than with the linguistic theory of Davidson which will be followed more closely in the coming chapters. It is worth preserving, though. It safeguards the fact that not all intentional states in religious discourse have propositions that can be clearly assigned to them, particularly those associated with various forms of prayer. It is strange to see that

1 See Mackie 1973 pp 120-133. The particularly difficult statements are of the subjunctive type (indeed, a counterfactual statement may be analysed as a negative, subjunctive, conditional statement.) See also Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames 1988. **Propositions and Attitudes**, O.U.P., Oxford. for a discussion of the problems involved in accounting for belief statements and a history of the analysis of propositional attitudes from Russell and Frege to the present day.

2 See Kuhn, Thomas S.1962 **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. See also Kuhn, T.S. 1977 for some back-tracking of this position, and for a critical analysis, together with Kuhn's response, see Lakatos, I. & Musgrave, A.E. 1970. **Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge**. C.U.P., Cambridge.

Quine, for all his hard-headed nominalism, takes the same view.[1] An example of this would be the state of open-ness toward God, alert yet ready for whatever He is disposed to convey.[2]

A model from organic chemistry may be useful in describing the dual function of belief. This is called tautometric isomerism and describes a molecule which is in a vibrant tension and resonance between two or more different states and able to behave, because of this, in two or more different ways. Often this property is a feature of those chemicals used as indicators. Such a model may serve as way for belief to be considered. On the one hand, it is a disposition, usually containing a propositional content, and that proposition will have truth conditions. As such it is a singularity - one belief - but, because of the holistic nature of language, those very truth conditions are recursively related to those contained in all other similar beliefs. In this way world views, paradigms and belief maps are formed which interact with the disposition or propositional attitude of the belief. This model is very powerful, and anticipates two other features which will come in for further examination in this study. One is the need for consensus, concerning what is believed. It can be seen that no belief is just a singular belief. It is related to other beliefs, and finally, because of the holistic character of language, to the beliefs of all other language users. The nature of the consensus required will be investigated further on in this study.[3] The other feature which it foreshadows is the Duhen-Quine Thesis. Because each belief is related as has been shown, unlooked-for evidence

1 See his illuminating note on Metaphor in Quine, W.V.O. 1991 Theories and Things, Belknap Press, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. pp.187.ff.

2 In writing this, I was trying to describe a state of mystical prayer, yet it has strangely come out very like C.H.Dodd's definition of faith as 'that moment of passivity which is the active negation of all activity which alone allows God to act.'

3 see sections 3.4.5 & 4.1.2.

and interpretations can be tolerated within any given system, by small alterations in the truth conditions and tolerances of the beliefs related to it. This will be developed further in this chapter.

Beliefs may, then, be taken to be ways of framing or mapping reality.[1] As such they often involve a web of interconnections, groupings, classifications and relative weightings. Whilst it may be possible, given the subtlety of language use with its stresses, nuances, inflexions and supportive gestures, to give an indication of this complex, to expect that it is possible to *reduce* it to a series of propositions of the sort which could be analysed by the truth-tables of symbolic logic is a supposition that would need a great deal of justification. One thing which would certainly be lost would be the over-arching world-view character of a belief or perspective. Another thing that would be lost is any link between the proposition and reality For this reason, the notion that the truth-bearer is just a proposition (rather than a proposition entertained by some form of intentional attitude or disposition) is rejected.

Whilst it may well be that over-much has been claimed for the "theory-laden data" views of the nature of paradigms in scientific inquiry, the interest generated by such discussion has at least high-lighted the inter-relatedness of different aspects of a particular perspective, as instanced for example by the Duhem-Quine hypothesis:

> According to the Duhem-Quine thesis, given sufficient imagination, any theory (whether consisting of one proposition or of a finite conjunction of many) can be permanently saved from "refutation" by some suitable adjustment in the background knowledge in which it is embedded. As

1 Armstrong,D.M. (1973) pp.65.ff.

> Quine put it: "Any statement can be held to be true, come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system... Conversely, by the same token, no statement is immune to revision."[1]

If this is the case, what might look like a satisfactory propositional reduction of a particular world view or perspective, might, in fact, be one which not only modifies the particular concepts relationships and properties which the statements encode, but also subtly modifies the definitions and relationships of much else as well - not least the actual nature, strength, and commitment of the belief itself. The belief might be part of an illative process.

> It is the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be converted into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible..... the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than actually attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premises, which all converge to it, and as a result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically, (though only not touching it) on account of the nature of its subject-matter and the delicate and implicit character of at least part of the reasonings on which it depends. It is by the strength, variety, or multiplicity of premises which are only probable, not by invincible syllogisms, - by objections overcome, by adverse theories neutralised, by difficulties gradually clearing up, by exceptions proving the rule, by unlooked-for correlations found for received truths, by suspense and delay in the process issuing in triumphant re-actions - by all these ways, and many others, it is that the practised and experienced mind is able to make a sure divination that a conclusion is inevitable, of which his lines of reasoning do not actually put him in possession. [2]

Again it might be a partly filled prediction or perhaps a working hypothesis. Each of these forms of belief could involve a different kind of mapping, though the actual networks of inter-relationships might be the same.

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1 Lakatos & Musgrave 1970 pp.180ff. Also see Lakatos (1978) **Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes** C.U.P. Cambridge. pp.96 ff. Lakatos accepts the weak form of the Quine thesis but rejects its stronger formulation. Refer Duhem (1906) ***La Theorie physique: son objet et sa structure***, Paris, Appendix, and Quine, W.V.O. (1953) **From a Logical Point of View**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp.41 & 79. This discussion will become of crucial importance when the role of language in constructing our encounter with reality is analysed. Popper (1963) **Conjectures and Refutations**. R.K.P., London. pp.212-214 suggests that reality is encountered at the point of refutation. I shall endeavour to extend this to an interactive theory of inquiry.

2 Newman 1868. **Grammar of Assent**, Clarendon Press, Oxford. pp.219 & 244.

The reductionist attempt to re-write belief as a series of propositions only, is therefore rejected for three reasons. It fails to do justice to the language which it claims to translate. Secondly, the attempt to translate in terms only of dispositional statements[1] runs into difficulties in formal logic since the statements are often of a hypothetical character. Thirdly, such a series of propositions could not give due weight to either the inter- relatedness of belief structures or the nature of belief itself.

It could be argued, much more convincingly that the truth of propositions, sentences and statements is parasitic upon the prior truth-bearing function of the beliefs and dispositions which they seek to encode. However, such an argument might precondition us to limit the truth-bearing qualities of propositions and statements. In any case, the claims to truth have, in the subject of this thesis, already been codified in religious discourse. It is to the nature of this encoding that attention must now be given.

2.3 Ordinary Language Philosophy

One of the characteristics of much British linguistic philosophy has been its penchant for ordinary language. The emphasis has been on simplicity, elegance, and a distrust in multiplying entities! These correspond closely with the traditional criteria for the acceptability of a particular scientific theorem or paradigm. This will be a basic tenet of the methodology here, though it will be recognized that this *frames* what comes out of the analysis. It may be that the status of truth is a vastly

1 e.g. Ryle, Gilbert, 1949. The Concept of Mind, Hutchinson, London. esp.ch.5. What is being argued against in this chapter is the tendency in those who follow Ryle's Logical Behaviourism, to *reduce* propositional attitudes to propositions so that the notion of any mental event or state can be totally ignored.

complicated variable involving several imponderables. If so, this analysis will produce something over-simplified, perhaps of application in some spheres of religious discourse only. That is a risk that will be taken.

Another feature of this tradition in philosophy has been the recognition that language has not only a formal structure, it is also used to do something. The original analysis by Austin[1] has been much improved by the reformulation by Searle and this taxonomy will be used here. According to Searle,[2] illocutionary acts may be held to fall into five major classes: assertives, which are an act of commitment to a matter of fact; directives which are prescriptive in character - they are attempts, of varying degrees of force to get someone to do something -

> The propositional content is always that the hearer (H) does some future action (A).;[3]

commissives, which are acts of commitment towards a future action; expressives which are taken to be mood statements - this class will be here extended to include dispositional statements- and declaratives which, by virtue of their declaration, make a real difference in a state of affairs - appointments and resignations fall into this category - the important word, expressed or tacit is "hereby". Perhaps promulgations in encyclicals would fall into this category too.

One of the important contributors to the semantics of illocutionary acts is the notion of Intention. Anscombe[4] attacked the possibility of using intentions in this way because there was no way of saying who had a particular intention. Indeed, at an Open University Summer School, she gave a very entertaining

1 See as an example Austin's "William James" Lectures, published as a paperback 1978. as **How to Do Things with Words**, O.U.P., Oxford

2 Searle, John R. 1979. **Expression and Meaning**, C.U.P., Cambridge. pp.12.ff.

3 op.cit.p.14.

4 Anscombe, G.E.M. 1957. **Intention**, Blackwell, Oxford.

lecture called "The anatomy of a Murder" in which she questioned whether the charge of murder (with intent) could ever be sustained at all. This position was taken up by Gibson:

> No linguist or philosopher has yet produced a theory presenting authoritative criteria for fixing a means of defining the relation of language to mind especially in the role of predicting the content of intention via linguistic expression.[1]

However other philosophers, such as Strawson[2] have found the concept of intention in semantics very important and Chisholm, in his discussion of Bretano, suggests that it is impossible to avoid the intentional set of words (wish, want, etc.) by re-writing it in other terms.[3]

Searle's method of avoiding this problem is to suggest that an intention is expressed by selecting from the alternatives available within a particular lexis and grammar. These are correlated with background assumptions - assumptions that are inevitably made concerning the circumstances of a particular discourse and its application. Hence by comparing the words actually used in a discourse with those that were actually available, we can see the sort of choices that have been made, and so delineate the intentions of the author. Whilst there is sometimes an ambiguity, there is enough common ground within a linguistic convention for adequate communication to be made, securing connotations and, sometimes, reference.

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1 Gibson, Arthur. 1981. **Biblical Semantic Logic**, Blackwell, Oxford. p.91. (this book moves in a climate which is heavy with the atmosphere of an outdated empiricism) - but cf. with 3.4.3. where there is a discussion of Davidson's attempts to provide a relationship between reality, mental events and language.

2 See Strawson, P.F. 1967. **Philosophical Logic**, O.U.P., Oxford.

3 See Chisholm, Roderick M.,ed. 1960. **Realism and the Background of Phenomenology** ch.2. And art. **Sentences about Believing**, in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 56 (1956) pp.125-148.

This correlates with the symbolic interactionist perspective[1] in which I, if I wish to communicate with you, deliberately choose symbols which are part of your vocabulary in order to try to convey my message. It also has affinities with Quine's suggestion that the problem of inscrutability of meaning, which

> extends to the home language itself,

is generally circumvented by the fact that

> this network of terms and predicates and auxiliary devices is, in relativity jargon, our frame of reference, or co-ordinate system. Relative to it we can and do talk meaningfully and distinctively of rabbits and parts, numbers and formulas. [2]

Perhaps the problems associated with intention can be circumvented another way. If I believe, hold, or claim a particular concept or network of ideas or relationships to be true, then I have certain *expectations* with regard to what will be the case. Though 'expect' may be regarded as one of the 'intentional' class of words, it has certain features which make it more serviceable in a semantic exercise. One of these is that the referent of a sentence involving expectation is usually a state of affairs rather than a mental disposition. Another is that it can be considered as an act or an event, rather than a mental state. This notion has affinities with Davidson's stratagem of intentional action in his theory of intention.[3]

To expect means to postulate a form (though not in a Platonic sense) or name which is to be filled with a real object or state of affairs. The parameters of the form may be vaguely or finely drawn according to the accuracy of my knowledge of the expected object. Another way of analysing it would be to say that when I

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1 See for instance Manis, Jerome G. & Meltzer, Bernard N. 1972. **Symbolic Interactionism** where the position of George Herbert Meade is outlined and developed. The most important outline of Meade's position is that taken from lecture notes and edited by his pupil Charles W.Morris 1934. **Mind, Self and Society**, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

2 Quine, W.V.O. 1969. **Ontological Relativity and Other Essays**, Columbia University Press, New York and London. p.48.

3 Davidson, Donald 1980. **Essays on Actions and Events**, Clarendon, Oxford pp.100.ff. & LePore, E. & McLaughlin, B. 1985. **Actions and Events , Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson**, Blackwell, Oxford. chapters 1 to 3.

expect something I make an act or orientation or commitment towards some anticipated state of affairs which will provide its satisfaction. It should be noted that the use of the word expectation is not entirely looking to a future fulfilment. One usage of expect is in terms like 'expected behaviour' which describes the sort of behaviour which can satisfy certain conventions in such statements as "that is not the standard of courtesy which is expected of us". Hence 'expect' can have a present tense as well as a future tense.

This expectation will now be encoded within a statement which should reflect, using lexis, grammar, and the background knowledge associated within a particular linguistic convention, the form of the expectation. For the expectation to be true, the form of the expectation and the form of the real object or state of affairs must coincide. If I now choose language which, according to a linguistic convention, is associated with those expectations in order to frame and express my own, then the hearer or reader, on re-using that language, expresses a re-expectation with regard to the state of affairs. This the receiver of the statement can do. He cannot, with certainty, re-intend my original intention but he can and does express certain expectations which are his own but are framed by the language which conveys the original claim to truth. It is this re-expectation which is satisfied by the state of affairs which appertains. If, in my original encoding of the expectation, I take care to use symbols that are my hearers' or readers' symbols, I shall have the more certain hope that a successful communication will occur and there will be a degree of similarity between my original expectation and that which is interpreted by those who hear or read my language.

Sometimes, as for instance in messianic expectation, the exact formulation of the expectation and the events or states of affairs which provided their satisfaction do not entirely match up. What sometimes happens then is that there is an interaction between the expectation and the fulfilment. The expectation may be regarded as imprecise or imperfect. It is of some importance that an abuse of hindsight should not be allowed to mask the problems involved in cases of partial fulfilment. It is thus an open question whether Christ is a true messiah of the Jews according to their contemporary expectations.

If this process takes truth-theory out of the realm of logic and introduces it into the field of behavioural psychology and psycho-linguistics, so be it - but I do not think that it does. The semantic interest now lies on the relation between linguistic conventions and usage and their association with expectation in that use. In other words it brings a symbolic-interaction theory of linguistic usage into direct association with truth-theory. It also brings into prominence Davidson's central thesis that the meaning of a sentence is to be found in its truth conditions.[1] If we are asking "what are the expectations associated with the lexis and grammar of this sentence?" in order to form our own expectation, then, even if we do not follow a verificationist or falsificationist theory of meaning, we are saying that the meaning and truth of a sentence is framed by the expectations (which may include truth-conditions) associated with the discourse itself.

1 See, for instance, Davidson (1984) p.24ff. For Davidson, to understand a language is to understand the truth conditions of the expressions of that language. I would want to submit that part of that understanding relates to the expectations associated with particular terms and predicates.

This needs further explication. In order to do so, it is necessary to give some account of the denotational aspect of meaning in terms of belief and knowledge. Briefly, it is suggested that what is expressed may be related to either knowledge or belief. If the relationship is with knowledge, then the truth of that knowledge will be ascertainable from the truth-conditions of the statement that indicates that meaning, together with the acceptance of the justification of the underlying belief by either a linguistic community or some authority representing it. If it is with a belief that meaning is related, then the credibility of the truth-condition of the statement will be testable by the indications, illations and so on that are suggested by the statement.

This procedure highlights the 'chicken and egg' situation with regard to meaning and truth.[1] If we follow Searle and use intentionalist language in our semantic theory, then we can follow him also in saying that the truth values follow from the meaning. If we follow the theory of truth-bearing founded upon the notion of expectation and truth-conditions which I have here put forward, the position is partly reversed -only partly because it seems to me that there is an interactive relationship between meaning and truth which makes them well-nigh inseparable.

> before I could think of possible ways of verifying a given statement, I must first know what the statement means, otherwise there could be nothing for me to verify.[2]

When I hear and read a sentence, I am participating in the expectations associated with it as I assimilate it and find it a place within the map of my experience

1 See, for instance Hebblethwaite (1987) p.141 Hebblethwaite, however. renders his truth theory opaque by its association with a mentalistic account of intention in which mental entities play a critical part- not to mention a full-blown Cartesian 'ghost in the machine' dualist view of man!

2 See Berlin, Isaiah 1978. **Concepts and Categories**. Hogarth, London. p.14. (This paper on **Verification** first appeared in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. vol.39). cf. Quine, W.V.O. 1991. p.38. "Truth, meaning and belief are sticky concepts. They stick together."

which I have called my belief network. It is already finding a meaning within this network of relationships and implications. But these very implications are modified by what is given in the sentence itself. It is this interaction in the receiver, forming the re-expectation with regard to the truth conditions which must be satisfied which then becomes the bearer of truth for the sentence.

Perhaps the problem might be clarified further. When I hear or read a sentence I interact with it in its interpretation (using word-association, grammatical analysis, background information and prior knowledge) and form an expectation (or primary or formal meaning). This gives me an indication of the form of the truth conditions or illations which I now explore. As these truth conditions are now explored, the meaning becomes explicit (having secondary or satisfied meaning). This analysis (which I term my 3x analysis! 'I expect, I explore, I explicate') seems to solve many of the problems associated with the meaning and truth relationship, not least the fact that there is a sense in which the meaning of a sentence appears to be immediate, whereas the exploration of truth conditions cannot be so since it involves the holistic relationships within a language system.[1] A two-stage system of meaning such as is described here meets this criticism of truth-condition semantics and also that levied by Isaiah Berlin, simply because it does provide for an immediate, if incomplete, awareness of the meaning and import of a statement and yet recognizes the role of truth conditions in locating its true meaning.

Certain corollaries follow from this outline. A sentence does not need to establish its satisfiable *truth*-conditions in order to be meaningful. A statement

1 As will be seen later, this process has much in common with the notions of prior theory and passing theory in Davidson's A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs. LePore pp.433.ff.

expressing belief may be satisfied, not by establishing empirical or syllogistic truth, but by the sort of indications and illations that Newman described. These would be sufficient to satisfy the meaning of a belief statement.

It may be that the truth-conditions of a sentence are to be fulfilled in the future. This brings into focus the realist/ anti-realist controversy.[1] Even so, it provides a way for a sentence, expressing, say, a hope, to have a primary or formal meaning even though any truth conditions have not yet been satisfied.

2.3.1 The Role of Christian Expectation in Truth-Bearing

Now that the role and function of 'expectation' in satisfaction theory has been delineated, the way is made open to demonstrate its particular relevance to truth-claims in theological discourse. The two senses of 'expect' (viz. the anticipatory or future hope, and the moral, or present, prescriptive stance) bring together the promissory note of future fulfilment, the anticipatory note of a stance of awareness towards the realisation of that promise, the present task to live as though that future is to be consummated, and the interpretive task, to recognize the rumbles of the distant thunder and to accord them a place in one's belief-map. This provides the agenda for outlining a theory of religious truth within a realised eschatological framework. Though this theory accords with that of Jurgen Moltmann in most points, some qualifications in emphasis must be made.

First, the way in which the fulfilment accords with the expectation is more 'elastic' than that suggested by Moltmann. The expectation is not, as it were, to

1 considered in more detail in chapter 3

be looking for the final piece of a jig-saw in which the parameters are clearly defined. The fulfilment may indeed modify the expectation or at least its interpretation. Thus issue is taken with Moltmann:-

> ..there can be no logos of the future, unless the future is the continuation or regular recurrence of the present. If, however, the future were to bring something startlingly new, we have nothing to say of that, and nothing meaningful can be said of it either.[1]

Whilst conceding the point that something which is totally alien to the expectation would, by reason of its lack of affinity, afford no satisfaction of any conceivable expectation, it is nevertheless maintained that the notion of surprise has been an element in previous fulfilments, sometimes providing a drastic contrast between the expectation and the fulfilment (consider, for instance the expectation of 'the Son of Man' in extra-Testamental literature). Perhaps it belongs to the 'otherness' of God that His ways will indeed surprise us. Not only this but, and here is a feature not noticed by Popper, it was the fact that the discovery of the double helix structure of D.N.A. began to answer questions and problems that the discoverers had previously thought *unrelated*, that convinced them that they were on the right track. For this reason, the above quotation should be balanced with a further one:

> If the promise is not regarded abstractly apart from the God who promises, but its fulfilment is entrusted directly to God in his freedom and faithfulness, then there can be no burning interest in constructing a hard and fast juridical system of historic necessities according to a schema of promise and fulfilment - neither by demonstrating the functioning of such a schema in the past nor by making calculations for the future. Rather, the fulfilments can very well contain an element of newness and surprise over against the promise as it was received. That is why the promise also does not fall to pieces along with the historical circumstances or the historical thought forms in which it was received, but can transform itself

1 Moltmann, J. 1967. Theology of Hope. S.C.M., London. Moltmann is preferred to Hick here because the view of truth outlined by the latter seems to be bound up with conceptual schemes. Part of the consequence of Davidson's extentionist semantic is that there can be no conceptual schemes. In 4.2 the concept of eschatological verification will be considered, and discarded in favour of a more holistic fulfilment of expectation.

> - by interpretation - without losing its character of certainty, of expectation and of movement. If they are God's promises, then God must also be regarded as the subject of their fulfilment. [1]

Second, and this is also a matter of stress rather than essential difference, far more attention is paid to the present realisation in the experience of the Church than is afforded by Moltmann. There is some sort of 'empirical fit' which gives us an indication that the expectation is legitimate. It is rather like the scientist testing out a particular analysis, who receives confirmatory evidence as he proceeds, sufficient for him to exclaim "Well, we're on the right lines, anyway." It will be argued later[2] that such interaction with the world could *cause* belief rather than be construed as *evidence*, thus being in accord with Davidson's theory.

With these two minor qualifications, the programme set out for the role of expectation in truth theory accords well with the **Theology of Hope** of Moltmann. The link is to be found in Moltmann's use of Luther's comments on Rom.8.19 and the development of a theology of the 'expectation of the creature'.[3] Indeed in several places Moltmann seems to be using the language of truth-theory.

> ..future is that reality which fulfils and satisfies the promise because it completely corresponds to it and accords with it. [4]

The anticipatory note involves the adoption of a stance (which colours one's response to situations) of alertness and readiness. The words that Moltmann uses are:

> open to the future, open for new, promised possibilities of being.[5]

This disposition is paradigmatic in character in that it frames future behaviour. In some manner, it is somewhat akin to the research programme commitment

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1 op.cit.p.104.

2 see 4.2

3 op.cit. pp. 35, 223, etc.

4 op.cit.p.85

5 op.cit. pp. 68, 286, 325, etc.

described by Lakatos. In such a programme, the researcher 'plays a hunch' following through the programme even though there may be some contra-indications along the road as to its usefulness. Lakatos refers to the 'protective belt' which provides some sort of immunity in the process. Alongside this there is a 'positive heuriustic' which

> forges ahead with almost complete disregard of 'refutations', drawing its strength from encouragements and 'verifications' (small 'v') which keep the programme going. [1]

In the same way, in theological discourse, the fulfilment of the content of claims to truth in statements (or beliefs or attitudes) relating both to the present situation and historical affirmations is to be regarded as having also a future dimension. Thus the concept of the Lordship of Christ - patently contradicted by much of present experience - is affirmed alongside a future vindication; and the present anomalies may thus be tolerated.

> The promises of the Old Testament and the hopes of Israel are fulfilled only in principle in Jesus Christ, and only partially fulfilled through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last times..... It is only the Parousia of Christ which will bring the fulfilment of all promises which are being experienced here in the historical and messianic time only incipiently.[2]

The interpretative role of our expectation is to be found in the recognition of such confirmatory or indicative information as exists in the experience of the believing or affirming community and the individuals within it. Thus the Church's interpretation of its own history will be coloured by its final expectation. Perhaps this is why we have Gospels rather than more historical documents concerning

1 Lakatos 1978 p.49.ff. The 'verifications' are the confirmations and corroborations that emerge along the process of a project showing its heuristic power. Indeed, it is the unlooked for verifications which were not predictable which are the most telling!

2 Moltmann, J. 1984. **On Human Dignity**, S.C.M., London. pp.202-3. cf. Moltmann, J. 1967. pp.180.ff.

the Life of Christ. Similarly the present experience of the believer will be drawn upon to provide corroborating indications of the validity of a commitment to the veracity of those stories and the anticipation of their future fulfilment.

The moral or behavioural demand of such a stance, to live in the light of a future fulfilment of the Lordship of Christ in the Kingdom of God involves certain commitments: religious, ethical, and in the identification of goals and in the vigorous pursuit of them. Thus a basis for Christian moral theory (i.e. one that answers the question "Why should I want to follow a course of good behaviour?") can be demonstrated

> If, however, the Christian Church is thus oriented towards the future of the Lord, and receives itself and its own nature always only in expectation and hope from the coming of the Lord who is ahead of it, then its life and suffering, its work and action in the world and upon the world, must also be determined by the open foreland of its hopes for the world. Meaningful action is always possible only within a horizon of expectation, otherwise all decisions and actions would be desperate thrusts into a void and would hang unintelligibly and meaninglessly in the air. Only when a meaningful horizon of expectation can be given articulate expression does man acquire the possibility and freedom to expend himself, to objectify himself and to expose himself to the pain of the negative, without bewailing the accompanying risk and surrender of his free subjectivity. Only when the realisation of life is, so to speak, caught up and held by a horizon of expectation, is realisation no longer - as for romanticist subjectivity - the forfeiting of possibilities and surrender of freedom, but the gaining of life.[1]

Moltmann brings together Wolf's phrase of 'creative discipleship' and Pannenberg's of 'creative love'[2] to show how such a programme demands a radical mission in its widest sense. In a more recent work, Moltmann comments upon the displacement of correspondence (adequatio rei et intellectus) as a criterion for truth in modern perception, by a broad-ranging praxis.[3]

1 op.cit.pp.326-327

2 op.cit. p.334.

3 Moltmann, J. 1988 pp.92.ff.

Thus the anticipatory, interpretative, moral and religious dimensions of religious claims to truth in terms of the satisfaction of an expectation may be outlined. This seems to be both logically coherent and akin to the procedures for confirming truth claims in other disciplines. Popper has shown that the provisional nature of scientific truth has been demonstrated by his concept of verisimilitude [1] - the fact that a conjecture has to date withstood the most rigorous attempts at falsification. This apparently is the most that a scientist may expect.

> There is no ultimate proof that, even where Elizabethan beliefs were replaced in the course of progressive problem shifts (like beliefs about heat, magnetism), we have been heading towards the Truth. We can only (non-rationally) believe or, rather, hope that we have been. Unless hope is a 'solution', there is no solution to Hume's problem.[2]

Thus, even in an empirical discipline such as natural science, there is a future dimension to the truths by which it operates. It is not necessary to follow Popper in his prospect of complete falsification! More likely the theory will be refined and delineated more clearly in the same way that the Newtonian paradigm was not replaced by that of Einstein - it was merely shown to be a special case describing the approximate relationships of things at rest or at relatively low speeds or accelerations. In other words, Einstein's theory is a refinement of that of Newton. In a similar way, what is perceived as truth for Christians - even authoritative truth - such as the relationship between slave and master - may become refined into the partnership of employer and employee. In the process, the reciprocal obligationships will be redefined into a new moral programme which involves the relationships with other employees with as much, if not more, significance than the original master-servant relationship.

1 Popper 1972 pp.334-5.

2 Lakatos 1980 p.223.

The theory of truth advanced here may be seen as some sort of synthesis (appropriately!) between the truth theory of Tarski and Hegel. Hegel's idea of the essence of truth is to be found in **The Science of Logic** and **The Phenomenology of Mind**. It is the summation of a historical process consisting of the syntheses of countless theses and antitheses throughout the course of history and viewable only at its end. (One may picture it as a sort of genealogy stood upon its head). For Hegel, it is the whole family tree, and not just its end-point which constitutes the truth. It is to be considered not as dead facts but as active life. Both Pannenburg and Moltmann show themselves to be influenced by Hegel's systematic analysis. Both criticise it for the fact that, because the end is projected so far into the future, one cannot with any justification talk about it without assuming one's self to have a privileged view from that end in order to do so. Such a view, they argue, has been afforded the Christian in that the Christian revelation in Christ is proleptic in character and provides us with the anticipation of the eschaton. Moltmann develops this still further.

> It is not merely said that Jesus is the first to arise and that believers will attain like him to resurrection, but it is proclaimed that he himself is the resurrection and the life and that consequently believers find their future in him and not merely like him. Hence they wait for their future by waiting for his future. The horizon of apocalyptic expectation is not by any means wide enough to embrace the post-Easter apocalyptic of the Church. The place of apocalyptic self-preservation to the end is taken by the mission of the Church. That mission can be understood only when the Risen Christ himself still has a future, a universal future for the nations. Only then does the Church's approach to the nations in the apostolate have any historic meaning. The apocalyptic outlook which penetrates the whole of reality in terms of universal history is secondary compared with this world transforming outlook in terms of promise and missionary history.[1]

1 Moltmann, J. 1967 pp.82-83

2.3.2 Unifying the Linguistic Theory?

Two major tasks remain in this survey of truth-bearing and the role of expectation in it. The most important of these involves some examination of the two principal disjunctions which occur in any account of truth theory which uses intentional language. The first of these occurs between, on the one hand, intentional states or intentional acts and, on the other, states of affairs.[1] The other occurs between the state of affairs which satisfies the truth claim and the belief or knowledge of the observer.[2] Secondly, having identified the role of expectation as a bearer of truth, it might now be possible to provide a unifying factor in the polymorphous usage identified by Thistleton, and in the multi-functional usages mentioned by Baker and Hacker. These subjects provide a programme for the last part of this chapter. The problem of the disjunction of intention and 'the world' is a recurrent theme of truth theory. The question may be framed thus "How do my intentions relate to the world?". Various answers to the problem have been offered. The behaviourist thrust is to say that there is no mental connotation to intention. It is merely a matter of responses to stimuli. Where these are of a uniform or predictable nature, dispositional language may be used to describe them. With such a view, the notion of truth becomes redundant.

This view is not followed here because it seems that 'what is true' appears to be an important part of a person's relationship with the world and his behaviour in it. Further, the behaviourist point of view may be shown to contain a

1 Davidson's 'Convention of Charity', which provides an overall justification for claiming such an equivalence, is discussed in the next chapter (3.4.5.)

2 See the next chapter (3.4.3.) for an outline of Davidson's causal theory of intentional attitudes with its fusion of causality and rationality through what he terms 'a practical syllogism'. This should safeguard the rational element in intentionality which writers such as Hebblethwaite require.

contradiction in that one of the things at stake is the truth or otherwise of the behaviourist account! However there are several things that we may learn from the behaviourist perspective, notably the attempt to preserve a unified physical world and to avoid dualism.

> Behaviourism, at its best, is the insistence on external, intersubjective criteria for the control of mentalistic terms. Behaviourism, mine anyway, does not say that the mental states and events consist of observable behaviour, nor that they are explained by behaviour. They are manifested by behaviour. Neurology is the place for the explanations, ultimately. But it is in terms of outward behaviour that we specify what we want explained.[1]

The Kantian line is to say that it is all a matter of phenomena and experience. I do not relate to the world but to my perception of it. Thus the apparent disjunction becomes one of far less serious proportions - that between perception on the one hand and states and attitudes on the other. This position is rejected in the perspective outlined above for the usual reasons and difficulties that are advanced against such a position such as the impossibility of relating present phenomena with past or future experience and the difficulty of giving a sustainable account of what is meant by illusion.

It must be admitted that the arguments advanced above are far too slight to count in the current philosophical discussion which perennially goes on between adherents of the different schools. All that has been done is to outline a reason for personal preferences. Any further development of the arguments would involve the chasing of too many hares and be a distraction from the general line of argument being here advanced. The approach advanced by many linguistic analysts is to say that what we are dealing with is a relationship between mentalist language (which is generally regarded as 'opaque') and the language describing

1 Quine in conversation with Brian Magee. Magee, B. 1978. Men of Ideas O.U.P. Oxford. p.147.

empirical experience. Thus the whole problem becomes a linguistic one. To a large extent, the general thrust of this philosophy is followed here. The problem is 'how can I deal with the opacity?'. As Quine put it, what is needed is to find

> a way of making objective sense of mentalistic concepts.[1]

Some philosophers, notably Brian Hebblethwaite, regard it as a necessary and tolerable feature in their truth theory and give a mentalistic account of intention. Others reject any intentional language at all and seek to make truth a matter of statements and their truth-bearing capabilities. These views may be regarded as the Scylla and Charybdis through which a further view will be essayed. Davidson suggests that to intend something is both a mental and a physical event.[2] He then proceeds to use a cause and effect relationship to describe the way in which the intentional act is satisfied. This view has been criticized because it is difficult, if not impossible to specify and demonstrate which mental/physical events can be considered a sufficient cause. Davidson's distinction between causal relationships and causal explanations is useful here and it is, as will be demonstrated in 3.4.3, possible to construe the rational element in belief in terms of the latter. All that is needed is to say that our stance in intention is one part of the way in which we are at all points interacting with the world. It is acknowledged, thus, that the interaction is a holistic affair and it is no longer required to specify necessary or sufficient causation for any piece of that interaction. Hence the disjunction between expectation and the world may be shown to be the outcome of a polarisation that is really nonexistent: the notion that there is a gap between the observer and

1 op.cit.p.147.

2 LePore & McLaughlin pp.312-314 and Davidson 1980 pp.208 & 223. This view is presented in much more detail in the next chapter.

the world. We are part of the world and as such are interacting with it at many levels. It is the way that we interact that is described by the intentional event of expectation. Similarly we may follow Quine in recognizing the conditioning effect of the world upon our belief systems and indeed on our will - admitting the while that these will only have corrigibility as they are subject to public examination and analysis. In this way the notions of opacity and disjunctions are banished in the expectation theory of truth.

There remains the problem of the multi-functional usage of the word 'truth'. The temptation to find some unifying element is very strong. For instance, by closely defining the community accepting a particular 'truth by convention', it might be possible to unify the various usages by saying that they are 'assertable' along the lines of Hilary Putnam's theory of truth. Or again, it might be possible, within the same constraints, to say that the use of truth in all these contexts was an affirmation that it would satisfy the expectations of the readers or hearers. Such an analysis is not open to us however. The limiting definition of the community providing the consensus - or the commitment to a particular authority for belief - itself begs the question "who is to decide what is assertable (or what meets expectations)". Hilary Putnam quotes Quine in his discussion of this view:

> truth by stipulation is not an enduring trait of sentences.[1]

Nor should an attempt be made to find some primitive unanalysable concept of 'truth' prevalent in all of the uses.

> If one assumes that whenever we have diverse phenomena gathered together under a single name, There Must Be Something They All Have In Common, then indeed it will follow that there is a single phenomenon (and, if it is not reducible, it must be "primitive") corresponding to intentionality.[2]

1 Putnam, H. 1988 pp.9.& !0.

2 Putnam op.cit.p.2.

So, the temptation to produce a philosophic or linguistic 'ground' for the multifunctional use of truth must be abandoned. However, it does throw up a further interesting question. If we cannot find a common intentional ground unifying all usages of the word 'truth', what reason have we for expecting some such ground to be common to any two of them? The reason given above is that any intentionalist language is not given either a simple mentalist or primitive definition, it defines an act of the whole person rather than a mental state. Thus it is observable and analysable rather than opaque. It is in the analogues of the behaviour evoked in response to different claims to truth that similarities will be observed and unification made.

2.3.3 Summary

The account of the truth-bearing feature of religious discourse, thus described, has demonstrated that, following a Davidsonian description of intentional behaviour and isolating the particular 'intentional term' of 'expectation', a satisfactory analysis may be given of language which accommodates religious usage. In the process, some grounds, particularly those provided by illocutionary speech acts, have been noticed as ones offering an alternative way forward, though these will not be further pursued in this study.

It seems that the Christian perception of truth is not merely limited to verisimilitude in its strictest sense. As Lakatos has shown, there are 'verifications' along the way. Perhaps these should be sought in the present experience of the Church and interpreted as 'arrabons' (present realisations of the fulfilment to come). By seeking to correspond to Christ in political and social acts, the congregation simultaneously anticipates the Kingdom of God. These anticipations are

not yet the Kingdom of God itself. But they are real mediations of the Kingdom of God within the limited possibilities of history. They are, so to speak with Paul, a pledge (*arrabon*) and the first fruits (*aparche*) of God's kingdom in the midst of human history.

The whole issue of truth-theory for ordinary language is currently under much discussion. What is claimed is that the truth-bearing function of religious discourse may be legitimate and academically respectable. In order to further substantiate that claim, the way in which language, and particularly religious language, relates to reality, and the problem of metaphor must be examined. That will be the major burden of the later chapters.

3 TRUTH AND REALISM

3.1 Introduction

The methodology of the following two chapters needs some explanation. Its purpose is to explain how the truth claims of religious discourse can imply an underlying realism. Obviously such a quest implies other analyses, for instance some attention must be given to the sort of realism that is appropriate for religious discourse, the nature of the implication - reference or correspondence - and the sort of 'fit' or 'mapping' that it entails; and whether it is legitimate for linguistic behaviour to make reality claims at all.

Not only the theory of 'realism' must be under review but also the kind of reality that follows. For instance, some will interpret 'in Christ' in terms of their own religious experience, others will interpret it in terms of a participation in a particular community of people that they term 'the Body of Christ', yet others will understand it with reference to a far more diffuse entity which they call 'the kingdom of God'; finally, there will be others who wish to define it as part of the behaviour of God in relation to His people, that it is His will to treat us as part of a community of people that are identified in some very definite way with His Son.

All of these claims correspond to a different sort of reality: the reality of experience; the reality of a visible Church; the reality of a rule of God in the world; and the reality of Divine attitudes in relation to man. Whilst these are not mutually exclusive, the criteria for the claims may be somewhat different.

The fundamental question is, of course, how any sort of language may make truth claims, and what purchase such claims may have on an underlying reality. It is only after this question has been answered that the more specialised one relating to the religious realism can be entertained.

Throughout this thesis no special privileges have been sought for religious language or even for religious knowledge. It shares with scientific research the prospect of future satisfaction of its truth claims. It has particular problems in the type of figurative statements that are made - but no more than does some language that describes music for instance. These problems call for analysis but only after the fundamental claim of truth conditions to some sort of realism has been discussed.

Thus. a program for this chapter can be mapped out. The first, and largest, task will be an excursus into modern truth theory relating to what is termed 'natural language' - which is really all language. In particular the theory of language of one particular philosopher - Donald Davidson - will be summarised in some detail. The reasons for this are twofold: most philosophers of religion when discussing this philosopher have tended to concentrate on a small part only of his considerable output; secondly, as Passmore says

> "Davidson's thinking is a seamless web".[1]

It only results in a distortion if one aspect of his philosophy is treated in isolation. It is hoped that Davidsonian realism will be shown to have been established and some of the objections from other modern philosophers will have been satisfactorily answered. There follows an appraisal, evaluation and application to that particular part of natural language that we call religious discourse.

1 Passmore, John, 1988. **Recent Philosophers**, Duckworth, London, p.64.

In the next chapter it is of prior concern to see how the truth theory may be used in the interpretation of religious language. The problem of metaphorical language has to be faced as do the problems of conceptual schemes and the various relativisms. Since Davidson depends upon a consensus of linguistic usage for the justification for 'The Convention of Charity' upon the basis of which he claims realism and objective knowledge, the 'crunch question' for religious realists is the problem of differing views, standpoints, denominations and even religions. Davidson, as will be seen, rejects the sort of social construction of reality advocated by Peter Winch,[1] so there is no escape down that blind alley. The nettle is firmly grasped, rejecting alternative conceptual schemes, but advocating the analysis of interpretative schemes as suggested by Godlove.[2]

The final question, 'Does Davidson deliver an adequate realism?' is then tackled. As Passmore comments

> In general, Davidson is widely rebuked in the United States as an advertiser of programmes which make large promises but never come to fruition; his most devoted admirers have been in England, which is perhaps less demanding in this respect. But even there.. doubts have been expressed.[3]

This criticism is more than a little harsh though it does contain a grain of truth, as will be seen. Certainly, for religious language, the sort of realism that results is a minimalist realism and to be secured at the end of a very long, and somewhat

1 See Winch, Peter 1958. The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy, R.K.P., London.

2 See Godlove, Terry. 1989 Religion, Interpretation and Diversity of Belief, C.U.P., Cambridge. See esp. pp.109-110. "Rather, to say that religion can come to bear on so many facets of life is just to say that the devout may interpret many (as a practical matter, it is hard to imagine all) of the world's goings-on with their religious views in mind. In this interpretative sense, a sense which leaves behind the metaphor of organising neutral content, and pre-empts the possibility of radical or even preponderant diversity of belief, we may, if we wish, speak of religions as alternative conceptual frameworks. We need to think of religions as holding this *interpretative* priority whilst denying them the *epistemic* variety...The nature of interpretation makes then diversity of religious belief possible." (My italics).

3 Passmore 1988. p. 75.

dark, tunnel.

Following this, some identifiable alternative stances will be criticised. The so-called anti-realism of Phillips is traced to Wittgensteinian 'concepts' and the question is asked whether these do not boil down to an implicit, if not acknowledged, conceptual relativism. Hebblethwaite's claims to religious truth and its derivation from theism are also analysed. Ultimately, it is shown that religious truth cannot be built up from the building blocks of semantic reference, as Hebblethwaite suggests, but has to be holistic in character. The sort of realism that follows from this is very moderate and very tenuous, but encourages the humble-mindedness which is a rare commodity in any philosophy.

3.2 Truth and Reference

Until very recently, realism was defined as the ability of language to refer to objects and events in an objective world.[1] The need was to show how any particular statement (and, recursively, thus all particular statements) could have reference. The basis of this would have to be a general theory of reference since to have an idiosyncratic theory for every particular statement would be incapable of summation in any correspondence theory of truth.

There are also cognitive issues involved in any discussion of realism. Margolis[2] has listed three distinct stances thus:-

1. The "real world" is ultimately unknowable

1 c.f. Margolis, J. (1986) Pragmatism without Foundations, Blackwell, Oxford. suggests that realism may be either a theory of some knowledge about an actual world, or some knowledge of facts about an actual world. See pp. 92-93.

2 op. cit p 214

2. Being knowable, its actual determinant structure is open to discovery

3. Though un-knowable "in itself" - that is on the essential conditions of mind-independence - we are, nevertheless, able to formulate a valid description of the world as-it-impinges-on-us.

Because of the difficulty of deciding which views are idealist, realist, or anti-realist and because of the confusing way in which these terms are used,[1] Margolis advises a certain caution in ascribing such terms to the views of Dummett *et al.* So, for instance, Dummett's anti realism turns out to be a variant of realism.[2]

Early attempts to provide an empirical realism embodying the view at (2) above centred upon some form of ostensive definition theory wedded to a correspondence theory of truth. At the heart of many traditional correspondence theories stand two presuppositions: that language may hook up onto the world epistemologically; and, by the amalgamation of many instances of this (building blocks) a system of knowledge may be derived.[3] These tenets are now under attack, especially from Davidson and Rorty, upon epistemic and semantic grounds, as they had, earlier, by Wittgenstein.[4]

The way in which language hooked up on to the world was traditionally described by means of observation sentences. This is Quine's term, they were traditionally called 'protocol' sentences which Hookway defines as follows:-

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1 Margolis 1986.(p.217)

2 See Dummett, Michael. 1982. Truth and Other Enigmas, p.25. "Although we no longer accept correspondence theory, we remain realist au fond; we retain in our thinking a fundamentally realist conception of truth." See the discussion in Margolis, Joseph. 1986 pp.117.ff.

3 See, e.g., Rorty on Frege, Carnap, Russell and Hume.

4 v.i. p.7.

> Protocol sentences refer to sentences used to express the content of experience.[1]

These came from observation reports such as

> "black here now".

In such a pseudo-sentence, sensation and perception are to provide a content for belief - and, perhaps, knowledge. It should be noted that the attempt to relate the 'idea' (Davidson points out the ambiguity latent in the word) [2] as a percept and the semantic function of the word "black" already contains a leap over a ditch of Lessing-like proportions! Awareness is just another belief or propositional attitude and attempts to touch a real world fail because they cannot effect a meeting between sensation (which is basically physically caused) and the justification for the belief that such a sensation has happened which must lie in a reason or rational cause. So, for instance, Davidson writes

> Such theories do not justify beliefs on the basis of sensations, but try to justify certain beliefs by claiming that they have the same epistemic content as a sensation. There are two difficulties with such a view: first, if 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.[3]..... Neurath was right in rejecting the intelligibility of comparing sentences or beliefs with reality. We experiment and observe, but this is not 'comparing' in any but a metaphorical sense, for our experimentation bears no epistemological fruit except as it causes us to add to, cling to, or abandon our beliefs. This causal relation cannot be a relation of confirmation or disconfirmation, since the cause is not a proposition or belief, but just an event in the world or in our sensory apparatus. Nor can such events be considered

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1 Hookway, Christopher 1988. Quine, Polity Press, Oxford. p.189. Hookway in this passage gives a critique of the position associated with the empiricism of Schlick, Ayer and Carnap. Quine's view is that the signals from our nerve endings act as a signal or trigger for us to use observation sentences. Davidson will have none of it, he will allow nothing to come between reality and language use. See Evnine, S. 1991 pp.144-145 and Quine, W.V.O. 1991 Theories and Things, Belknap Press, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Chapter 4. On the Very Idea of A Third Dogma.

2 (1) See LePore (1986) p.310 ,See also pp. 323-4. "Here we come to the standard attempts - standard at least from Hume onward - to find states of mind that bridge or eliminate the gap between sensation, where no question of truth can arise, and judgement which is plausibly a source of evidence. Quasi sentences like "Black here now" are supposed to express such states of mind. And perhaps we will be persuaded that there are such states of mind if we overlook the fact that the verb has been omitted (since putting it in would push things too far in the direction of judgement) and that 'here' and 'now' cannot be understood except in reference to an agent."

3 See Davidson, D. A Coherent theory of Truth and Knowledge, in LePore, 1986. p.310

> in themselves to be evidence, unless, of course, they cause us to believe something. And then it is the belief that is properly called the evidence, not the event.[1]

So also Lakatos also points out that

> no factual proposition can ever be proved by an experiment. Propositions can only be derived from other propositions, they cannot be derived from facts: one cannot prove statements from experiences - 'no more than by thumping on the table'. This is one of the basic points of elementary logic, but one which is understood by relatively few people even today.[2]

There is all the difference in the world between the experience of blackness as a sensation and the relating of it by means of question-begging indicator words like 'here' and 'now' with the verb conveniently left out! Such indicator words already need delimiting or amplifying in order to explain their function. How much black is there? What are its limits? Over what period is the blackness perceived or is it momentary? Does it move or vary with time? In other words, even such elementary pseudo-statements as those above require other sentences for their content to be explicated. These statements belong to the domain of language, and there is always another sentence. There is no easy way out of the language system here.

3.3 Attempts to secure Reference

3.3.1 Through Description

Attempts to state how a sentence may refer have either followed the classical pattern of definite descriptions-

1 Davidson, D. Empirical Content, op,cit. p.331.

2 Lakatos 1978 pp.15-16. Reprinted in Lakatos and Musgrave 1979 p.99.

here is a description which can identify one and one only object or class of objects: now find the referent which corresponds to this description

- or, more recently in terms of causation, either through intentionality, through speech-act theory,[1] or through such psycho-semantic devices as a "language of thought".

Definite description which "designated", defined by the meaning of a statement, was the locus classicus of the traditional empiricist approach which was followed by Church, Carnap, and, with some significant and revealing modifications, by Russell. The basis of this approach was the hypothesis that singular terms actually describe, and the description is logically prior to the act of finding a referent that could satisfy the description. In all such attempts, the 'meaning' of a statement was logically prior to, and secured the referent. Philosophers differed as to whether the description was analytic - e.g. a definition - or synthetic, based on the stipulations of say, an ostensive definition.

Bertrand Russell's modification of this view came as a result of his 'Logical Atomism'. This ontology postulated that the world was composed of 'atomic facts' which were irreducible. These simple entities could only be named (rather than described) by proper names, and combine to form the more complicated facts which we find in any state of affairs.[2]

The particular problems associated with Russell's view are that, on the one hand, facts (really semantic entities) are substituted for things and hence the claim to realism is difficult to sustain, and, on the other hand, nobody has yet been able

1 See Davidson op.cit p.44. "It has been argued, and convincingly, that we do not generally, or perhaps ever, say of a speech act, utterance or token that it is true."

2 See Pears, D. (ed.) 1972. Russell's Logical Atomism. Fontana/Collins. London.

to identify even one irreducible atomic fact. Wittgenstein notices in the Tractatus that compound statements which say 'that' (believes 'that', thinks 'that', etc) are not simply reducible to the truth values of the corresponding atomic facts.

Davidson's classic Essay "On saying that", attempts to tackle this problem by re-writing the relative pronoun - that - as a demonstrative pronoun - that. Davidson's illustration of this is to be found in his rendering the sentence 'Galileo said that the earth moves' as

> The earth moves
> Galileo said that.[1]

The importance of solving the semantic problem of compound sentences of this nature for Davidson is that he attempts to arrive at the meaning of a statement from an analysis of its truth conditions. The truth condition of a compound sentence containing a false judgement or a false belief is a strange one, and could lead to a multiplication of negative entities. To eliminate such a problem animated the semantic systems of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein. To quote Alvin Plantinga's paraphrase of Meinong,

> "This is a thing such that there exists no such thing... a monumentally perplexing idea." [2]

Many, even Quine, in his responses to the contributors to Words and Objections[3], have thought that this device was largely successful, suggesting that there was implicit in the relative pronoun a degree of demonstration. It is not immune from criticism, though.[4] LePore summarises the discussion thus:-

1 Davidson, Donald. 1984.p.105.

2 See Plantinga, Alvin. 1974. The Nature of Necessity. Clarendon, Oxford. p.132.

3 Words and Objections edited by Davidson, Donald and Hintekka, Jaako. 1969 Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

4 There has been a vast amount of literature about this one article and it is listed in a footnote to page 14. LePore, E. 1986.

> The upshot of these various complaints is that, under Davidson's analysis, we shouldn't need to look inside the displayed subordinate that-clause to see if words there interact with the wider environment of the sentence. The critics argue that we have such a need.[1]

A further criticism is offered here. If the question is asked "What is it to which the demonstrative pronoun relates?". The answer has to be given, "the next clause in this book or the next words that I say." In other words there has to be a degree of ostension implicit in the answer and the device can fail for that reason on other grounds discussed shortly.

This analysis of Davidson of 'belief-that' or 'says-that' sentences could be regarded as paradigmatic of his whole method. He is concerned to define belief in a causal fashion, and to treat it independently of the belief which is entertained. It is the latter which is regarded as a linguistic feature. Thus the whole of Davidson's linguistic philosophy is fore-shadowed in this article.

The problems noted in Russell's attempt are significant because they help to delineate the problems in the general descriptive theory itself. Frege's theory is built upon a "building-block" theory of reference and hence of truth.[2] Starting with simple definite descriptions, the more complicated entities in the world may be so defined as combinations of definite descriptions. But the world is not like this. It is a matrix of relationships and interfusion in which simple building blocks are impossible to identify. They are even more difficult to define, as Wittgenstein[3] demonstrated by his challenge to produce a definition of 'a chair' which could satisfy all possible instances of its class and yet not also be shown to include items which were manifestly not chairs. Wittgenstein's way out of the

1 op.cit. p.14.

2 See Frege, Gottlob, 1984. Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy, Blackwell, Oxford, pp.163.ff. & 391.ff. Davidson, 1984. p.220

3 cf Wittgenstein 1972 72

dilemma, to settle for 'family resemblances' - with a corresponding vagueness of reference limited only by usage - is well known. But, in substituting such a process for definite descriptions, Wittgenstein had also to forego reference and rely on 'knowing how to go on' and, indeed, making up the rules as you go on in any particular circumstance.

Wittgenstein also attacks the attempt to relate language to things by means of ostensive definition.[1] He shows that there are always implicit limiting sentences involved in any such definition. The act of defining also requires a prior knowledge about the usage and, indeed, reference, of such words as 'here' or 'now'.

As Davidson[2] puts it,

> Ostension would be fine if we could give a non-linguistic account of reference.[3]

Donnellan[4] shows that this criticism may be taken yet a stage further. In order to test any universal theory of reference, I must have universal criteria with which to mount such a test. Such criteria must logically precede the act of securing reference and take the form of a general theory. It is, however, difficult to provide such a general theory without, covertly, introducing the notion of truth, already defined in other terms than correspondence. The only other option is to introduce self-reference with all the problems and paradoxes that such a process entails.

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1 Wittgenstein 1972 no 72

2 Davidson (1984) p.221

3 Hookway cites Neurath who claimed that "talk of ostensive definition of these protocol terms simply posits an ineffable relation". See Hookway C. 1988.p.189.

4 See Donnellan K., art. **Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions**, in Davidson,D. and Harman,G., (ed.) 1972. **Semantics of Natural Language**, pp.356-379 discussed in Ramberg, B.T. 1989. **Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language**, Blackwell, Oxford. pp. 18-19

3.3.2 Causal Theories

Another way of attempting to secure reference is through causal theory; either through a speech-act (as with Donellan and Searle) or through a "Language of Thought" ('LOT').[1] This produces a much more sophisticated version of the causal theory capable of dealing with the particular problems that such a theory faces. These are, briefly, that it has to produce a general (i.e. universal) theory capable of coping with all possible areas of reference through counterfactuals; it has to be predictive so that the referent of any particular statement can be denoted; it has also to take into account the 'tokens' - the intentions and linguistic limitations - of the utterer.

LOT, to use an analogy from micro-processors, takes linguistic ability out of the 'software' and puts it (Chomsky-like) into the hard-ware or at least the firm-ware of the mind. Such a manoeuvre has its difficulties - not least because it fails to display frugality with entities (Some might think that the application of Occham's razor[2] is required here!)

Devitt, who advocates LOT, attempts to argue that there is a syntactic structure to thinking itself. This removes the voluntary element that has bedevilled attempts to ground a causal theory in speech-acts. Mental states are not a matter of choice. I may be able to choose which sentences I utter but I cannot exercise the same amount of choice upon my thinking, and the way that I think. This basic assumption of LOT is, perhaps, question-begging in itself. I can, if not under neurotic or psychotic stresses, certainly show a certain disposition of mind which

1 See Devitt, M. 1981. **Designation**, Columbia University Press, New York and London. pp.75-80 and critical discussion in LePore 1986 pp.248 ff. and Ramberg 1989 pp.20 ff.

2 Quine's rephrasing of Occham's razor is attractive:- "Try not to dream of more things in heaven and earth than you have to." Quine, W.V.O. 1970. **Philosophy of Logic**. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall. p.3.

refuses to countenance, say, sewer language or blasphemy even in my thoughts. If I can so channel my thinking, the question rather becomes a matter of the range of voluntary acts of will. Is it restricted to lexis or might it include grammar - a refusal to think in split infinitives, or trailing prepositions - and if grammar, why not syntax as well, preferring to think obliquely, rather than directly about painful subjects? The case is not made unequivocally. In LOT the major area of research has been to show how a primitive set of core ideas, together with a law-like series of rules governing their usage and relationship to each other might produce a universal and general principle of reference in any given situation.

The problem, as Ramberg[1] demonstrates, is that the whole hypothesis cannot be tested without a prior conception of truth. And since truth, as correspondence, is going to be derivative upon reference in this system, it is hard to avoid circularity. "The very idea" (to quote from Davidson) of a LOT, must, in any particular instance, be gained through public language. But, in order to know whether we have succeeded in referring, we must assume the very connectives between public language and LOT that it was required to prove. For these reasons, the concept of a LOT is as yet unproven. It would be unwise, therefore to argue for realism in language on any such hypothesis. If this is the case, attempts to provide a semantically satisfactory account of reference via general epistemological methods have yet to be fulfilled. So the challenge of Hepburn to show how religious language may 'refer'[2], though so nobly taken up by Janet Soskice[3], proves to be a

1 Ramberg 1989 pp.23-27

2 "ologising and the problem of validity" in Flew & MacIntyre 1955. New Essays in Philosophical Theology. S.C.M., London p.237

3 Soskice J.M. 1985 Metaphors and Religious Language, Clarendon, Oxford.ch.7.

cul-de-sac. That sort of realism, described by Hilary Putnam as an obsession, is not open to any sort of language let alone religious language which may be regarded as a sub-set of ordinary language with its own particular problems.

Nevertheless the problem of finding "a place where there is direct contact between linguistic theory and events, actions, or objects described in non-linguistic terms" remains, as well for religious language as for natural language. Perhaps there is no direct link. The choice open is either to accept the way of Pragmatism, advocated by Rorty, or to pursue the way of securing correspondence through coherence in which language touches the world, as it were 'tangentially',[1] as charted by Donald Davidson.

3.4 Realism by Correspondence

It does seem strange that, with such a pronounced nominalistic bent, Davidson should make his target a thorough-going realism. But Davidson's nominalism varies with his interpreters. Soskice automatically accepts that Davidson is a nominalist [2]. Margolis presents us with the disciple of Quine's nominalism. In Ramberg, Davidson's Nominalism is so taken for granted as to become transparent. Simon Evnine, on the other hand, whilst recognizing the nominalist stresses in Davidson's philosophy, presents us with a rationalist idealist.

> Davidson has now stepped entirely outside this empiricist tradition. It is far more useful to see him in the company of Plato (on whom, incidentally, he wrote his doctoral thesis in 1949) and Hegel, with all their metaphysical baggage, than in the company of the Vienna Circle and Quine, with their austere, anti-metaphysical scientism.[3]

1 The use of this word is taken from Barth's Introduction to his Commentary on Romans.

2 Soskice 1985 p.166. note 14

3 Evnine, Simon. 1991. **Donald Davidson**, Polity Press, Oxford. p.154.

Now it may be that these interpreters have failed to understand the full thrust of Davidson's perspective. There are several points at which Evnine's book interprets Davidson in a rather different way from the understanding which is given later in this chapter.[1] This contrasts sharply with Margolis who tries to accommodate a Quinean relativism within a Davidsonian framework.

Perhaps this is not the place to examine in detail the forms of nominalism listed by Armstrong. These are outlined and discussed by Ingor Johannson. [2] What is required here is to see whether the admitted nominalistic tendencies obscure Davidson's realism.

3.4.1 Through Coherence

Donald Davidson in **A coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge**[3] attempts to show that a recursive theory of truth based upon a Tarski-like formulation, can yet lead to a correspondence with a real world;

> "an objective, public world which is not of our own making"[4]

about which we can talk and of which we can have knowledge.

Davidson's method[5] is first to define the criteria which will provide a recursive definition of truth for natural languages. To provide such a touchstone, he redefines Tarski's Convention T[6] so that it can apply to natural languages instead of the highly specialised synthetic meta-language which was its

1 Evnine seems to ignore the fact that Davidson re-interprets Tarskian theory so that it applies, not to an artificial language, but to the natural language. He also finds difficulties in understanding Davidson's anomalous monism and the way in which belief supervenes upon the physical world.

2 op.cit. 1989.p.12.

3 LePore pp 307-319

4 op.cit.p.310

5 This is to be found in the essays, **The Method of Truth in Metaphysics** and **Reality without Reference**, Davidson, 1984. pp.199-225.

6 op.cit. pp 60 ff

domain in Tarski's theory of truth. From this base it is possible to construct what Davidson calls "**A coherence theory of Truth and Knowledge**".[1] It might, more properly, have been called "A Coherence Theory of True Belief", since the logical status of beliefs and their derivation in the causal scheme of things is the central issue in the enterprise.

Davidson's next move is to show that, for any language to succeed as a communication, it must entail a large area of shared belief concerning what is the case. But, for Davidson, belief is a disposition caused by what is the case. For Davidson the causal relationship between the objective world, mental states and intentions or other dispositions is critical.[2] He then applies the "Convention of Charity" to suggest that a language usage that is conditioned by a determined and determining area of shared belief must, by the same token correspond with what is the case i.e. the objective world. Thus, though no single statement may be said to 'refer', yet the body of language use relates as a whole to a real objective world.[3]

Correspondence without reference, as Ramberg notes, enables statements to have truth-conditions rather than truth-values.[4] Such truth-conditions are essential to Davidson's scheme since they provide the meaning of statements.

Thus it may be said that Davidson's attitude towards cognition approaches the view outlined at (3) above. As such it is a minimalist realism;[5] it does not draw upon any way of knowing and is incapable of referring; it makes ontological claims,

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1 In LePore 1986 pp 307 ff.

2 But see Davidson's later position in which a judgement of an evaluation of desirability (a rational, irreducible mental act) is also introduced. v.i. 3.4.3.

3 See Ramberg (1989) p.40. "We are left wondering what Davidson could possibly want from correspondence. The short answer is 'satisfaction'."

4 op.cit. p.44

5 Newton-Smith W.H. (1981) **Rationality of Science**, R.K.P., London, gives this definition. See p.38.

certainly, but, because of its holism, it has very little pertinence in any individual instance. It is, therefore anti-foundationalist (in spite of Margolis's charge of 'logocentric foundationalism')[1] in its thrust, whilst preserving some metaphysical purchase upon states of affairs for the language as a whole (or, rather, for the act of using language in its widest sense).

It might be thought that, because of this, it could be of very little help in theories of religious truth. It will be argued, however, that the sort of theory that truths of religion require is paradigmatic and holistic in character, and that the theory of Davidson may be used in this respect to very good effect: indeed, it has particular advantages in eschewing the atomism of much truth theory based upon correspondence with referents.

Davidson's thesis has been subjected to much scrutiny. The principle areas of discussion have been:-

1. Whether Tarski's Convention T could be re-formulated in the way that Davidson suggested so as to provide a way of providing a theory of truth for natural language.[2]

2. Whether a causal theory of belief can be provided which allows

a) for belief to be caused by objective reality.[3]

b) for dispositions to govern linguistic usage.[4]

1 Margolis (1986) pp. 148-9

2 Ramberg 1989 p.59.

3 See Stoutland, Frederick, Davidson on Intentional Behaviour, in LePore & McLaughlin, 1985.

4 e.g. Annette Baier, Rhyme and Reason: Reflections on Davidson's Version of Having Reasons, & David Pears, Reply to Annette Baier: Rhyme and Reason, arts. in LePore & McLaughlin 1985

3. Whether the "Convention of Charity" has any semantic force, or could Davidson's method, in the end result, as Rorty suggests, be boiled down to another description of Pragmatism.[1]

4. It involves a crude form of Instrumentalism by making a distinction between observation (factual) sentences and theoretical (instrumental) ones[2].

These criticisms will be considered in the course of the discussion in the following sections.

3.4.2 Convention 'T' - What a Theory of Truth must do

Convention T is simply a criterion for adequacy for theories of truth. It asks for a set of rules that designates a true T sentence for every possible truth function of that language.[3] The problem of providing a definition of truth for natural language is well known. Godel enumerates the problems with regard to set theory. It runs the risk of self-reference with its corresponding antinomies.[4] Tarski, in finding a criterion for testing how adequate any theory of truth was for a given language had recourse to the use of a meta-language to frame any such theory, thus avoiding self-reference within the natural language. Davidson's way out of this problem is to say that what we need is a good workable theory rather than a definition.[5]

1 See Rorty, Richard, art. **Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth**, in LePore 1986 p. 351 and Rorty, Richard, 1982. Chapter, **A World Well Lost**, in **Consequences of Pragmatism**, pp.14-15.

2 Devitt's criticism, discussed in Ramberg 1989 pp 26-27.

3 See Davidson (1984) pp.22.ff.

4 Tarski claimed that natural language would have to be re-formulated so that it would be un-recognisable and that it would result in semantic paradoxes. Davidson wishes that he had a complete answer to the second of these charges. See Davidson op.cit. pp.28-29.

5 See Davidson, Donald. 1984. **Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation**, O.U.P., Oxford. pp.72

With such a method recursion should be possible over the whole of linguistic usage without having to postulate sets or sequences where it has to apply. Such a method must necessarily be incomplete (according to set theory) but it remains nevertheless convincing. Davidson's modification of Tarski

> "..inverts Tarski's: we want to achieve an understanding of meaning or translation by assuming a prior grasp of truth".[1]

The form of it is

> A theory of truth will be materially adequate, that is, will correctly determine the extension of the truth-predicate, provided it entails, for each sentence s of the object language, a theorem of the form 's is true if and only if p' where 's' is replaced by a description of s and 'p' is replaced by a sentence that is true if and only if s is.[2]

The upshot of Davidson's use of the Convention T is that it makes meaning dependent upon truth. Indeed Evnine in a lucid passage[3] has clearly demonstrated that the theory of truth emerges out of the attempt to formulate a theory of meaning. Some have argued that other constraints are necessary in order to relate it to a theory of meaning.[4] Ramberg argues that this criticism will not do because

> we need a whole supply

of meaning, and this is allowed for by the very incompleteness of Davidson's theory.[5]

One of the problems thrown up by a truth-dependent theory of meaning is that it results in a very uncompromising treatment of metaphor.[6] It is perhaps this upshot that has caused philosophers of religion such as Janet Soskice[7] to neglect the very many important positive contributions to philosophical theology

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1 op.cit. p.150.

2 op.cit. p.150. Discussed by Ramberg pp.59.ff

3 Evnine 1991.pp. 80-81.

4 See Introduction to Evans G. & McDowell J. 1976. **Truth and Meaning**, Clarendon, Oxford. pp.xiv-xv

5 See Ramberg 1989 pp.60-62 and 79-80.

6 Davidson op.cit. pp.246.ff "Metaphors mean what the words mean and nothing else."

7 Soskice (1985) pp. 90-92

that Davidson's Truth theory could bring. And it may be possible to produce another account of metaphor within a Davidsonian framework, taking into account expectation of interpretation.[1]

The argument that the sort of theory of truth provided for by the Davidson's reformulation is materially uninformative is met by Davidson head-on. He would admit that, in any particular instance, there is a minimum of information, but, given the holistic nature of the theory, such infinitesimal points, summed to infinity, provide the basis for the informative process.[2]

3.4.3 The Asymmetry of Belief

In several papers,[3] Davidson gives his account of the relationship between Intentional Attitudes such as belief, mental states, and physical causation. This study, a vast area in itself, has many implications for both truth theory and theology. It has, however, been largely neglected, certainly by theologians. It is important to note that Davidson is really a systematic philosopher and his attitude to the relationship between belief and the objective world is a major plank in the platform upon which he builds his version of Realism.

In his study of the causes of belief, there are, or seem to be two distinct purposes. The first is to safeguard his understanding of the rational process from the challenges of physicalist behaviourism. Because of this he is anxious to deny any formal way of relating mental events to physical events by a natural law. It will be seen that

1 Davidson's distinction between meaning and use is critical here. Note should also be taken of Davidson's comment in LePore p.315. "I now think it is essential, in doing radical interpretation, to include the desires of the speaker from the start, so that the springs of action and intention, namely both belief and desire, are related to meaning." See also op.cit p.439, for Davidson's approval of Donnellan's analysis of sentences in terms of speaker's expectation of their interpretation.

2 See Davidson op,cit p.225.

3 Collected in Davidson, D., 1980. **Essays on Actions and Events**, Clarendon, Oxford. Discussed in LePore, E. & McLaughlin, B. ed. 1985. **Actions and Events, Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson**, Blackwell, Oxford. See also art. **Belief and the Basis of Meaning**, in Davidson, 1984. pp.141.ff

this issue surfaces in what is called *'The Anomalism of the Mental'*. The second is to show that there is a way that dispositions such as belief 'supervene' upon the real physical world. The way in which this takes place though it has been adequately described in Davidson, has produced variant analyses in his own commentators.[1]

The relevance of this section to the overall plan of this study needs to be underlined. For Davidson, his causal theory underpins his semantic theory. Davidson is at pains to demonstrate that dispositions are of a piece with the physical world. The propositional content of those beliefs, however, being a linguistic and therefore rational feature, are distinct from this, though they, in some way, supervene upon it, and, in some way, reflect what the world is. They are therefore grounded in reality and, taken as a whole, may give an indication of what is real.[2] If this is the case for general belief, it will later be argued that if the Davidson system is applied to the case of religious belief[3], and it can be demonstrated how the same causal relationship, this time with spiritual realities, might appertain, then, assuming that some form of consensus about *what it is to be* real in those who hold a theistic belief can be arrived at,[4] applying Davidson's Convention of Charity to religious language, it should be possible to talk about a knowledge of religious reality.[5]

1 e.g. cf. Follesdal,D. art. **Causation and Explanation**, pp.311.ff., & McLaughlin, B., art. **Anomalous Monism and the Irreducibility of the Mental**, p.331.ff., Kim, Jaegwon, art. **Psychophysical Laws**, p.369.ff., and McDowell, John, art. **Functionalsim and Anomalous Monism**, p.387,ff, in LePore & McLaughlin, 1985. and Evnine, S.,1991. Chapter 2. p.7.ff. see also pp.161. and 177.

2 This will be further demonstrated when Davidson's Convention of Charity is examined.

3 understood in terms of a general belief in theism.

4 This does not mean that disagreements are eliminated, but rather, where they exist, it should at least be possible to demonstrate and specify what the disputes are about.

5 Where knowledge is taken to mean justified true belief.

It is therefore necessary to give some attention to his studies on Actions, Reasons, Causes and Mental Events,[1] even though, for the sake of brevity, the summary may be somewhat crude and fail to do justice to the enormous amount of interest and discussion it has occasioned.

Davidson has, as has already been noticed, compared two distinct areas of influence upon intentional behaviour: causation and explanation. His own intention is to show the bearing that causal law has in fixing our intentions. If this can be clearly demonstrated, such intentions, encoded in language and having truth conditions, can be clearly related to that which caused them, which for Davidson, are states of affairs in an objective world. The arguments used have many stages, each being tightly described and supported by ancillary arguments.

The first stage is to re-describe reasons and actions as 'causes and effects'.[2] Here the argument is that such a re-description is possible, not that reasons and actions are usually described in these terms. The next series of premises are critical.

(i) Mental events can be caused by, or may effect physical events. It follows from this that reasons may be causes.[3] This is what Brian McLaughlin describes as the *Principle of Causal Interaction.*

(ii) A strict causal law may be involved in the description of causally related events. (His '*Nomological Character of Causality*')[4]

1 These papers are to be found in Davidson, 1980. Attention will also especially be given to the criticism of Dagfin Follesdal Causation and Explanation: a Problem in Davidson's View on Action and Mind. in LePore & McLaughlin, 1985. pp.311.ff.

2 LePore & McLaughlin, 1985. p.313

3 See Evnine 3.3, pp.47.ff. for a general amplification of this point.

4 Davidson D. 1970 p.215. See also Evnine S. p.37.

(iii) Whilst every mental event is also a physical event, we cannot provide strict laws relating mental vocabulary events and physical vocabulary events. (*Anomalism of the Mental.*)[1]

(iv) Mental qualities supervene upon physical qualities.[2]

From these premises Davidson deduces his position, which he calls 'Anomalous Monism',[3] thus. From premise (i) and (ii), if a mental event 'm' is preceded by, or follows a physical event 'p', causation must be involved. But (iii) shows that causation is not possible in mental terms, and cannot be couched in mentalist language. What is described must therefore be a physical process which cannot be described by physical laws.Intentional states, therefore reflect 'what is the case' only as they supervene upon the world.

Davidson then turns to an analysis of intentional behaviour itself. An action is defined in terms of intentional behaviour.[4] His analysis of rationalisation depends upon his analysis of 'primary reasons' into complementary pairs of 'belief states' and 'pro-attitudes'.[5] These, in any given situation may interact to produce a

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1 See Evnine p. 19. for an exposition of this argument. Davidson's point is that 'mental and physical predicates are not made for each other'. Consider a supposed mind-experiment. Imagine that the belief that 'a hippopotamus is an animal' is triggered off by one set of neurons and that 'a hippopotamus is a fish' is triggered off by another sat of neurons. Then we should not expect that these neurons should fire together. But what sort of principle could prevent them? The firing of neurons are contingent events. They are not subject to the laws of logic such as the law of contradiction. Yet the propositions supposedly linked to them are. There should be no reason in principle why they should not fire together. But there is every reason why I should not believe the propositions 'The Hippopotamus is an animal' and 'The hippopotamus is a fish' simultaneously. Such a view would be prevented by the logical view of entailment, in this case the proposition that p excludes q. (The other law of entailment is the law of inclusion. See art. Chisloim, Roderick, **The Truths of Reason**, in Sleigh, R,C, Jr. ed. , **Necessary Truth**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood-Cliffs. "For every sate of affairs, p. and q., the conjunctive state of affairs, composed of p. and p. being a sufficient condition of q, includes q; and the conjunctive state of affairs, composed of not-q and of p being a sufficient condition of q, excludes p. These latter 'truths of reason' are thus said to be the kind of truth with which the logic of propositions is concerned." This article is a robust defence of the analytic/synthetic distinction which is one of the **Two Dogmas of Empiricism** challenged by Quine, in Quine, W.V.O. 1953. **From a Logical Point of View**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

2 See Davidson **Mental Events** p.214 and **The Material Mind** p.253. Both of these essays appear in **Essays on Actions and Events** and the page numbers are those appearing in that collection.

3 *Anomalous* - because there can be no laws which can predict mental events. *Monism* - because Davidson is anxious to show that propositional attitudes really supervene upon and so reflect their causes in the physical world, in which they belong as well.

4 See Evnine, S. 1991 p.41. For anything to be an action at all, something I do, rather than something that merely happens, it must have some description under which it is intentional.

5 op.cit. pp.4.ff.

'practical syllogism', issuing in intentional behaviour.[1] Thus intentional behaviour is directly caused by a mental event. But mental events themselves are caused by physical processes. Therefore intentions and beliefs are conditioned by events in the objective (real) world.

Rationalisation as a process is therefore looked at as a species of causation. The content of rationalisation - "x thought that", "y said or reasoned that"- belongs to discourse and hence to logic. Because of problems associated with future-directed intention, Davidson has modified his earlier reductivist account.

> When I wrote Essay 1 (Actions, Reasons, Causes) I believed that, of the three main uses of the concept of intention distinguished by Anscombe (acting with an intention, acting intentionally, and intending to act), the first was the most basic. Acting intentionally, I argued in Essay 1, was just acting with some intention. That left intending, which I thought would be simple to understand in terms of the others. I was wrong. When I finally came to work on it, I found it the hardest of the three; contrary to my original view, it came to seem the basic notion on which the others depend; and what progress I made with it partly undermined an important theme in Essay 1 - that 'the intention with which the action was done' does not refer to an entity or state of any kind.[2]

Davidson's modified position may be reduced to the following formula:-

Intention = forecast + Judgement

The forecast or anticipation is an estimation of how the intended action would change a future state of affairs. The judgement or evaluation is that the action is ("all out") a preferable action,

given the rest of what I believe about the immediate future.

For Davidson the reasons for such are mental causes which are irreducible to physical ones, they are rational ones.

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1 op.cit. p.7.

2 See Davidson's **Introduction** to his **Essays on Actions and Events**, in which he answers some of the criticisms of the papers compiled in that volume and shows how his thinking has developed. See also LePore & McLaughlin, 1985., p.12. Discussed by Wilson, George M., **Davidson on Intentional Action**, ibid. pp.40.ff.

In much contemporary analysis, Davidson's three basic premises have been carefully interrogated. Follesdal has quoted Quesada's comment on the first premise with approval[1] in that the only people who would not agree with it are epiphenomenalists and Leibnitzian parallelists. It is with premise (ii) and (iii) that the more critical reaction has come. So, for instance, Follesdal has challenged the preference for strict causal laws, citing the modern use of 'powers, tendencies, and propensities' in Natural Science.[2]

It is the Anomalism of the Mental which has occasioned most of the disquiet. Davidson supports his position with a two-fold argument. The mental area is not one that can be accurately drawn or defined; it is an open system interacting with the physical, rather than a closed system. Because of this, prediction, and therefore causal law, becomes impossible. It is also, because of Quine's Indeterminacy of Translation,[3] impossible to translate mental events into physical causal language without, in the process, becoming indefinite and vague. There are no touch-stones or criteria which will provide guarantees of the adequacy of such a translation.

Follesdal suggests that Davidson's arguments amount to an under-determination[4] - which he is quite happy to accept - it accords with his own position on premise (ii) - rather than indetermination. Follesdal is therefore happy to proceed

1 op.cit. p. 318.
2 op.cit. p. 318.
3 See, for instance, Quine, W.V.O. 1969. Chapter 2.
4 op.cit.p.320.

to an integrated theory of mind which incorporates mentalist and physicalist language - as particle and wave theories of light are brought together in a modern quantum theory (but only at the expense of taking on board a-determinism!).

In spite of Follesdal's attempts at a synthesis, Davidson has still, within the paradigm of strict causation, made out a strong case for there being a *metabasis eis allo genos* (a modal leap or logical type jump) between the two areas of discourse.

Some philosophers have accused Davidson[1] of having used a Cartesian framework in his discussion of mental states - a rare blind-spot! This is certainly true, particularly in the newer version outlined above. Whilst these might easily be re-written as propositional attitudes, the importance of Davidson's position is that it preserves the notion of physical causation - essential in the basis for Davidsonian realism - whilst, at the same time showing the role of rational choice, as has been shown.

The asymmetry of the causes of belief has been thus demonstrated. Rational processes according to the laws of logic may indeed cause dispositions which are physical processes. Yet there is no way in which neuro-psychological law can be appealed to in order to describe the rational content of those dispositions.

3.4.4 How Belief becomes Knowledge

Though Davidson is constructing a coherence theory of truth, he does not define truth in terms of coherent beliefs.

> Truth is correspondence with the way things are[2]

1 Stoutland,F. art. **Davidson on Intentional Behaviour**, in op.cit. p.45.
2 op.cit.p.309.

For Davidson, though, in many places, he treats it as a totally transparent concept. So a coherence theory of truth has to be so constructed as to accord with this definition and hence to lead to correspondence. Because belief may be mistaken, a coherence theory of truth is not infallible. All that can be claimed is that a preponderance of the totality of belief is true, and the larger the body of beliefs in such a coherent set, the more likely they are, if they cohere, to be true. Any of the beliefs may be wrong, but a global scepticism would be unintelligible and meaningless.

The formula for constructing any coherent set is that it should conform with Convention T. This is sufficient to provide a recursive method of constructing such a set, testing each statement for coherence within it without ever defining truth in terms of it. Such a set, must according to Godel's theorem, always be incomplete. But this is in fact very convenient in that it is parasitic on states of affairs, which are also never completely describable, for its satisfaction. Davidson is content to describe knowledge[1] in terms of justified true belief and, in these terms, is able to show that knowledge is the end term of such a process.

The truth of the belief will be shown by its coherence with that matrix of beliefs with which it is part of a set. Its justification will be the fact that others who use similar language

> know what a belief is and how in general beliefs are to be detected and interpreted [2]

Because such beliefs are caused,[3] there is a strong presumption that

> the objects of belief are the causes of that belief[4]

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1 op.cit p.308

2 Davidson, art. **A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge** in LePore, 1986. p.314.

3 op.cit p.317

4 op.cit. p. 319.

Thus the underlying reality to which the truth bears testimony is arrived at justified and belief passes into knowledge.

3.4.5 Davidson's Convention of Charity

So now Davidson's argument converges. Belief has been shown to be at least partly causally conditioned.

> Beliefs for me are states of people with intentions, desires, sense organs; they are states that are caused by, and cause, events inside and outside the bodies of their entertainers.[1]

But Davidson has been able to show how these beliefs may be massed in a body via a coherence theory of truth based upon Convention T. The argument now moves to demonstrate that the success of communication depends upon a Convention of Charity. If we can understand and communicate with each other, we must presume that we share a large common fund of beliefs, encapsulated in a common language.[2] This would include the fact that we know what beliefs are, and how we arrived at them and how we interpret them. So we must attribute to the person with whom we communicate, the same probability of overall correctness concerning the world that we afford to ourselves. This includes the interpretation of a belief in terms of a shared objective world via the same attitude to truth. If we can do this, and are warranted to do so, then we, and the form of our language, are

> Largely correct about the world.[3]

1 op.cit. p.308.
2 op.cit. p.316
3 op.cit. p.318

This does not mean that all beliefs or any particular beliefs are universally correct, but it does give us a pretty firm platform on which we can attribute error in any particular case.[1] Nevertheless such a stance should not be extended to become

a tool of cognitive imperialism[2],

as Ramberg puts it. We cannot claim that our own way of interpreting the world is universal.

> It is not the speaker who must perform the impossible feat of comparing his belief with reality; it is the interpreter who must take into account the causal interaction between world and speaker in order to find out what the speaker means, and hence what he believes. Each speaker can do no better than make his system of beliefs coherent, adjusting the system as rationally as he can as new beliefs are thrust upon him. But there is no need to fear that these beliefs are just a fairy tale. For the sentences that express the beliefs, and the beliefs themselves, are correctly understood to be about the public events that caused them, and so must be plainly veridical.[3] Each individual knows this, since he knows the nature of speech and belief. This does not, of course, tell him which of his beliefs and sentences are true, but it does assure him that his overall picture of the world around him is like the picture other people have, and is, in its large features, correct.[4]

In this manner Davidsonian realism is established.[5] It now has to face two challenges: that of global scepticism (i.e. that language could be completely wrong about the world) and that of triviality (that the sort of realism asserted here will not live up to all that Davidson has claimed for it).

The sceptical challenge is met by emphasising the role of causation in belief and other propositional attitudes. This makes global scepticism 'unintelligible'.[6]

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1 op.cit. p.319

2 See Ramberg pp. 83-85

3 For Davidson beliefs are caused by the interaction of rationality with a real world: in other words, what it is reasonable to believe, and what the world is. See Evnine, S. 1991.pp.148-149.

4 Davidson in LePore 1986 p. 332.

5 cf. Davidson, 1984. p.201. "Successful communication proves the existence of a shared and largely true, view of the world... The suggestion is that, if the truth conditions of sentences are placed in the context of a comprehensive theory, the linguistic structure that emerges will reflect large features of reality."

6 Davidson (1984) p.201.

> What stands in the way of global scepticism of the senses is, in my view, the fact that we must, in the plainest and methodologically most basic cases, take the objects of a belief to be the causes of the belief. And that we, as interpreters, must take them to be what they in fact are. Communication begins where causes converge: your utterance means what mine does if belief in its truth is systematically caused by the same events and objects.[1]

Rorty notes that this passage neatly weds a Kripkean account of causation of belief with a holistic interpretation of Strawson's opinion that a way to understand meaning is to understand a speaker's beliefs.[2] The second challenge, offered by both Rorty and Ramberg is the more trenchant one. Rorty boils down the Convention of Charity to what he says is a 'merely negative' statement that

> there is no third thing relevant to truth beside meanings of words and the way the world is.[3]

Rorty regards Davidson's allegiance to 'an objective public world which is not of our making' as

> no more than out-dated rhetoric.[4]

To establish this he interprets Davidson's modification of Tarski to imply that concepts of truth modelled according to that criterion did not need to have a correspondence with the world. In this way Rorty attempts to enlist Davidson as a pragmatist.

Similarly Ramberg, because of the difficulty of providing relata in giving an account of a correspondence with the real world, comments:

> Davidson's realism comes to this: If we think we understand what people say, we must regard most of our observations about the world we live in as correct. Davidson does not provide metaphysical assurance of our connection with reality, he simply makes the point that if we try to give up the world, we must also give up language.[5]

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1 LePore 1986 pp 317-318

2 LePore (1986) p.340

3 op.cit. p.344.

4 art. **Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth**, in LePore, 1986. p.354.

5 Ramberg, B. 1989. p.47.

Against this can be cited Margolis who advances the view that Davidson's argument against the existence of conceptual schemes, which is one of the consequences of his stance concerning realism, "ushers in new options". Margolis outlines the following programme for his concept of philosophy. Such a programme :-

1. is committed to pursuing issues of legitimation - transcendental issues;
2. acknowledges the defeat of all forms of cognitive transparency;
3. accepts a pragmatist or holistic defense of realism;
4. opposes anarchism, skepticism, radical incommensurabilism;
5. favors a scientific realism addressed to distributed claims;
6. historicizes and praxicalizes human existence and human inquiry;
7. rejects all forms of traditionalism as cryptic versions of essentialism or cognitive transparency;
8. is hospitable, within limits, to idealism and anti-realism; and
9. espouses a moderate or robust relativism, wherever reasonable.[1]

Though these, for Margolis, include transcendental arguments (admittedly of a non Kantian nature) which would not necessarily have the approval of Davidson, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to outline further or defend such a programme, the fact that such a possibility emerges from Davidsonian realism in itself means that there is more to what is affirmed by it than either Rorty or Ramberg concede.[2]

1 Margolis, 1986. p.304.

2 Ramberg 1989 p.47

4 TRUTH FUNCTIONALITY IN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

This chapter attempts to consider the interpretation of religious language using some of the parameters laid down in the previous sections. In order that a Davidsonian semantic may be shown to yield a fruitful study of religious discourse, certain initial questions have to be addressed, and these occupy the first part of the chapter.

It has been seen that an essential part of the scaffolding of Davidson's linguistic theory has been its relation with his causal theory which attempts to show that dispositions, are compounded with rational features which preserve the integrity of their propositional content, and supervene[1] upon them.

One of the major tasks, then, will be to give some account of what it is for faith to be caused by that which it seeks to describe. Along the way, there will be some new insight from Davidson which may throw new light on old problems. Especially useful will be Davidson's distinction between causes and causal explanation on the one hand and the understanding of reasons as causes on the other.

The second of the preliminary requirements concerns Davidson's Convention of Charity. For this to have any purchase upon reality, there has to be a convergence of understanding upon what is meant by this reality. The sort of consensus that is required will be shown to be one that does not eliminate disagreement, but one which makes possible the sort of dialogue where such disagreements can be realised and interpreted as such.

1 Davidson's own illustration of a model for supervenience is that of a man who decides to pay his taxes. Though there are laws which enforce the paying of such excise, the actual act of the man is a free and rational one. and are caused by the reality upon which they are grounded.

The significance of this part of the study for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue is apparent and perhaps this will function as one of the major contributions that Davidson can make in the study of religious discourse.

Following these preliminaries, some lines of approach for the interpretation of religious language will be examined in more detail. In particular, the question of a realism for religious language and how a correspondence for it might be obtained will be analysed. The object of this study is not to produce a new hermeneutic for religious language but to show how a Davidsonian linguistic theory might contribute to and function in such a construction.

4.1 Some Pre-conditions

4.1.1 Causation and the Formation of Faith

The difficulty in showing a causal relationship between any reality and a disposition is exacerbated by the fact that the reality is cognitively un-get-at-able. All accounts of reality have to be second order at least; derived, according to Davidsonian theory, from a correspondence between language and a reality assumed according to the convention of charity.

Foundational theorists would, on the other hand make a presumption of reality on the basis of perceptual theories. Even sophisticated realist theories such as those outlined by W. Newton-Smith[1] and Janet Soskice[2], who argue from the success of scientific prediction and inquiry for an underlying realism, are basing

1 art. **Relativism and the Possibility of Interpretation**, in Hollis, M. & Lukes, S. ed. 1982. **Rationality and Relativism**, Blackwell, Oxford. See also Newton-Smith, W.H. 1981. Passim

2 Janet Soskice, 1985, **Metaphors and Religious Language**, Clarendon, Oxford. e.g. pp.122.ff.

that argument ultimately upon interpretations of perception. Thus it is not possible to demonstrate any causal relationship at first hand. Yet it should be possible to set it out, to formulate it, in terms of causal theory. Probably, the most that can be hoped for is that some outline may be given of 'what it would be' for the disposition of faith or religious belief to be caused by the eternal realities that they seek to affirm. Davidson's analysis[1], allows for some clarification in the type of causal theory that is required.

Davidson distinguishes between causal relations (simple causes which may exist between events) causal explanations (which are the description of the essential outlines of the primary reasons for events or causes of actions) reason explanations (which are the rational causes of intentional actions) and actions - which are intentional events.

The search for a direct causal link between a creative event and reality has been completely elusive in physical theory, and in contemporary studies on Divine Action, is generally abandoned in favour of causal explanation[2] or of some sort of rational justification for holding such a belief. The attempt to provide a direct causal account of theistic belief founders for the same reasons. This, according to Humean theory, would require, at least, some sort of affirmation of a constant conjunction between 'cause' and 'effect' and an indication of what could be necessary and sufficient conditions.

One part of the task is, ex hypothesis, easily disposed of. It follows from any understanding of immanence, that a religious reality must be in constant

1 outlined in section 3.4.3

2 See e.g. Rodger Forsman's article **Double Agency and identifying reference to God** in Hebblethwaite, B. & Henderson, E. 1990. **Divine Action** T.& T. Clark, Edinburgh.

conjunction with the believer and those who do not believe alike. This relationship may be termed a necessary condition. It is, though, by no means, a sufficient condition otherwise everybody would believe.

Richard Niebuhr argues strongly that the sufficient condition for faith is revelation. He quotes Professor Hermann thus:-

> All Revelation is the self revelation of God. We can call any sort of communication revelation only then if we have found God in it. But we find and have God only when he so incontestably touches us and seizes us that we wholly yield ourselves to him.... God reveals himself in that he forces us to trust him wholly. [1]

The problem of specifying what would be sufficient conditions is illustrated by the Calvinist resort to variants of the doctrine of 'effectual call'. This was an attempt to account for the fact that some responded to the preaching of the word and some did not. Its problem is that it runs the danger of most forms of illuminism: the objective act of revelation becomes a subjective experience of an inner light. A parallel problem is associated with Professor Hermann's definition.

It substitutes compelling vision for the obedience of faith. The sort of causation that we are looking for to account for the disposition of faith is not a quasi-mechanical compulsion or propulsion of an automaton. It is that revelation which occasions the wonder of a faith which works by love. It is that call from God that speaks to my inner being in tones that cause me to long to become what he calls me - a child of God. Such things are only demonstrable in the witness and testimony of the believer. This is the only way that any cause can be shown to be effectual. But it leaves open still the problem of what it is about any particular mediation that it is effectual and another not.

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1 Niebuhr, H.Richard. 1960. **The Meaning of Revelation**. Collier Macmillan, New York, I.S.B.N. 0-02-087750 p.111 quoting from Hermann, W. **Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament** Vol III, p.575.

The contribution that Davidson can make to this study is to be found in his attempt

> to defend the ancient - and common-sense - position that rationalisation is a species of causal explanation[1].

If this is taken at its face value it means that the most probable reasons for a person's having a belief are the reasons which they give for entertaining it. This is not to rule out the influence of other possible causes of belief such as might occur in some types of psychological conditioning, brain-washing and so on, but these are to be regarded as aberrations rather than the norm. The norm as far as theists are concerned is that they believe in God because, in some way, His very existence calls, rationally, for that belief. Some, indeed will refer to their own belief in terms of an action of God. Thus it is possible to give, in Davidsonian terms, a causal explanation or a rational explanation of theistic belief in terms that could satisfy the requirements of the Convention of Charity.

Many alternative stories of causation have been tried in order to account for the disposition of faith. These range from those of Sigmund Freud in **Totem and Taboo** to the hypotheses of Feuerbach, Neizche, Sapir and others. The task here is not to engage in the continuing discussion with the adherents of the respective points of view. That is the province of apologetic theology. The significant issue for the purpose of this study may be illustrated by the fact that it was Barth who wrote the foreword commending Feuerbach's work to a wider public. He was able to do this by adopting the device that has been used when faced with alternative accounts of creation, miracle and the like. Whenever a naturalistic cause is postulated, it does not prevent a non-naturalistic cause from being asserted

1 Davidson, D. 1980 Actions, Reasons and Causes Collected in Essays on Actions and Events, O.U.P., Oxford

at another remove. In answer to Feuerbach we might say "What if the determining force of a transcendent God caused men to project their own ideal selves into some image of divinity that they could understand and worship?". What is of interest here is that such an argument when faced with a causal explanation seems to be always possible. It seems as if there is, in such discussions, a natural neo-Barthian pressure towards an autonomy in fields of theological study and any attempt to provide an alternative reason, let it be for miracle or creation, does not preclude an insistence that final causes are transcendental.

Perhaps the time is ripe for an investigation into the nature of autonomy in the religious sphere. It seems that, within disciplines it is a necessary rigour whilst not precluding inter-disciplinary studies. The danger with such manoeuvres as the one outlined above is that they have a tendency towards the creation of invulnerable (almost quasi- fundamentalist) positions. It is to counter this tendency that the Davidsonian theory of language is to be seen in its best light. Such a theory insists that, since theology shares language with the rest of our experience of the world, it must be understood as part of that holistic universe. There is no separate 'Universe of Discourse' for religious language. Its lexis and grammar are, in the main, those functioning in all aspects or fields of the one universe of discourse. This means that there are no unique truth conditions for religious language since their interpretation is modified by their being placed (receiving their status) in the context of the rest of language. Therein lies our only hope from being rescued from linguistic dualism.

4.1.2 Truth and Consensus

The indication in Chambers' Dictionary is that the word consensus is derived from consentire - to feel, to think, or consentus - a harmony of voices. Microlytics' Thesaurus give the words feeling, flavour, opinion sense, as synonyms for the word. It will be plain from what follows that the interpretation of the word used here is in a somewhat weaker sense which may be taken as thoughts chiming together in harmony

4.1.2.1 Interpretative Schemes and Authority

In ordinary language, where there is a wide degree of consensus regarding the way the world is, The Convention of Charity may indeed apply in the manner that Davidson indicates. The question which theologians must face, is whether it can also have application in religious discourse where there are wide divergences of understanding between denominational and religious systems. Coping with the problem of religious difference is not a new problem but it does assume a new and serious problem for the form of realism outlined here simply because consensus is the foundation of the Convention of Charity.

> "The reason why different people are able to rest satisfied with different convictions about the same subject is often that they have asked different questions to which different answers are needed".[1]

Traditionally such divergency has met with various responses:-

a) one claim or another is true and the rest false.

b) each is true within its own, culturally conditioned, conceptual system, but 'the truth' is confined to that system.

c) given adequate analysis, a dialectical process will take place, arriving at a new synthesis.

1 Temple 1923. Mens Creatrix. Macmillan London.

d) some are partly true but could find their final truth in the one true religion which fulfils all the others (e.g. Christianity)

e) (an amplification of c) above) to inquire, given each interpretative scheme, and asking the sort of questions that they ask, whether each in turn cannot be understood as relating to the same underlying reality.

f) to examine what is being claimed and what has to be the case for the claim to be sustained in a progressive and holistic program of interpretation and analysis in which, according to a Convention of Charity, the widest respect is offered to the reality of the claims that are made on all sides.

It is this last position that is taken in this paper. An analogy with the various forms of curved geometry may be useful here. Each system of religious discourse could be compared to a different form of curved geometry (depending upon whether the basic curvature was spherical, parabolic, hyperbolic, etc.). Given adequate analysis it should be possible to derive a parent geometry that embraces all the schemes - it might be extremely difficult if one was originally 'imprisoned' in, say, a parabolic geometry, but it is not impossible. Whilst one would find it difficult, if not impossible to recognize when one had got to a form of non-curved geometry, yet at the same time, there would be a progressive ease with which other systems could be interpreted from such a parent scheme. From the resulting all-embracing stand-point, each of the functions within one geometry could be re-interpreted within another. Because these schemes are interpretable they can

be regarded as schemes of interpretation, rather than conceptual schemes. Thus the heresy of scheme and content which Davidson regards as the origin of the conceptual scheme hiatus, would be avoided.

Most of the while our belief is being modified by some interpretative scheme or other. This is because the parameters within which we talk about our faith are set by authority. An illustration from cartography should begin to make this apparent.

When a map is checked out to see whether it corresponds with an area of terrain, all sorts of things are going on. The lines of roads, coastlines or hills are, as it were, laid against the world that they attempt to portray and checked for 'fit'. Are the angles right and are the lengths properly proportionate? Interpretation too is involved, for the maps belong to one or other particular class or style of projection. Perhaps it might be orthographic projection or some other. The map may be a relief map, or it may seek to show political, rainfall, occupational, or demographic demarcations. In any interpretation of a map, almost subconsciously, allowance is made for this.

To talk about 'mapping' as a model for the correspondence of language to reality is not, therefore, as simple as it seems.[1] There may be interpretative levels - analogous to the sort of allowances that have to be made in cartographic understanding - in the checking out of correspondence with reality. When it is the correspondence that can be found for religious discourse, further problems come

1 It should be noted that Davidson requires mapping to satisfy sentential functions. Davidson, 1984.p.47.

into play. In religious matters there are no obviously given outlines. Religious 'entities' merge into their background like a Chinese ying-yang picture or a Turner seascape.

The only way out of this problem is to seek definitions from dogma or the sources and norms of authority.[1] The selection of which authority may be quite arbitrary. The choice may have actually been made because of the theological linguistic community of one's birth! Again, with others, it may have arisen by conviction and rational choice. For many Christians, it may be because of the impression that the character and numinous nature of Christ gives, coming through the filter of the written records, and evoking a faith in the Gospel writers themselves that is unaccountable in other terms. This sort of personal impression is important in any sort of witness - even in a court of law. This is not a complete justification of what must be finally an arbitrary choice - that is not the purpose here. It is to show that choices of authority have been made and on them depend the characteristics and conditions of the so-called truths of revelation.

The analogy drawn from cartography may again be helpful here. Who is to decide what are the criteria for classifying some areas of the Duddon Estuary as tidal lands and what are coast-line? It all seems very arbitrary. The sand dunes themselves are in a state of movement. The tides vary daily and their level is further complicated by other climatic factors. There has to be some working definition as to what counts as land mass or what will count as sea or as tidal sands. It involves the invoking of authority as well.

1 Soskice suggests that the definitions are supplied by traditional models. Soskice 1985 pp.153.ff.

Yet more interesting difficulties emerge when questions as to the type of mapping are applied to religious discourse. With the abandonment of reference, just what does correspondence mean for religious discourse? It is fairly obvious that to look for equivalence with religious feeling or experience can only lead to a form of idolatry. Perhaps something like an analogy of proportionality might be the only way in which it can be understood. A particular truth claim is to the whole mass of religious discourse as the thing designated is in relation to 'all that is'. It only has to be spelled out like this to show the elusiveness and enormity of the task involved. The problem with analogies of proportionality is that they have two unknowns. Yet the idea that such models are meaningful is very persistent. The original way of dealing with this problem was to argue for an *analogia* entis. This implied that all things, together with their origin - say 'Being' itself - shared a common ontological understructure. The modern way out of the dilemma might be to argue for the primacy of mythological symbols. The further clarification of this problem, with its related significance for the reconciling of interpretative schemes and the functioning of theological integrity could form a major program for religious truth theory.

4.1.2.2 Theological Integrity

The sort of program of radical interpretation envisaged here must, in religious discourse meet with several groups of difficulties. The first of these relates to the self-sustaining and self-reinforcing nature of the systems themselves. This means that, even for intellectually honest people, 'knowledge by faith' can seem, unconsciously, to pass into immediate or 'incorrigible' knowledge. Yet the latter knowledge, as Paul warns us, is not yet ours. What happens to an individual at an internal level is to be found, even more insistently, within groups: dogmas

become incapable of modification; ultra-fundamentalist groups show their own insecurity in a fear of any attempt at understanding, let alone being reconciled with, the views of others. Yet, within Christendom, even the most extreme fundamentalists do not burn witches. No one would wish to dash children's heads against the stones of Babylon either! In other words we all show a certain amount of liberal interpretation in our account of our sources. What is required here is that such an interpretative treatment be extended, humbly, reverently and radically. What is under analysis, at root, is the way that particular dispositions may relate to particular propositions, sets of propositions, or even systems of propositions.

The notion of disposition in this analysis may need defining. It owed originally much to Gilbert Ryle. Instead of talking about 'belief-states' or using mentalist language, a 'disposition' to act in a certain way is preferred. In the general trend of English philosophy, the predilection to re-write mentalist statements has been part of the general trend towards reductionism against which the first sections of this thesis were a protest. Because of the way that Davidson has, as it were, turned this process on its head by establishing clear relationships between mental events - and he is willing even to call continuous mental events "Mental States" -the term has found a new usage as describing the propensity towards behaviour which is always a feature of such belief-events.

When the relationships between such sets of propositions and the particular disposition (e.g. Expectation, belief, etc.) are examined it might seem that a modified set might 'fit' - express the disposition more effectively. There can only be two tests of this - internal coherence and the feel of the 'fit'. We do this when

we grope for a set of words to express exactly what we are getting at. The 'What we are getting at' is the disposition and the set of words is a particular term, statement or group of statements.

It should be noted that to talk of 'propositional-attitudes' is here actually to beg the question. It is the relation between the proposition and the attitude that calls for analysis.

The analysis of interpretative schemes will involve asking why particular models have been used and particular questions asked; even why particular answers have been rejected. The investigation will be part historical, part linguistic-analysis, and part psychological introspection. It will demand a ruthless honesty and *tapeinophrosune* (humble-mindedness). When such understandings have been laid bare, the question has to be asked "How do the findings impinge upon my own interpretative schemes?" This is where theological integrity comes into play in that the alternative systems, thus analysed, have to be tested for 'fit' against one's own dispositions - can they be rejected as false, accommodated within some sub-set of understanding, or is a synthesis demanded? This is what radical interpretation means within religious discourse. It has to be done. Our claim to a purchase on reality depends upon it.

The sort of claim to realism that can be made at such a stage of radical interpretation has to be proleptic. Finally it has to be secured by the re-understanding of doctrinal differences and contradictions within the religious sphere. At present there are indications that such analysis can achieve the sort of results which could provide the convergences and consensus that is required. It is to be expected that these are the arabons of greater understandings to come. Whilst there will always be groups on all sides who will be unable or unwilling to

understand the importance or significance of such a process, it is enough that there are already signs that such a rapprochement is possible. If this is so, then the claim that religious belief is caused by a common religious reality is sustainable. What cannot be said with any certainty is that the nature of that reality will conform to any particular model. But one can hope, and perhaps even know-by-faith that such is the case!

Enough has been said in the previous section for it to be fairly obvious that our claim to have a purchase upon religious realities is at best very tenuous. Yet most of us have loyalties and allegiances with authority structures claiming unique privileges and sometimes monopolies with regard to the definition of the form that faith may take. Part of the problem of theological integrity is that of maintaining such loyalties whilst engaging in honest and open dialogue with others who are loyal to other systems. It is the problem of combining, on the one hand, one's own commitment with openness, vulnerability and the willingness to believe that those with whom we would do business are largely correct about the realities which they describe (if we are to do justice to Davidson's Convention of Charity).

> If we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters[1]

Two other quotations from Davidson, which somewhat modify the above statement, may serve to show just what is required within the Convention of Charity and what is not. His formulation of it has undergone a process of sophistication. It will be now seen that within the parameters of his later enunciation, there is plenty of scope for error and for disagreement.

1 Davidson 1985.p.197.

> But minimizing disagreement, or maximizing agreement, is a confused ideal. The aim of interpretation is not agreement but understanding. My point has always been that understanding can be secured by interpreting in a way that makes for the right sort of agreement. The 'right sort', however, is no easier to specify than to say what constitutes a good reason for holding a particular belief.[1]

How Davidson copes with the problem of disagreement is to be found in an earlier formulation:

> Some disagreements are more destructive of understanding than other, and a sophisticated theory must naturally take this into account. Disagreement about theoretical matters may (in some cases) be more tolerable than disagreement about how they are; disagreement about the truth of attributions of certain attitudes to a speaker by that same speaker may not be tolerable at all, or barely. It is impossible to simplify the considerations that are relevant, for everything we know or believe about the way evidence supports beliefs can be put to work in deciding where the theory can best allow error, and what errors are least destructive of understanding. The methodology of interpretation is, in this respect, nothing but epistemology seen in the mirror of meaning. [2]

This helps to define the sort of consensus that is required. What is not needed is agreement on all counts. Such an agreement would be a rare commodity indeed in theological circles. What is necessary is that opposing or variant views are taken seriously and the horizons of those holding such opinions merged with one's own.

Even so, with this restricted view of consensus, there is a tension when there is such a fundamental intolerance to other views as has been the historic stance of classical Christian theism and Islam. To pretend that such a tension is, say, outdated, or belongs to a more conservative age is very tempting. Yet there is the danger of distancing oneself from the very body of belief that one hopes to represent within a dialogue. The position can be rather akin to a union negotiator who strikes a compromise only to find himself at odds with his union. The only answer is to live

1 Davidson 1984 Quoted by Evnine S. 1991. p.109.

2 Davidson 1984 p.169.

with the anomalies created by such intolerance and to hope the larger perspective may create a situation where such claims to a monopoly of the truth become seen as separate interpretative schemes within a greater claim to the reality of the Eternal.

4.2 Truth Conditions and Meaning

Since Davidson uses a truth conditional theory of meaning, it is useful to explore what is meant by truth conditions. Such conditions may be found by analysing the syntax and logical form of statements. The tools of such logical analysis are to be found in the rules of propositional and predicate calculus, class theory and set theory. Such rules govern such statements as conditionals (if x then y), bi-conditionals (if and only if x then y), negation, universal quantification (for all x's there is a particular or general function, which may be a property or a relationship), existential quantification (for some, i.e. at least one, x, there is such a function), conjunction (both a and b,) and disjunction (either a or b.). The rules by which such analysis proceeds are covered in the primers on symbolic logic and are not further outlined here.

Davidson is, in effect, ruling out the empirical traditional association of meaning with verification procedures by alleging that the meaning is given by the truth conditions (which, because they are holistic, and embedded in a holistic language, are not capable of verification or falsification by such methods of inquiry). The meaning is not the same as the truth conditions, but is somehow bound up with it.

In order to illustrate how the analysis of truth conditions would work out in religious discourse, it might be useful to take the paradigm-example of theodicy. This will illustrate just some of the important elements that feature in religious language. Others, such as historical statements like 'he was crucified dead and buried' and quasi-historical statements like 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' or 'the third day he rose again from the dead', will have rather different truth-conditions. The model for this analysis, then, is to be summarised in the affirmation:

I believe that God is good.

In order that the truth conditions should be clearly set out, some initial linguistic and syntactic analysis is required. According to Davidson[1], the sentence breaks down into two clauses

God is good,
I believe that,

where the relative pronoun 'that' has been re-written as a demonstrative pronoun. It is with the first of these clauses that this analysis is primarily concerned.

Is 'God' a term denoting a member of a class of things, the name of a class of things, or a logical proper name? Already we are in an area of much speculation, but we may take it for now that 'God' denotes the name of a class of things whose membership is one. The word 'is' can function in at least three different ways. It can act as the 'is' of existence, as in the question:

Is there a God?

Secondly it can act as the 'is' of identity as in:

A bachelor is an unmarried man

1 On Saying 'That' Davidson 1984., pp.93.ff.

or, more controversially, in the expression:

God is love.[1]

It may also act as the 'is' of attribution or predication, as in

Brian is running a marathon.

Indeed it may be that the 'is' does duty in one, two, or three of these senses. Any such overlap of sense needs to be brought out into the open and, perhaps, the analysis will treat separately each of these interpretations. For present purposes, the interesting sidelines of interpreting 'is' in the first two senses, will, largely be ignored - the 'is' of equivalence or identity would need some notion such as 'The Good' of Plato, in order for it to make sense.

It is to the third, that of predication, that attention will be given here. When we come to the adjective 'good', we have to ask what the function of the word is. It might be just an expression of approval like

strawberry jam is good

which might be re-written

I like strawberry jam.

Such a rendering makes little ontological claim. In a similar manner, some empirical interpreters of religious discourse have sought to re-describe theological statements as sentences about commitment, viz.,

I will live as though God is good.

Such a device rendered the statement immune from attack by positivists but only at the expense of making no ontological claim. Davidson is rather scathing about such procedures

> ..semantics without ontology is not very interesting, and a language like our own, for which no better could be done, would be a paradigm of unlearnability.[2]

1 See Alexander, Peter, 1969., An Introduction to Logic, George Allen and Unwin, London.

2 Davidson 1984., p.13.

Assuming that we can interpret 'good' as having some ontological purchase, it might be useful to re-write the original statement as

God is not (not good)

or

God is not evil

Using Davidson's predilection for talking about about acts rather than states, and using the minor premise that

evil persons do evil acts,

syllogistic reasoning produces the expression

God does not do evil acts.

It is at this stage that the notion of 'entailment' comes in. This is strictly a logical word and will be used in a logical sense here. It means that, if we say "if and only if p, then q," then it would be a contradiction to affirm p and deny q. The more common use of 'implication', meaning 'to assume that....with good reason', is avoided here. A good reason to believe something should not be confused with a logical derivation.[1] If we are clear about this, we shall avoid attempting to answer what is basically a logical problem by listing good reasons why we should believe the contrary. Using syllogistic reasoning, and applying two further minor premises:

the events in the world are ultimately the act of God,

and

Some events in the world are judged to be evil,

the logical dilemma of a theodicy becomes apparent in the contradiction

No act of God is evil - i.e. for all acts of God, none are evil,

Some acts of God are evil - or there is at least one act of God which is evil.

1 See Sparkes, A.W., 1991, **Talking Philosophy**, Routledge, London. pp.76-77.

From the rules governing universal and existential quantifiers, these two statements can be shown to assert p and 'not p' at the same time, which is a contradiction and against one of the 'laws of thought'.[1] The argument would, of course, proceed by challenging one of the minor premises, but that is not our purpose here. What is suggested is that the analysis of the statement "I believe that God is good," has allowed something of its meaning to emerge. It would seem that, if we also accept that, within the concept God, is contained the notion of creator of the world, and it is difficult to conceive of a Christian God without such an assumption, we are forced to share Leibnitz's conclusion that we live in the best possible world and that this is all contained in the original premise! It has been a syntactic and truth conditional analysis rather than a matter of verification or falsification, but, as the truth conditions have been teased out, more and more of the meaning has become apparent.

> ...principles of form and principles of interpretation are to be articulated together, and not in theoretical isolation; and explanations of semantic facts obviously require both syntactic and semantic premises. Davidson's program, as I understand it, stresses this intertwining of considerations on form and meaning.[2]

It remains to attempt the almost impossible task of locating a definition of meaning. It should be said that every philosophical system has to have some transparent quality, which is taken for granted. Many have 'experience' or 'meaning' or 'being' as such a quality. The best that can be done for the word meaning in this respect is to identify it with the *content* of beliefs. As such it forms a matrix of and relationships and relative weightings of importance and significance. To some extent this definition is circular, but it is, perhaps, the best that can be done.

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1 See Lemmon, E.J., **Beginning Logic**. Nelson, London. pp.122-123.

2 Higginbotham, James, art. **Linguistic Theory and Davidson's program in Semantics**. LePore pp 46-47.

Such a definition of meaning might be compared with a rule of thumb definition of truth which is taken to be the relationship of that content of belief with what is the case.

In the example above it was the relationships with creation that emerged from the analysis. If we had gone on to look at the analogies that were implicit in the statement, then other relationships and weightings would have emerged.

4.3 Verification

The relationship between truth conditions and the means of testing or verifying them is one of the issues that has often, in the past, forced theologians on the defensive. It used to be thought that the affirmations of the so-called facts of science were readily verifiable whereas those of religious discourse were not capable of the same sort of verification at all. In the light of modern truth-theory, however, the relationship between empirical testing and 'showing to be true' has become increasingly difficult to maintain. How this is so, and the consequences for religious claims to truth, is the subject of this section.

First of all there needs to be some clarification of terms. According to Davidson's system, what is true can be real without needing to be factual. Facts are a trivial and unnecessary intrusion into the relationship between language and the world. So, in **True to the Facts**,[1] Davidson constructs a

redundancy theory of facts

which eliminates the requirement for their existence altogether.

The use of the word 'verification' can hide a multitude of sins. It can be used to describe testing procedures. John McDowell's *equation* of meaning with truth-conditions seems to boil down to a programme of perceptual confirmation

1 Davidson 1984 pp.37.ff.

or dis-confirmation,[1] or to that which is "confirmable in principle." Herbert Feigl's reformulation in these terms is approved by John Hick.[2] But see Ramberg's criticism that there can, in the final analysis, be no distinction between those statements which are 'in principle verifiable' and those which are not.[3] It could also be those confirmations or hints of future success which encourage the scientist to continue in the pursuit of a particular research program in the way that Lakatos describes[4] Dummett's distinction between direct and indirect verification, which he interprets as conclusive or inconclusive verification, is analysed by Akeel Bilrami[5]. The important point at issue is the relationship between language and the world. Though Davidson, in constructing his theory of truth uses the notion of testing procedures, [6]it is only to discard them as "*counting noses*" in favour of linguistic competence.[7]

> A semantic theory of truth is verifiable, it will turn out, precisely because it allows us to 'characterize the property of truth without having to find entities to which sentences that have the property differentially correspond.[8]'

Davidson cites the well-known 'brain-in-a-vat' argument in which a human brain is held in a life sustaining nutrient in a vat and fed physical or electrical stimuli corresponding to those which could be associated in normal conditions with

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1 See McDowell, J.1980 art Towards a Unified Theory of Meaning and Action in Grazer Philosophische Studies, and art 1984, Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding in Bouvereese, J. and Parrett, H. eds. 1981 Meaning and Understanding. This is discussed by Akeel Bilrami in LePore 1986 pp.118-121.

2 See Feigl, H. 1956. Some major issues and developments in the Philosophy of Science and Logical Empiricism, art. in Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, 1. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. No.15. and Hick, John, 1985 Eschatological Verification Reconsidered in Problems of Religious Pluralism, Macmillan, Basingstoke. This is an edited re-print of the article which first appeared in Religious Studies xiii 1977. It is further re-printed in Hick, John, 1990 A John Hick Reader, Macmillan, Basingstoke.

3 See Ramberg, 1990. pp.46-47. cf, Ramberg, 1990. p.9. "Trouble arises only when epistemology conflates the question of what it is for a sentence to be true (which asks what we mean by calling a sentence true) with the question of how we know whether a sentence *is* true."

4 Lakatos, Imri 1978 pp.49.ff.

5 Bilgrami, Akeel, 1986. Meaning, Holism and Use in LePore 1986.

6 see Davidson, 1984. pp.25-27.

7 op.cit. p.25. See also Ramberg 1989 pp.9-10.

8 Ramberg, 1990. pp.9-10. is quoting from Davidson 1984.p.70.

a human nervous system, in order to show that verificationism according to sensory stimulation can tell us nothing about the world, nor need it.[1] So any awareness of the world becomes "just another belief".

John Hick, in his definition of Verification as

> the removal of ignorance or uncertainty concerning the truth of some proposition,[2]

describes this definition as 'logico-psychological' and so moves some way towards the causal relationship which Davidson maintains is the only one which appertains in our formulation and re-enforcement of belief about the World but he does not make the final break with his pre-occupation with facts. It is interesting to see how his formulation of verification has recently become much more holistic in its formulation:

I would therefore suggest that the proposition whose eschatological verification we should consider is not 'God exists'; for this treats divine existence as an isolable and bounded fact. What we are seeking to verify is the truth of the theistic interpretation of the process of the universe, and this verificandum is embodied in a complex proposition such as 'The theistic account of the character of the universe, and of what is taking place in its history, is true'.[3]

The only sort of verification that can be allowed in Davidson's theory is that which is caused in the believer, rather than that which describes any semantic process. The notion of the confirmations that 'we are on the right track' in

1 Davidson, art. A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge in LePore 1986 p. 313.

2 See Hick, John, 1957. Faith and Knowledge, Macmillan, Basingstoke. pp 169-170.

3 Hick, John, 1990. Eschatological Verification Reconsidered in A John Hick Reader Macmillan, Basingstoke, p.132.

a research programme, as indicated by Lakatos, might well be interpreted in a causal way. This could be interpreted in the manner of Moltmann's eschatological fulfilment of our Christian Expectation.

4.4 Truth and Conceptual Schemes

In this section, the course of Davidson's argument "On the very idea of a Conceptual Scheme"[1] is outlined and some account is given of the ensuing discussion amongst contemporary philosophers. Finally an attempt is made to assess its relevance to the study of theology. Davidson's target in this article is conceptual relativism as exemplified in the writings of B.L.Whorf[2], Kuhn[3], Quine,[4] and Bergson.

Davidson argues that the notion of different points of view implies that there is, underlying that idea, something on which the different points of view can be plotted. Yet such an underlying matrix, to which the different points of view could relate, would mean that they were not incommensurate. The meaning of this word is part of the general discussion.

The link is traditionally made between languages and conceptual schemes and this Davidson accepts. So, for Davidson, the meaning of 'incommensurate' is a breakdown in intertranslatability. One way of getting at a shared conceptual scheme would then be to analyze the criteria that are used in the translation of one language to another. Davidson, because of his nominalism, rejects the supposition

1 Davidson 1984 pp,183.ff

2 e.g. in The Punctual and Segmentative Aspects of Verbs in Hopi, see Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf ed Carroll, J.B. 1956 M.I.T. Cambridge, Mass.

3 Kuhn 1962 in the Structure of Scientific Revolutions University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

4 in 'Speaking of Objects' Quine 1960. Word and Object, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. And Ontological Relativity in Quine 1969 Ontological Relativity and Other Essays, Columbia University Press, New York. -

of a mind capable of grasping a language-less reality in all its pristine purity - though Davidson is prepared to talk about mental events and mental states, this is not the way in which mental activity is construed. Thought, for Davidson, is a linguistic activity as are the mental events and processes which characterise it. There is no privileged, neutral, point of view from which we can claim to assess the relationship of other schemes therefore. We have to look from the standpoint of our own language.

Supposing two languages did fail the test of intertranslatability, would this in itself provide a basis for the 'conceptual scheme' hypothesis? If there were total breakdown, then it would be impossible to recognize that there was a language or any linguistic behaviour which needed translation at all.

Kuhn's paradigm theory of incommensurability assumes a dualism of scheme and neutral content. It is, Davidson asserts, impossible to get at such a content apart from examining the language - the two are not separable in this way. There is no way that we can say that those having incommensurate schemes inhabit different universes. The idea that all sentences have an empirical content which can be spelled out in terms of experience and causation is also rejected:-

> ...in place of the dualism of the analytic-synthetic we get the dualism of conceptual scheme and empirical content. The new dualism is the foundation of an empiricism shorn of the untenable dogmas of the analytic-synthetic distinction and reductionism[1], shorn that is of the unworkable idea that we can uniquely allocate empirical content sentence by sentence. I want to argue that this second dualism of scheme and content, of organising system and something waiting to be organised, cannot be made intelligible and defensible. It is itself a dogma of empiricism, the third dogma. The third, and perhaps the last, for if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything left to call empiricism.[2]

1 Davidson is here alluding to Quine's famous article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in From a Logical Point of View, Quine, W.V.O. 1961 Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

2 Davidson 1984 p.189.

According to Whorf, such a dualism can issue in incommensurable schemes. Incommensurability is, for Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Quine, the criterion for saying that what we have are conceptual schemes. Davidson now turns his attention to the relationship that is purported to exist between the organising scheme and its undifferentiated content, the raw uninterpreted data. Various metaphors have been used to describe this - to organise, to fit, to predict, to justify. The content which is being treated in this way is described as either reality or experience. If the content is a unity, then there is no way in which it can be 'organised':-

> Someone who sets out to organise a closet arranges the things in it. If you are told not to organise the shoes and shirts but the closet itself, you would be bewildered. How could you organise the 'Pacific Ocean? Straighten out its shores, perhaps, or relocate its islands, or destroy its fish.[1]

If we talk about a plurality of experience, then the items in it are already individuated by language and the experience cannot count as a raw uninterpreted datum. In practice where there is perhaps a partial breakdown in communication, anomalies are interpreted and re-interpreted on the basis of the assumption of a shared rationality and the prior assumption of a large area of shared belief. Thus Davidson concludes there is no basis, either theoretically or in practice, on which an assumption of incommensurability can be made since there is no 'co-ordinate system' which would enable us to give the paradigms position, nor is there a vantage point from which the rival systems could be viewed. However this is not to argue for the Kantian alternative view:-

> It would be equally wrong to announce the glorious news that all mankind - all speakers of language at least - share a common scheme and ontology. For if we cannot intelligibly say that schemes are different, neither can we intelligibly say that they are one.[2]

1 op.cit p.192.

2 op.cit.p.198.

In his critique of the position taken by Davidson in this article, Ramberg[1] clarifies and redefines the meaning of incommensurability. He prefers Devitt's definition which emphasises semantic difference rather than the failure of inter-translatablity.

> Incommensurability is the thesis that, because of meaning, reference and ontological change, theories T and T' in the one area are semantically incomparable[2]

Thus Davidson's argument against incommensurability, defined as the failure of intertranslatability leaves Devitt's formulation of it untouched. Such a position, Ramberg argues, does not support the idea of a bridgehead into reality for the scientific investigator, argued for by Hollis and Lukes in **Rationality and Relativism**. For Davidson's reasons, he rejects what he calls Linguistic Kantianism

> ..the idea that the world appears pretty much the same to everyone who talks...

Agreement concerning the truth of the statement that swans are white depends upon the concept of truth alone, it does not depend upon the coincidence of what counts as whiteness in their perception, nor does it depend, for that matter that swans appear to them in exactly the same way. Rather than the failure of intertranslatability, incommensurability may be taken as "a divergence of cognitive values" between the convention and practices of rival social groups. Such divergences are open to rational exploration using a process akin to Aristotle's *phronesis* in which logical principles (the laws of thought and other aspects of rationality) are taken to be values rather than law-like concepts. This method of attack, Ramberg argues, is more like Gadamer's 'fusion of the horizons' between two cultures in the hermeneutic process.

1 Ramberg 1989 pp.114.ff.

2 Devitt, M. 1985 **Realism and Truth** Blackwell Oxford, quoted by Ramberg 1989 p.116.

Ramberg's hidden agenda emerges as he reaches his conclusion. He wishes to save Quinean relativism, such as might occur between different linguistic practices, whilst recognizing that Davidson's argument is effective against conceptual schemes thought of as different ways of ordering a 'content'.

Margolis makes the same point. He suggests that Hacking's notion of incommensurability as a "dissociation" of paradigms or exemplars could lead to a form of relativity which could be acceptable, whilst Davidson's argument disposes of the impenetrable conceptual schemes of Kuhn at his most extravagant.[1]

Terry Godlove, whilst accepting Davidson's arguments against "the framework model" of ordering experience, nevertheless makes a plea for what is rejected explicitly by Davidson, a unified background against which various interpretative (rather than conceptual) schemes can be understood. In such a transcendent unity,

> ...the objective world, over which religious belief may come to hold an interpretative priority, is already transcendentally constrained.. the Kantian approach locates systems of religious belief, however diverse, against a common, objective world. On both interpretative and transcendental grounds, we have reason to reject relativisms about the world that we confront together.[2]

Godlove's main thesis is that the model against which Davidson protests arose out of Durkheim's misreading of Kant. Godlove's distinction between the notion of alternative conceptual schemes, which he regards, because of Davidson's arguments, as a non-viable option, and interpretative schemes, which offer a measure of rational inter-translation and understanding, is a useful one and is taken further in section 4.1.2.

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1 Margolis 1986 pp.80-81. cf also Hacking, Ian 1983 Representing and Intervening C.U.P. Cambridge. Chapter 5.

2 Godlove, Terry. 1989. **Religious Interpretation and Diversity of Belief - The Framework Model from Kant to Durkheim to Davidson**, C.U.P. Cambridge. p.138.

Many theologians have sought to use the notion of conceptual relativism as an approach to the study of comparative religion. An example of a considered and systematic exposition is to be found in the works of John Hick:-

> ...the great post-axial faiths constitute different ways of experiencing, conceiving and living in relation to an ultimate Divine Reality, which transcends all our versions of it.[1]

Such a view, variedly expressed, is to be found to underlie the assumption that multi-faith education is to be a sub-set of multi-cultural education. The faith is regarded as a construct of the culture to which it is endemic. Whether or no conceptual relativism is regarded as a viable way of looking at comparative religious studies has important implications for the prospect of, and indeed goals for, inter-faith dialogue. If conceptual relativism is the only model that can be used, then all can that be hoped for in inter-faith dialogue is that those engaged in it can manage to achieve a constant duck-rabbit paradigm switch so that they can inhabit the two universes of discourse. If, following Godlove, we allow that alternative interpretative schemes have been socially constructed, (though I would argue that these are constructed through the working out of the implications of belief-dispositions, rather than the apprehension of any transcendental reality) then the prospect for dialogue and radical interpretation and re-interpretation using each others' models becomes a possibility, if a difficult and tortuous one.

One additional complication in the project of constructing such a theology for dialogue is that various assumptions have been made about the understanding of 'experience'. I shall argue later on that one of the important revolutions that can occur in theology if Davidsonian linguistic theory is consistently applied, is that it takes religious knowledge out of the domain of experience and into the domain of

1 John Hick 1989 **An Interpretation of Religion**, Macmillan, Basingstoke. pp.235-6.

what is true and can be justified as belief. The arguments against foundationalist bases of knowledge as derived from experience have already been rehearsed in discussing how realism may be achieved.

For some, however,[1] experience is 'veridical'. This assumption, to use Davidson's metaphor, provides him with the background co-ordinate system against which he can plot the various religious conceptual schemes. Hick's use of the word "veridical" is open to question here and must be analysed. Experience may be 'real' or it may be 'illusory' but the use of 'true' or 'false' to describe it as implied in the adjective veridical is to conceive of truth as a value-judgement rather than as a rational function. To do so, perhaps might be quite in order, providing it was so used consistently. But to import the idea of truth into descriptions of experience under the umbrella of value judgements does not warrant its use as rational function as well unless a theory of truth can be construed which unites the two ideas. To date, such a theory of truth has not been satisfactorily enunciated!

What happens, in the formulations of conceptual relativists, is that the basic experience of religion is pronounced 'true' in the first sense. The assumption is then made that, because of this, it cannot possibly be 'false' in the second sense, and the universal validity of religious experience as a basis for differing conceptual schemes is regarded as having been assured. It has already been demonstrated that the foundational argument from experience is seriously flawed. There is no way of moving from the content of a percept to the linguistic formulation and expression of it. Hence the hypothesis of a background matrix of 'experience' is just that - a hypothesis. As such it cannot point to 'experience' as evidence, for the justification

1 for instance John Hick 1989 p.211.

of a hypothesis must be a rational and hence a linguistic process. It has to be justified by argument. It is difficult to imagine the form that an argument for such a postulate could take. Thus the argument for an 'experience' background for conceptual relativism in religion cannot be sustained.

To apply the foregoing arguments to the prospect for dialogue, two possibilities remain. One is to regard religious language in a purely extensional way, and to proceed by means of linguistic analysis of truth conditions and other syntactic and semantic means to investigate the divergences and anomalies which are apparent in the different formulations of religious belief. The backdrop to such a process is the assumption that a shared linguistic ability implies a large area of shared belief, thus making possible a rational process.

The alternative is to pursue the same process of radical interpretation against the background of a transcendental unity, in the manner described by Godlove. Some might argue the latter option is the only one that is allowed by Christian theism. That is to ignore what has been said about the cause of belief being in relation to what is real, not as some transcendental construct but as the sum total of all that is. It seems that the option is that we must either iconify our conception of transcendental reality or we must follow the first option. The second option may, indeed, assume that an understanding of what is meant by transcendental reality is more immediately available than may be the case. Thus for this reason, and perhaps residual Barthian tendencies, the first option will be followed here.

4.4.1 Davidsonian Realism and Forms of Life

In discussing the contribution of neo-Wittgensteinian philosophers and theologians such as D.Z.Phillips and Alan Keightley, it is as well to remember that

their position is not easily summarised in a way that can be crystallised into one simple agenda for understanding the operation of language. For instance, D.Z.Phillips has, with some justification, been described as an anti-realist.[1] Yet Phillips criticizes Rorty for his attitude towards a real world,[2] and, within Phillips' own *forms of life*, this can be shown to be a valid criticism. Phillips shares somewhat Wittgenstein's elusiveness. The very questions that one would want to use in interrogating his work seem to be those that he most wishes to avoid. The fact that he does so wish throws up the further questions: what is it about religion that Phillips is seeking to preserve in avoiding particular sorts of analysis and at what cost? The sort of initial interaction with his perspective from the stance outlined in this paper might be to ask the following questions:

a) Phillips makes much of the word 'concept' in his writings. Do they have the force of 'conceptual schemes' and are they distinctive in different forms of life? b) How far does Phillips follow Malcolm in making religious behaviour a form of life? c) Just what is Phillips wishing to say in terms of ontological commitment (if anything) in view of his criticism of Rorty? Does this betray a modification of his earlier position? d) What sort of world, if any, would Phillips' use of language entail - within the domain of his own form of life and apart from that domain? e) Phillips rejects Hick's charge of invulnerability. Do either of them make an adequate case? Because Phillips, in his writings, does not pay much attention to Davidson, the way in which the theory of truth advocated by the

1 Hick (1989) pp.198.ff.

2 Phillips, D.Z. 1988. **Faith after Foundationalism**, Routledge, London. pp.134-135

latter, and the minimal realism propounded thereby, relate to the stance of Phillips will have to be gleaned by a comparison of the content of their linguistic philosophy and such comments as Phillips makes about Rorty, O.K.Boswana[1] and others.

Of importance to the task of examining the stance of D.Z.Phillips on realism are (i) Forms of Life and their relationship to conceptual schemes in the thinking of Phillips; (ii) his stance on foundationalism and the relationship of religious language and epistemology; (iii) whether the rational process is indeed holistic and that there is an infinite regress in any attempt at justification; and (iv) whether his criticism of the pragmatism of Rorty does imply a belief in a real objective world.

Of some limited value in this enterprise will be a paper by Anthony Manser[2] (given as the inaugural address to the 1982 session of the Aristotelian Society) which compares Davidson and Wittgenstein. In some respects this is now dated in that it does not take into account some modifications of Davidson's earlier position.[3] The discussion on this later point is crucial. Ramberg differs with Hacking in that the latter[4] sees in Davidson's paper what can only be a drastic revision of his whole method. Ramberg sees it as a natural consequence of the sort of radical program that he had begun in Communication and Convention.

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1 op.cit. p.274

2 Manser A. (1982) Language, Language Games and the Theory of Meaning. The inaugural address of the July 1982 meeting of the Aristotelian Society, in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume, 1982 pp 1-19. Manser's main point is that Davidson expects too much in terms of structure, formalisation and rigour from a natural language. Language, according to Manser, should be regarded as an unstructured open system in which varied *linguistic practices* may take place.

3 In A Nice derangement of Epitaphs, Davidson abandons the notion of a linguistic structure as also he criticises any role for linguistic convention.

4 Art. The Parody of Conversation, in LePore (ed.) 1988 p.448.

Phillips, in discussing Swinburne's contribution to a Conference held at the University of Lancaster in 1975,[1] remarked upon the problems created when disagreements between symposiasts "were too extreme" in that they could fail to communicate with each other. It might be said that Phillips has failed to communicate with a whole strand of American philosophy in the Quine-Davidson tradition. Quine, it is true, does merit one reference in **Faith after Foundationalism**, but his discussion of what has become to be known as the Duhem-Quine thesis from which he quotes, viz.

> "and that there are no assertions which are immune from revision"

shows either a mis-interpretation of what the whole thesis is about or else a reinterpretation to prove a rhetorical point.[2] The quotation above is not from Rorty, through whom, obviously, Phillips approaches Quine, but from Quine himself.[3] What Quine is saying, as has been demonstrated in an earlier section of this study, is that anomalies can be re-interpreted and accommodated within any system by making holistic adjustments within the scheme. So, the idea of knowledge being, as it were, held in position in the same way as a metal ball could be suspended by a collection of magnetic forces (this might provide a visual illustration of Quine's model) begins to take sense. If one piece of evidence begins to assume too strong a proportion, a minor adjustment in the other evidences and the theories that support them will adjust the balance, rather like the relative strength of the magnetic forces can be adjusted to keep the ball in its allotted place. The

1 Art. **The Problem of Evil** in Stuart Brown (ed.) 1977. **Reason and Religion**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. p.103.

2 Phillips 1988 p.144. His reference (Note 26) refers to Rorty. Perhaps he does not know that Rorty is quoting Quine verbatim.

3 See Quine 1953 Chapter 11, discussed in Lakatos 1978 p.96.ff.

very thing that Quine is denying is the building-block, architectonic structure, checking the facts, approach. With Quine, it is the theories that are checked, not the facts, so the whole idea of

> "someone, constantly checking to see that he was holding a book or sitting in an armchair"[1]

described by Phillips is a nonsense. This then is the extent of Phillips' skirmish with this school of philosophy. Yet there are many affinities between Davidson and Wittgenstein. Some of these could be fruitful. But there are two almost insuperable blocks to matching it with Phillips' interpretation of Wittgenstein. The first is that Phillips regards it as intrinsic to his interpretation of Wittgenstein to make it a matter of 'language idling' to talk about any concept of a reality beyond epistemic practices.

> "Wittgenstein far more radically, insists that distinctions between the real and the unreal get their sense within epistemic practices"[2]

In other words, philosophy cannot talk about religious realities - that is for the language games of devotion and worship.[3] Hand in hand with this goes the sense of absolute claim in religious language which would be relativised by secular philosophy. This point is also taken up by Keightley.[4]

The second stumbling block is to be found in incommensurability and conceptual relativism. There is a range of interpretations amongst neo-Wittgensteinians on this point ranging from the full-blown conceptual relativism of Keightley through the unacknowledged conceptual frameworks of Phillips to the work of Kerr who eschews them and wrongly suggests that Davidson based his

1 Phillips, 1988.p.144.

2 op.cit. p. xiv.

3 Keightley, A. 1976. Wittgenstein, Grammar and God, Epworth, London p.81.

4 op.cit.p.79.

essay showing why they could not exist, upon "Wittgensteinian grounds".[1] In view of Davidson's preference for talking about mental and linguistic events and actions, Kerr's criticism of an earlier formulation in Inquiries,[2] does not really hold water. Davidson would indeed wish to talk about activities rather than entities. Hacking's comments[3] are relevant here, too. He suggests that what emerges from **A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs** could be:

> ..the first real use, in many a long year, of Wittgenstein's idea of a multitude of loosely interlocking language games.[4]

This makes Kerr's analysis at this point rather trivial. His assertion that Wittgenstein argues against conceptual frameworks is unsupported and, indeed, a strong case can be made for suspecting that at least a relativity of *linguistic practice* characterised his forms of life.[5] It is interesting to note that Keightley denies that forms of life are forms of conceptual relativism because they are neither hypothetical nor propositionally related. The argument will not serve to deliver the answer that he requires. Concepts have to be ways of mapping propositions and so are pre-propositional in form anyway - they provide the perspective or matrix with which the propositions gain their status and significance.[6]

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1 Kerr, F. 1986. **Theology after Wittgenstein**, Blackwell, Oxford. p.109. It is probable that Kerr's approach to Davidson is through the deliberately controversial and now somewhat dated paper by Manser. His one quotation from Davidson is also quoted by Manser. It should perhaps be remembered that Manser's article is the substance of an address given at the beginning of a conference and, as such, was intended to be provocative! (Manser art.p.19 quotes from **The Method of Truth in Metaphysics**, Modern Studies of Philosophy II 1977 p.244. This article by Davidson is also reprinted in Davidson 1985 pp.199.ff.). Manser's aim in this article is "simply to provoke a confrontation between the views of Davidson and Wittgenstein." (op.cit.p.4.) Fergus Kerr's main themes concerning Wittgenstein's 'private language' argument and its application to theology are not further discussed in this paper. That study, though important, is not central to the main thrust of the analysis of truth theory, upon which this paper focuses.

2 See Kerr pp.108-109,

3 art. **The Parody of Conversation** in LePore 1986 pp.457-458.

4 op.cit.p.458. This is the very thing that, Manser alleges, Davidson does not allow.

5 See later.

6 See Wittgenstein,L. 1969. **On Certainty**, Blackwell, Oxford. No.105.

To see how concepts do this the following language game may be played. Imagine that you are in a small ante-room. Beyond it there is a bigger room. You can see through the door. There is a large table. On the table there is a cloth. Above the table there is a light. There are several people round the table. One is using a knife. He is talking to some of the other people in the room. Beside the table there is a trolley. On the trolley there is a visual display unit monitoring a heartbeat and respiration. At some time during the reading of the above paragraph there will probably have been a gestalt-shift. Whilst it won't quite be like a duck-rabbit, in that it is difficult to see that as a duck and a rabbit at the same time in the latter instance, nevertheless a new concept will have been introduced that framed all the other propositions. Whilst it would be possible to couch this in the form of a proposition, all that the concept needs is a name, one word or a hyphenated word, to describe the situation.

So too Wittgenstein *names* concepts (colour, future, pretence, dissimulation, representation) rather than giving them a propositional character.[1] They refer to "certain patterns of life".[2] Relative to that situation even linguistic forms - such as the use of illative language and special vocabularies - derive their life. Whilst Wittgenstein himself avoided any form of conceptual relativism, the application of his thinking to one (protected) area of language runs a distinct danger, because of the close tie-up between language and *praxis*, of falling into some form of linguistic relativism, perhaps of the kind that Davidson attributes to Quine.

1 Wittgenstein L. ed. Anscombe, G.E.M. 1982. Last Writings on Philosophy of Psychology, Blackwell, Oxford.Nos. 206.ff., 224, 253-269, 446. etc.

2 op.cit.No 206. It could be said that, for Wittgenstein, the form is given by language and the content is given by behaviour or praxis. See e.g. Margolis p.150. This is another form, albeit an unusual one, of the form and content structure that Davidson argues against. To put it another way, Wittgenstein's universe could be pictured as behaviour/language/the world (if, in fact, we allow Wittgenstein a purchase on realism!). Davidson's universe, on the contrary is behaviour/the world, with nothing, not even language, getting in between.

In a similar manner, Keightley who admits to concepts that are community conditioned,[1] language-related,[2] and expressive of value,[3] is certainly talking, despite his protestations to the contrary in conceptual relativistic terms. Phillips has much to say about concepts, and, whilst he argues that religious language is not isolated from the ordinary language, he does not want to overplay the connection between them and does want to allow that there is something distinctive about religious forms of life. He is also critical about O.K. Bouswana's argument for a "commonality" of language,[4] whilst it could be argued that this implies that forms of life are interpretative structures rather than conceptual ones, Phillips' own emphasis upon concept formation and conceptualisation generally provide strong pointers to a stance of incommensurability. One of the clearest pointers to a tacit conceptual relativism in Phillips is this analysis of the linguistic approach of O.K. Bouwsma. For Bouwsma, there exists a shared language unifying a shared culture and a common set of presuppositions which we get from our background.[5] Phillips argues against Bouwsma's "commonality", that it needs a corrective, claiming that, in certain cases, in order to understand another point of view,

> we would have to change as persons.

What is more, though he does not use the term, such a change would involve a gestalt shift that would prevent us from remaining within the perspective of our previous understanding! Such a statement takes us out of the realm of

1 Keightley 1976 p.112,
2 op.cit. p.112
3 op.cit.p.114.
4 See Phillips p.274.
5 Bouwsma,O.K. 1984 **Without Proof or Evidence** p.28. Quoted in Phillips 1988 p.274.

different interpretative schemes into the world of different conceptual schemes and, indeed, into conceptual relativism. Yet, against this, Phillips has argued against autonomy of beliefs claiming that they are to be seen as distinctive, but sharing a background with other beliefs in a common context.[1] However Phillips would name his position, the very idea of a privileged position (as identified by Hicks, despite Phillips' disclaimer) that such distinctiveness entails, would fail against the Davidsonian analysis of conceptual schemes nevertheless.

4.4.2 Dualism, Monism and Universes of Discourse

There are many forms of dualism and Davidson appears, with varying degrees of success, to reject them all. The particular aspects of dualism identified in this study have been those between mind and body, analytical and synthetic, scheme and content and language and the world.

At several points in Davidson's philosophy, there is the explicit rejection of the mind as an intermediary between the world and cognition. Davidson classifies the possible attitudes to the body and mind question as follows:

> On the one hand there are those who assert, and those who deny the existence of psychophysical laws; on the other hand there are those who say mental events are identical with physical and those who deny this. Theories are thus divided into four sorts: nomological monism, which affirms that there are correlating laws and that the events correlated are one...nomological dualism which comprises various forms of parallelism, interactionism and epiphenominalism; anomalous dualism, which combines ontological dualism with the general failure of laws correlating the mental and the physical (Cartesianism). And finally there is anomalous dualism, which classifies the position I wish to occupy.[2]

Davidson, as has been demonstrated, (3.4.4.) argued that there was no way of correlating events in the brain with mental events by means of terms like sensory

1 See Phillips, Art. Autonomy of Religious Belief pp. 60-92. Discussed by Harvey, Theology as Grammar, pp.98-103. Religious Studies 1989. No. 25.

2 Davidson 1970 pp.213-214 Mental Events, reprinted in Davidson D. 1980 Essays on Actions and Events, Clarendon Press, Oxford.pp.207-227.

experience.[1] The mind as an arena for the epistemological process of organising perceptions into knowledge is banished. In its place are just mental events and mental states. Davidson has recently made his position even clearer. He is not attempting to introduce the concept of mind under another name

> . . .in my view the mental is not an ontological but a conceptual category.[2]

The celebrated essay in which Quine disposes of the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements is well known.[3] As might be expected from a student and admirer of Quine, Davidson verbally accepts the consequences of this essay and even describes one of his own contributions as the elimination of a third 'dogma'.[4] Yet it could be argued that Davidson seems to use something like this distinction in his derivation of anomalous monism.

Mental and physical predicates are not made for each other.[5] To illustrate this, Lessing's 'Ditch'[6] may be parodied as follows

> The accidental and contingent processes of neural physiology can tell us nothing of the eternal and rational (and necessary?) truths of the 'laws of thought' as instanced in the law of contradiction,
> *not 'p' and 'not p.'*

So Davidson's espousal of Quine's philosophical position may not be as whole-hearted as he affirms. This apparent contradiction lies at the heart of the

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1 see Evnine 1991 pp.147-148.

2 Davidson, D. 1987. Problems in the Explanation of Action, art. in P.Petit, R.Silvan and J.Norman, eds. Metaphysics and Morality: Essays in Honour of J.C.Smart, Blackwell, Oxford. pp.35-49.

3 Quine, W.V.O. Two Dogmas of Empiricism, in From a Logical Point of View, Quine, W.V.O. 1953. Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., pp.20-46.

4 Davidson, D. 1984 p.189.

5 Evnine, S. 1991. p.18 summarising Davidson, D. Mental Events p. 218. "nomological statements (i.e. laws) bring together predicates that we know a priori are made for each other - know, that is, independently of knowing whether the evidence supports a connection between them."

6 The accidental and contingent events of history can tell us nothing about the eternal and necessary truths of reason.

tension between Davidson's twin programmes to defend a realist position based upon the physical causation of dispositions and to preserve a role for rationality in the hermeneutic process.

The identification of a third dogma, that of a "content" to conceptual schemes is one of the major innovations of Davidson's analysis. One startling result of this insight is that it has altered the status of epistemology which becomes no longer the study of the mediation between the world and our knowledge of it. Even language is, in the final analysis, and controversially, forbidden the role of being the go-between in the epistemological process.[1]

Such a thorough-going attempt to reject dualism, together with the tensions which, it has been noted, it causes, creates problems and opportunities for theological interpretation. The tendency towards dualism in theology is well known. It issues in the distinction between sacred and secular, holy and profane, soul and body, spiritual and material - to mention just a few of the contrasts which seem an indispensable part of our theological language. To make such distinctions is to follow the pattern set up by the earliest and most venerable writers. Consider the chiaroscuro, of the Johannine literature with its polarities of light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil. These seem to be the very stuff of which our religion is made.

The way forward, in accordance with Davidson's avowed position, would be to regard such distinctions as part of a conceptual schematisation of the matrix of instance events that go to make up the Christian universe. On the other hand, it is possible to claim affinities with Davidson's espousal of rationality by claiming

1 Davidson D. 1986 p.466.

that we have to go on using these terms if we are to make sense of our world in any reasonable way. Perhaps this is part of the tension that perhaps should be part of all good philosophy and theology.

The question whether this dualist tension in belief is itself caused by the impress of the eternal realities upon the behaviour and dispositions of the believer, and how, are questions for further research and study which lie outside the purview of the present work. But it is plain that the sort of issues raised by Davidson should have a prominent place in their analysis.

4.4.3 Recursiveness in Religious Discourse

Perhaps the best illustration of recursiveness is to be found in the causal chain that led Aristotle to postulate an unmoved or prime mover. No element in that chain apart from the postulate is capable of being a complete explanation for its effects upon others because it requires other explanations for its own movement. Such a causal matrix as this picture of movement provides[1] is a very good model of how the truth conditions of beliefs form a coherent web of inter-determinate meanings.

In Christian theology, it is apparent that the truth conditions of atonement theory are themselves parasitic upon Incarnational definitions and these are themselves related to the doctrines of Man and of God. When it comes to items like the doctrines of the sacraments, then the interplay between the truth conditions of many areas of Christian doctrine becomes all the more pronounced. One begins to wonder how any coherent doctrinal formulation has been arrived at.

1 regardless of whether it would survive analytical scrutiny today which is a separate question

Perhaps the tendency to compartmentalize theology, in University Studies, lectures and many works on systematic theology, has managed to obscure its recursive propensity and to treat items in isolation which should have been discussed within a larger perspective. Especially is this true of the tendency to side-line the study of Comparative Religion which could provide an illuminating context for the study of what used to be called Christian dogmatics. Perhaps this will be regarded as somewhat dangerous, but it seems a natural consequence of taking Davidson's holism and the recursivity of truth definition seriously.

4.5 Metaphor and Interpretation

Had Davidson not produced a modification of his theory of interpretation[1], notwithstanding all the work in achieving correspondence through coherence and hence, via the convention of charity reaching a form of realism, the writing of any work hoping to find application of his theory in the arena of religious discourse would have proved in the end fruitless. His former work on metaphor[2] with its rigorist account of linguistic interpretation, would have meant that there would have been little prospect, through Davidsonian theory, of achieving a meaning, let alone any form of realism for a form of language which employs a good deal of figure, especially metaphor.

In the original paper, Davidson distinguished (in a very non-Wittgensteinian way) between what metaphors mean and "what they are used to do". What they

1 A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs in LePore 1986 pp.433.ff.
2 See What Metaphors Mean in Davidson 1984. pp. 227.ff.

do is to "nudge us into noting";[1] to intimate;[2] to make us notice aspects of things which we did not notice before;[3] They achieved their purpose through something like the gestalt switch in Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit.[4]

This function of metaphor contrasts sharply with the view that the meaning "lies on the surface".[5] No cognitive content, let it be called anything, is conveyed by the metaphor beyond the plain sense of the words, according to Davidson's paper on metaphor.

The consequence was that religious and poetic language users were left with a challenge: to account for the claim to truth of a discourse which is couched predominantly in metaphor. Theologians, for this reason, have largely left Davidson alone. Janet Soskice, for instance, who is one of the few to take note of him, suggests that his insistence on a rigid theory of truth-conditional semantics makes his theory remote from everyday usage. Yet the sort of reflective realism that she requires in religious discourse[6] viz. a realism which is related to the religious linguistic community which, though it uses culturally conditioned language, "is reality depicting", may indeed be delivered by a reformed Davidson. She compares what a theological realism might be expected to provide with that which might be available via ordinary language.

With natural language, it is not that individual terms somehow "latch on to" the world, but rather that whole networks of words and beliefs represent it. Some

1 ibid p.253.
2 ibid p.256 & p.262.
3 ibid p.261.
4 ibid p.263.
5 ibid p.262.
6 Abraham, W.J.& Holtzer, S.W. 1987. The Rationality of Religious Belief, Clarendon, Oxford pp.117-8.

have suggested that there are not only developments but recantations in **A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs**.[1] For the purposes of this thesis, Davidson's agenda, largely hidden and very startling, of negating the whole concept of language, may be noted here and then ignored. Dummett suggests that such a conclusion would invalidate a truth theory for natural languages, a premise which is foundational (in the nicest sense) for the whole Davidsonian enterprise, making "true in L"[2] dependent for its domain on a synthetic language. Such an agenda, removing a major plank in Davidson's structure, is therefore self-destructive.

What is of more interest for these purposes are the modifications to his theory of interpretation.

Davidson's difficulties with metaphor stem from two inadequacies in his theory of language. One is that he gives no place or function for convention in his overall picture. The other is that he restricts his attention, as far as meaning goes, to denotation and so neglects any connotations that a statement may have.

In **A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs**,[3] Davidson tries to find some sort of framework that would guarantee a 'prime' or 'passing' theory for the interpretations of malapropisms. The fact is, as Davidson notes, that we do understand what malapropisms are about. Davidson is concerned to show the mechanism. He finds that he cannot accommodate any linguistic structure that could cope with the problems involved in such an interpretation. Whilst, at the end of this passage, he

1 Dummett, M. **A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs: Some Comments on Davidson and Hacking**. art. in LePore, E. 1986. pp.459.ff

2 This term is inherited from Tarski and, in his work, refers to the truth-defining synthetic language. For Davidson "true in L" must mean true in the natural language. If there is no structured natural language, then there can be no place for such a truth definition.

3 Davidson, D. art. in LePore 1986. pp.433.ff.

adopts the untenable position that 'there is no such thing as language',[1] and we cannot follow him there, he has unwittingly pioneered a way for the interpretation of metaphor.

His problem, as Dummett in his "**Comments on Davidson and Hacking**" points out, is that he tends to view the interpretation of language from the point of view of the interpreter. Dummett suggests that both the presumptions of Humpty Dumpty - who views interpretation from the point of view of the utterer - and of Davidson are wrong. What we need is a higher theory about the expectation of how another will interpret our language.[2] In other linguistic fields, this would be called a Symbolic Interactionist perspective. I communicate with you when I use your symbols and the connotations and truth conditions that you attach to them.

Quine has shown[3] that, though Convention cannot add to the truth of a sentence, by re-defining it (but only through postulates) it can help us to 'translate' from one arena of discourse to another. It is interesting to note the overlap with Davidson's convention of charity here.

> "What is real is to be identified in terms of a contrast between more or less firmly accepted statements."[4]

Convention can provide a means of translation between one formulation and another e.g. Between a truth of logic and a statement in mathematics. It is just

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1 It is, perhaps, useful to see the hidden agenda of Davidson in this Paper. This has only just come to light with the publication of an earlier short paper by Quine in which the latter offers a defence against Davidson's attack in his article suggesting the refutation of a third dogma of empiricism -**On the very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme**. Quine's paper - **On the Very Idea of a Third Dogma** - says that he didn't mean, in his use of the term 'conceptual scheme', quite what Davidson had understood him to mean. "Where I have spoken of a conceptual scheme, I could have spoken of a language. Where I have spoken of a very alien conceptual scheme I would have been content, Davidson will be glad to know, to speak of a language awkward or baffling to translate." It now becomes clear why Davidson wants to show that there is no such thing as the sort of language that Quine describes in **Word and Object**, triggered off by surface irritations of sense receptors. See W.V.O. Quine, 1991 **Theories and Things**.

2 LePore 1986 pp 469.ff.

3 **Truth by Convention**, in **The Ways of Paradox**, Quine, W.V.O. 1976. Harvard U.P,. I.S.B.N. 0-674-94837-8

4 ibid.

such a translation that is required in the interpretation of Metaphor. The key to such translations belong to parent systems such as a 'kingdom' group of symbols (including 'shepherd' and 'flock') or the notion of 'warfare' in Biblical language.[1]

Quine, in his **Postscript on Metaphor**,[2] regards metaphor as 'the growing-point of a language' both in its development and in its acquisition.

> It is a mistake, then to think of linguistic usage as literal in its main body and metaphorical in its trimming. Metaphor, or something like it, governs both the growth of language and our acquisition of it.[3]

He also has something penetrating and useful to say about the religious use of metaphor even though he patently knows nothing of the *Messianic Secret*!

> Religion, or much of it, is evidently involved in metaphor for good. The parables, according to David Tracy's paper[4], are the "founding language" of Christianity. Exegete succeeds exegete, ever construing metaphor in further metaphor. There are deep mysteries here. There is mystery as to the literal content, if any, that this metaphorical material is meant to convey. And there is a second order mystery: why the indirection? If the message is as urgent and important as one supposes, why are we not given it straight in the first place? A partial answer to both questions may lie in the nature of mystical experience: it is without content and so resists communication, but one may still try to induce the feeling in others by skilful metaphor.[5]

Where interpretation is not available due to the original 'parent' becoming lost may be illustrated by the until recently inscrutable metaphor of 'coals of fire'.[6] Only after some historical research was the interpretation available through the unearthing of an Egyptian ritual that underlay the use of this metaphor.[7] In this ritual, the wearing of a headband containing a small firebox was used to

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1 Cooper, David, 1986., **Metaphor**, Blackwell, Oxford pp.130.ff. comments that most metaphors belong to 'a systematic way of thinking'.

2 Quine 1991, pp, 187-189.

3 ibid. This should be compared with Gombrich, E.H. 1960 **Art and Illusion**, Phaidon Press, Oxford. p.264. who comments, "Similes, metaphors, the stuff of poetry no less than of myth, testify to the power of the creative mind to create and dissolve new classifications." See also p.310.

4 given in a conference on metaphor at the University of Chicago in 1978 and reproduced with this short paper, originally in **Critical Inquiry 5 (1978)** Published by the University of Chicago.

5 ibid.

6 Paul's use in Romans 12.vv.14-21. echoes that in Proverbs 25.vv.21-22.

7 See Cotterell, P. & Turner, M. 1989. **Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation** pp.302,ff who refer to the work done by William Klassen on this metaphor. (Klassen, William, **Coals of Fire: Sign of Repentance or Revenge?**, New Testament Studies 9 (1962-63).

indicate repentance and remorse. Thus a connection between 'coals of fire' and repentance was established. So several commentaries which had interpreted the verse in a sub-Christian judgemental way have now to be re-written!

What was lacking in the understanding of this metaphor prior to this study was the knowledge of a convention or tradition. That convention linked the phrase 'coals of fire' with the Egyptian rituals. Without such a convention there was no adequate way of interpreting the passage. Hence, without a role for convention in linguistic theory the understanding of metaphor becomes difficult if not impossible.

Prior to the recent research, Paul failed in conveying the real meaning of his metaphor because he was no longer interacting with our symbols. What is being argued, therefore, is that an interpretation of metaphor requires some symbolic interactionist perspective and that metaphors are not interpreted from the interpreter's viewpoint alone. Such a perspective would provide the basis for Davidson's 'prior' or 'passing' theory and lead on to an interpretation which related to one of the traditions or conventions of interpretation.

In the light of this, it is useful to consider Dummett's criticisms of Davidson, and his extension of Davidson's method with malapropisms to cover other symbolic language, including metaphor. What is wrong with Davidson's scheme, according to Dummett, is that it leaves no place for the conventions of a linguistic community. Such a community can control, by such conventions, what words usually convey. This may, in the use of figurative and metaphorical language, be contrasted with what, in a particular instance, an utterer intends them to convey. The latter is to be found by subtle nudges and hints and perhaps connotations. Because Davidson has

no place in his theory for such conventions, he cannot follow Dummett in making this distinction. So he lays himself open to Hacking's charge of 'solipsism' - or at least, as Hacking puts it, of being 'a duetist'.[1]

In order to illustrate the use of metaphor in religious language according to such a scheme, the truth of "Our God is a strong tower" is not to be found in the meaning of the statement at its face value. The scheme of battle metaphors provides the key here. It is part of the convention of such metaphors to speak of 'attack' and 'defence'. The truth is to be found in the sustaining and supporting activity of God when one is in 'adversity' (one cannot avoid for long even the use of 'dead-metaphors'!) So also the notions of permanence and safety appertaining to the use of such towers in warfare also appertain to its interpretation. The denotational meaning of the statement now becomes that derived from the truth conditions of the parent metaphor.

For some metaphors, all that is needed is a 'prior theory. Because there are already 'worked examples', it will be taken for granted that a metaphor is being used to indicate a belief in a stereotyped way of looking at reality. In religious discourse, the community exercises a control on such examplars by means of those that are used frequently in the Paternoster, some well known hymns, the parables and other biblical models, creeds, offices and liturgies. The 'given' ways in which these are interpreted will itself provide a wide range of indications for the way in which other metaphors may be understood.

Have such metaphors any claim to realism? Obviously any such claim is going to be moderate or perhaps tenuous. The disposition to use such metaphors will be

1 For Dummett's analysis, see LePore 1986 pp. 459 - 476. and, for Hacking's charge, see LePore p.458.

a function of belief and such a belief has been seen to be produced by the interaction of causal and rational elements. The causal element reflects the 'ground' which inspires the belief. The justification for the rational element is not to be found in proofs, nor foundational arguments, but merely that any such usage should be 'of a piece with' the convention of the language concerned.

Where the disposition to use particular metaphors is widespread, the convention of charity applies. Failing some satisfactory humanistic explanation for such universal symbolic imagery, one can look for a correspondence with a religious reality, on the principle that the universal effect (religious discourse) bears a tolerable correspondence with its cause (religious reality). The detail in the way that such a correspondence actually maps any underlying reality will, of course, be uncertain and provisional. This suggests that, for any religious community, there is room for accommodation in the understanding and interpretation of the symbolic language of other groups, both in the ecumenical and multi-faith spheres.

4.6 A Correspondence for Religious Language?

When Davidsonian truth theory is applied to religious discourse, there are three further counter arguments that have to be considered. These are, firstly, that all that results is a form of pragmatism, rather than a true realism. Secondly, that one of the consequences is a 'Theology by Consensus'; and thirdly, that all that results is a form of ontological argument writ large. The first of these arguments is of course an application of Rorty's general criticism of Davidson, referred specifically to the field of religious language.

John Hick, in a lecture to the Manson Society in Manchester 1989, suggested that a useful test for religious realism might be to look for an over-arching optimism with regard to the future of the universe. Such an optimism, he maintained, would be - or, at least, could be - indicative of a religious realism. This could be contrasted with the largely private feelings of religious comfort which are available to the favoured few choosing the ant-realist systems of, say, D.Z. Phillips or Cupitt.[1] Since Davidsonian realism, so applied, is indeed intended to secure the application or correspondence of religious language to some form of reality, it could be argued that the religious forms so encapsulated will indeed be of a basically optimistic tenor. If so, there is something more than pragmatism here. The second argument, that all that results is a theology by consensus, is mainly the attempt to dismiss the approach outlined above by means of the perjorative 'one-liner'. Enough has been said already to suggest that any theological approach must be coherent with the sources and norms of its authority and must correspond, in so far as it is able, with the religious insights and apprehensions of its adherents. As such its sensitivity is not only to the insights of others, but also to the historical roots and conventions which help to shape the corpus of belief to which it belongs.

Consensus and theological integrity are sought for at another level: what I have termed (borrowing the device from the usage of the term 'meta-philosophy' in the U.S.A.) 'meta-theology'. Whilst, at this level, it will result in a radical re-appraisal and re- interpretation of how different systems may be taken to relate together, and so, of the relative significance of particular norms or authorities, what is aimed at here is not some sort of para-religion of a syncretic kind. What

1 "The kind of non-realist religiousness advocated by such contemporaries as D.Z.Phillips and Don Cupitt offers, then, welcome news to the few which is at the same time grim news for the many". Hick, J., 1989. An Interpretation of Religion, Macmillan, Basingstoke p.207.

will happen in practice is that we will 'tell our story' and then, adopting a vulnerable stance, listen to others telling theirs. The question that we shall try to answer from our own, nevertheless committed, standpoint is 'How far are those, who speak from different perspectives, still relating to the sort of religious realities that I talk of and how far do their forms of commitment correspond with mine?'

The third argument, that there is a basic ontological argument underlying it, is more intractable. The language, it might be claimed, embodies concepts which are then related to a reality. Is not this a variant upon the movement from essence to existence that is to be found in Anselm, or Malcolm, or Hartshorne? If the application of Davidson's truth theory is looked upon as simply an argument for religious realism, i.e. in order to say 'ergo the reality exists', then this argument has some purchase. Following Kant's demonstration that a species of ontological argument underlay most other causal arguments it could be asserted that the Convention of Charity, through causal in form, was based upon similar tacit ontology. Perhaps it might be argued against this, that similar ontological presuppositions occur regularly in our use of language (for instance, in our use of analogy) and in our behaviour and relationships with the world.

Another move is open to us, however. This application may be looked upon as a discussion of how religious language might apply to a reality. In this case there is no basic assumption of any underlying ontology, it is an analysis of how religious language could be interpreted. As such it is purely descriptive and avoids the ontological tag. Hence the problem is avoided but only at the expense of allowing Rorty's argument a re-admission through the back door. If the application

of the Davidsonian system is limited to a description of what goes on in religious linguistic behaviour, then the Convention of Charity is in itself being used in an un-Davidsonian way. The result as far as any thorough-going religious realism is concerned is that one would have to look for some other a-foundational argument for realism. It is for that reason that these distinctions have not been maintained in this chapter. The only argument that is left against that of ontological pre-suppositions is that of universality - that everybody does it all the time!

5 A CONCLUSION AND SOME APPLICATIONS

5.1 A Sketch for an Epistemology for Theology

"Experience is the mother of knowledge"

This aphorism, reputedly coined by Leonardo da Vinci, would meet with only qualified approval by Davidson. For him the relationship would be much more distant, with belief truth and consensus intervening in the family tree. It is for this reason that the treatment of epistemological issues, normally to the fore in discussions of truth, realism and reference, has been deferred to this later stage.

In earlier years, the tenet of a directly encounterable experience of God has been a major plank in the scaffolding of theories of truth following the blue-prints left by Schliermacher, and Dilthey.[1] In contemporary theology, such a position is reflected in the writings of John Hick.

Such positions have met with the criticism that the content of the description of a religious perception has to be provided elsewhere. Hepburn's criticism of a direct apprehension of God[2] is that, for it to have any meaning, it has to be related to, and indeed grounded upon, prior theological concepts. This point is taken up by Basil Mitchell who suggests that

> claims to direct awareness of God..... are what they purport to be, cases of direct awareness, but that the claim that this is what they are relies upon there being a theory or conceptual scheme in terms of which the claim can be adequately defended.[3]

1 See Pannenburg III pp 203-204.

2 See Hepburn, R. 1958. **Christianity and Paradox**, Watts, London. chapters 3.& 4.

3 Mitchell, Basil, 1973. **The Justification of Religious Belief**. Macmillan, Basingstoke. p.115

Such a claim is not to be made, according to Mitchell, in isolation but depends upon a consideration of all the events appertaining to the situation.[1]

Whilst it is clear that Davidson would not wish to use the language of 'conceptual schemes', it is also apparent that Mitchell's epistemology could be made amenable to a Davidsonian theory of language. So, too, with Pannenburg, who makes the comment

> ....the experience of meaning and significance

is cognitively significant only as it is related to the background of the history of the experience of mankind as a whole; and that experience has to be seen in

> ....the wider context of a text or utterance which in itself represents a larger totality of meaning and in turn points towards larger structures of meaning in which the position and importance of an utterance or text (its meaning) can vary greatly.[2]

With the holistic approach of this latter passage, Davidson could agree. Whether the 'meanings' are as transparent as Pannenburg assumes or are to be defined as value judgements, are more contentious issues and an alternative approach, based upon Davidson's axiom that the meanings are to be given by the truth values of statements, seen against the matrix of the truth values of the statements of language as a whole, has been developed in this thesis. However, if the entification of meaning in the above passage is re-written in terms of inter-dependent truth conditions, it can be seen that such approaches are not unamenable to a Davidsonian linguistic theory.

Thus the paradigm for a viable epistemology can be mapped out. It has to be seen as holistically based in every sense: it has to be interpreted in the terms which are provided by religious language. It has to be understood and compared with the

1 op.cit.p.113.

2 Pannenburg, W.,1972 **Basic Questions in Theology Volume III.** S.C.M. London p.200

claims to truth of all other interpretative systems, not only within the parent religion. It is grounded upon the fact that dispositions of faith supervene upon, and in some way reflect, the reality to which they testify.

These beliefs rely for their significance, content, justification and truth conditions, not upon individual perceptive experience, but upon the totality of belief within the believing and dis-believing community. Such a matrix of belief is expressed in a religious language which provides a web of interacting truth-conditions. Because of this there is no possibility of simple verification or falsification procedures such as would obtain in naive (atomic) verificationalism. For their truth conditions, statements expressing beliefs depend upon their coherence with the sources, norms and authorities of faith. But this does not make them invulnerable. Rather, they are subject to the Convention of Charity, in which all other similar accounts are vouchsafed as much credibility as they will bear, sustainable with one's own particular stance.

This vulnerability means that any interpretation of faith has to be provisional. It involves a radical interpretation and re-interpretation to accommodate the insights, dispositions and truth claims of all other believing people. There is no escape into the conceptual relativism of some invulnerable 'form-of-life' particular to a linguistic community which is cut off from other areas of linguistic usage, in the manner advanced by modern Wittgensteinians. There is no panacea in the idea that faith is conceptually culturally conditioned in any way that would make it incommensurable with, and, as such, invulnerable to the conceptual challenges of other faiths. Similarly, the only hidey-hole that self-authenticating knowledge can provide is that

of irrational, pre-linguistic mysticism which may provide comfort on an individual basis but has no cash value with which to barter a status to claims to truth within a religious linguistic community.

Thus 'knowledge-by-faith' which informed one's own original account of belief becomes provisionally a knowledge of eternal realities. This is always going to be, by the nature of things, partial and less than wholly demonstrable in this life. Even in eternity, other things being equal, religious statements will not be verified - in that even then there will be no case for atomic meanings and a building block model for semantic theory - but will find their vindication as they are seen to accord with all that is and has its being.

In the interim, Christian believers live in the judgement that such a vindication has proleptically been announced in the life and work of Christ and in that hope they live and are engaged to work to advance its fulfilment.

5.2 The contribution of Davidson to the Study of Religious Language

Apart from the research project of Terry Godlove,[1] on the application of a Davidsonian semantic to a theory of conceptual schemes,[2] the contribution of Davidson, so far, to the study of religious language has been minimal. Perhaps the only British philosopher of religion to take his contribution with any seriousness has been Janet Soskice, and, as has been shown, Davidson's own position has moved on significantly since she wrote her excellent study of metaphor in religious language.

1 Godlove, T.F., 1989
2 Godlove T.F. 1989

Perhaps the most significant contribution that Davidson can make to the study of religious language is that a way can be found for such discourse to provide coherent meaning without having to surmount the hurdle of first providing a theory of reference. The challenge to refer has been a destructive one for religious semantic theory, and it is perhaps because of this that no coherent truth theory has emerged from an analytical stance in Christian Philosophy during the past five decades.

The second way in which Davidson can influence the study of religious discourse is in the high significance that he places upon the role of belief. This allows space for affirmations, without having, in a narrow way to specify empirical justification, though truth-conditions will have to be outlined - but not in the context of an atomic verificationist theory of meaning!

The third contribution that Davidson can make to hermeneutics and systematic theology generally is a consequence of his holism. Those using Davidson's truth theory cannot take refuge in some private 'form of life' or conceptual scheme from the challenges of other disciplines such as sociology or comparative religion. Perhaps it is not only the study of theology but also the performance of it that needs to be worked out in these and other contexts.

Fourthly, theologians are rescued from embarrassment when discussing questions of the truth of religion. Truth claims are rescued from being watered down to, at best, verisimilitude and can have a robust standing alongside the claims made by other disciplines.

The above lines of thinking have, perforce, had to be seriously curtailed in the present study. To have followed them would have been to pursue too many hares. Nevertheless a case has been made for a re-consideration of the central significance that Davidsonian philosophy can make to the study of the philosophy of religion

5.3 Avenues for Further Study

Perhaps the time is ripe for someone now to approach the formidable task of producing a new philosophy of religious language using the parameters presented by Donald Davidson. The first difficulty will be to decide exactly what those parameters are. The study of 'Donald Davidson' by Simon Evnine[1] seemed to present such a radically different philosopher from the one seen in the festschrifts on Davidsonian philosophy edited by [2] Ernest LePore and Brian McLaughlin and also with the austere disciple of Quine presented by Ramberg[3] and Margolis[4] that one wondered whether this later study could be about the same person!

However, some distinctive elements have emerged and these have been outlined in the above study which has attempted to chart a middle course between the nominalism of Margolis and the Rationalist idealism of Evnine.

Two areas of study remain unfinished in the present analysis. The first, the connection between expectation, or future directed intentionality, is one that fits in directly with a Davidson-style epistemology and, with the emphasis on a holistic view of language and belief, could lead to a new definition of what in other ages was termed 'verification'.

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1 Evnine,S., 1991 **Donald Davidson**, Polity Press, Oxford.

2 Ernest LePore and Brian McLaughlin ed. 1985 **Actions and Events**. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, Blackwell, Oxford.
See also Ernest Lepore 1986. ed. **Truth and Interpretation**. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson.

3 Ramberg, Bjorn T., 1989 **Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language**. Blackwell, Oxford.

4 Margolis, Joseph. 1986. **Pragmatism without Foundations**, Blackwell, Oxford.

The second relates to the organisation of knowledge within the belief-community both in its interpretative aspects and in its authority structure. From the analysis in this study, it would seem that much of what Davidson has uncovered has a direct bearing on the study of the sociology of ideological knowledge.[1]

Some may find the previously unexamined causal theory of Davidson a gold-mine of resources for theological research. Davidson's distinction between cause and causal explanation, for instance, offers an approach to cosmological and teleological research which is full of fruitful possibilities. Similar opportunities ensue from the study of how reasons can be causes.

5.4 Evaluation and Consequences for Religious Discourse

When it comes to religious discourse, we are all field linguists. Using their disciplines, we must avoid the temptation to press what may be highly idiosyncratic idioms into conventional patterns. Any language is a delicate thing. Apart from its particular vocabulary, lexis, grammar and syntax, it has also its own nuances, allusions, and ways of forming connotations, even onomatopoeia. What is more, it is eminently mouldable - through clumsy linguistic method - so that all or most of these latter, more elusive, characteristics may be lost. The vocalised interpretation of written text itself may betray the sense by a wrong inflexion, or an absence of a pause.

Though religious language, it has been argued, is just a discrete part of ordinary language, the very subject matter[2] of the language puts it into a particular set of

1 The work of Burkart Holzner, 1968. Reality Construction in Society, Schenkman Publishing Company, Cambridge, Mass. (see especially chapter 10., the Social Organisation of Ideological Knowledge) could thus be taken forward and re-interpreted.

2 see Crombie's article in Mitchell 1957 esp.pp.39.ff.

styles. Though Davidson's claim that any language system is redundant has been rejected, the way of looking at language as linguistic behaviour may be helpful in this context if questions like "What are those who use this language actually doing by it?" are asked. Nevertheless, perhaps, say in an interpretation of mystical prayer, even this question may need re-phrasing.

It is in the context of such a language that claims to truth are made. To rely upon verification alone for meaning, seen to be a blunt instrument even in the philosophy of science, may be useful as a rhetorical weapon but it has no purchase as an instrument of linguistic analysis in this domain.

There have been many other attempts to mould religious language, and sadly, its apologists have co-operated in such moulding. The challenge to refer has brought several different responses, ranging from the traditional approach, that the way to God must be beaten through the bounds of sense, found in the foundationalism of St.Thomas and the neo-Thomists such as Mascall, to the 'Ontologistic approach' of John Baillie, culled from St.Bonaventura. In the latter scheme, a knowledge of God was to be found immediately impressed upon the soul which was prior to all other knowledge.[1] This was incorrigible knowledge with a vengeance! So, according to Baillie, Descartes made a faux-pas when seeking something that he could not doubt, for it implied that he had a prior sense of what reality was with which to compare his indubitable 'cogito'.

Two questions. which remain unanswered even now relating to this approach, are apposite. What is the role of propositional content in such immediate

1 Baillie quotes St.Bonaventure thus: God is "most truly present to the very soul of man and is in that fact already knowable". Baillie, John. **Our Knowledge of God** p. 171. quoting Bonaventure, **Quaest. disp. de Mysterio Trinitatis**, ix. 1. *Deus praesentissimus est ipsi animae et eo ipso cognoscibilis.* See also Bonaventure, **Sententiae**, Dist. III, Pars I, Art. I, Quaest I.

knowledge, in other words how does it latch on to language? This is the criticism of Hepburn to all forms of encounter theology.[1] The second question relates to its invulnerability and vagueness. Any concept which can, at will, be reinterpreted and reformulated (e.g. as ultimate joy or as infinite dread or, again, as ultimate yearning or transcendent fulfilment) without any loss in credibility needs to be treated with suspicion. Of course Davidson would claim that there is not such raw, pre-linguistic, data, and with that we concur.

In the present climate of thought, the pressures are either towards pragmatism or towards incommensurability. As has been shown earlier in this chapter, the claim to empirical knowledge has turned out to be somewhat tendentious. It is not only religious language that cannot refer, it is natural language as well. Thus the quest to show how any language can refer without taking in a prior concept of truth has thus to be abandoned. Margolis has shown how Popper, because he cannot cope with the Duhem-Quine Thesis, cannot even make verisimilitude, in any strong sense, derivable from scientific observation.[2] There is therefore no way in to foundationalism via a back-door through falsification theory.

> The denial of essentialism, the insistence upon the unfathomable depth of nature, the reliance on falsifiability without foundationalism, and the admission of the historical nature of science all conspire to make verisimilitude cognitively inaccessible. [3]

Hence there is no way to realism either, through scientific enquiry, no matter how clearly demarcated. The criticisms of philosophers such as Rorty, Davidson and Plantinga[4] which have had such a devastating effect upon a reference-based

1 See especially Hepburn,Ronald, 1958. **Christianity and Paradox** pp.55-56.

2 See Margolis 1986. pp.170-174.

3 See Margolis pp. 172. cf. 174.

4 Plantinga, Alvin, & Wolsterhoff, Nicholas 1983 **Faith and Rationality** University of Notre Dame Press, London. pp.59 - 63.

semantic may therefore be welcomed by the Christian philosopher of religion for they retrieve it from the fruitless task of trying to build a house of cards upon incorrigible and self-evident propositions.[1]

With the collapse of foundationalism, as Margolis notes, the problem of incommensurability becomes very urgent.[2] The analysis of Davidson showing why there are no conceptual schemes and its elaboration by Terry Godlove, suggesting that the various religious responses are alternative interpretative (rather than conceptual) schemes, could provide a major program for a new study of ecumenical relations and perhaps comparative religion, emancipating them from the Whorffian mythology that obscured any claim to objective truth.[3]

Whilst thus rejecting one aspect of Hick's epistemology, another should be retained, in spite of Dummett. It is important to note the way that Margolis disposes of the realist/anti-realist distinction that we find in Dummett. This distinction uses this terminology in a highly idiosyncratic way, so definitions may be in order. According to Dummett, realism affirms

> The meanings of statements of the disputed class (v.i. this page) are not directly tied to the kind of evidence for them that we have, but consist in the manner of their determination as true or false by states of affairs whose existence is not dependent on our possession of evidence for them.[4]

This is to be contrasted with anti-realism which in Dummett's terminology, denies that

1 See Plantinga & Wolterstorff 1983 pp.3., 52.ff.

2 See Margolis 1986. pp.38.ff.

3 See Simon Lukes' essay **Relativism in its Place** in Hollis M and Lukes S. 1982. p.267. "To render this" (Whorf's) "hypothesis is not easy but a series of attempts have been made. The upshot of such language-cognition research, more especially since Berlin and Kay's now classic study of the relation of basic colour terms in different languages and perception, is not favourable to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. cf. Cole and Scribner, **Culture and Thought**, & B.Berlin & P. Kay, **Basic Colour Terms**. 1969. Univ.of California Press, Berkeley. This research is reviewed in Eleanor Rosch Heider, art. **Linguistic Relativity** and M.H. Bernstein **The influence of visual perception on Culture**, American Anthropologist 77. 1975. pp.774-98. See also R.W.Brown, **In Memorial Tribute to E.Lennenburg**, Cognition 4 1976. p.152.

4 Margolis, 1986. p.40 quoted from Dummett **Truth and Other Enigmas** p.146.

> statements in the disputed class (whether about the physical world, mental events, mathematical phenomena, the past) possess, at least sometimes, an objective truth value, independently of a means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us.[1]

According to Margolis, all explanation is undergoing a process of revision. On the basis of hindsight, it is our experience that there are truths of science which we can now decide which we couldn't before. So Dummett's anti-realism does not work backwards. On this basis, it is reasonable to suppose that

> If so, then we cannot, on the strength of the record of the 'past-futures' of the history of science, deny that there are now, truths which cannot now construe as 'effectively decidable'.[2]

It may be that Dummett is not denying a future reality but merely placing restrictions upon the use of concepts such as truth-values to define them. In other words, Dummett's definitions may indeed be boiled down merely to a hygienic regulation with regard to the use of words. Nevertheless we can concur with Margolis that

> Our theory of the real world is and must be "tied" to what we take to be the pertinent evidence available to us; but, in affirming that much, we are not obliged to deny the evidence itself may justify us in supposing (for reasons of historical and technological limitation) that, at any moment, there may be truths that we do not now and may never (in terms of real-time considerations) actually know,[3]

Indeed it is the belief in future vindication, as Lakatos, has shown, and the history of many discoveries reported, that is at the heart of many scientific research projects. If this is so, such future-based verifications may not be limited to scientific research. Expectations are part of our attitude to life, and that includes the religious dimension as well. Whilst it is partly true that you can prove anything with a future verification, the sort of future that the Christian looks forward to is

1 ibid

2 op.cit. p.40.

3 op.cit.pp.40-41.

rooted in past events and present engagement and activity. He has hints or 'verifications' (in the Lakatos' sense) along the way. There is even a holistic way of looking at the future which involves the rest of our experience as well.

Though our expectation of fulfilment, according to the application of Davidson's system to religious discourse, finds its cause and origin in our interaction with spiritual realities, maybe at an unconscious level, we still have to have a reason why we look to a future fulfilment of that hope. According to Davidson, our belief, to be rational (and hence human!) should include explanations, these can be causal or rational. The causal explanation of our belief may well be expressed in terms of personal history and formative influences. It will also include mention of the historical origins of the religious community or denomination with which one is associated. The rational explanation is, perhaps, the more important, and will look to the provenance of textual sources, the integrity, reliability and credibility of the initial apostolic witness, and the authenticity of the faith and spiritual life of the contemporary religious community.[1]

This thus leaves open the possibility that the truth-conditions and illations - the very 'nudges' of Davidson - of our religious expectations may have an eschatological satisfaction, as was claimed in chapter two.

5.5 Concluding Remarks - Faith and the Substantiation of the Unseen

Maurice Wiles in the conclusion of the Ferguson lectures[2], suggested that a theology for dialogue should be 'Perspectival, Parabolic and Provisional'. This

1 Some will include foundationalist arguments and appeals to experience at this stage, but enough has been said already to discount their relevance to the programme being outlined here.

2 held at Manchester University March 1991, These are as yet unpublished but are due to be released later this year.

perspective should be that of the prevailing cultural background which should modify the church's claims to authority. The parabolic requirement is the alliterative reminder that most of the language of religion is symbolic and therefore has an indirect and oblique claim to truth. The provisional status of such a theology means that part of its nature is to grow and to change, as new areas of knowledge become available to it and news ways of understanding its significance emerge.

This is just the sort of theology that is delivered by a Davidsonian approach to truth. It will not find favour with those committed to authoritarian formulations but it offers a philosophically sound and respectable ground upon which to build a modern theology. Such a theology will be radical in its hermeneutic, rational in its method, reciprocal in its relations with other faiths, reflective in its epistemology and representative of its position within the whole of our language.

The application of the sort of linguistic theory as has been outlined above would also produce one major change in theological method as has been hinted at earlier. Because truth becomes a rational property, it would tend to take claims to Christian knowledge out of the area of religious experience and make it more dependent upon its coherence with the formulations of the community of faith.

Perhaps this would be reversion to an earlier model, say prior to Schliermacher, of religious knowledge. To accept such a model does not, as has been demonstrated, commit us to any naive verificationalism or, indeed, falsificationalism, but it does look for a coherence in what counts for knowledge amongst Christian believers.

As far as realism goes, if the Davidsonian system can be applied to religious discourse, then what emerges is short on specifics. It does, nevertheless, justify a

cautious optimism, which, as has been seen,[1] is the hall-mark of realism in theology. All that can be done is to echo some of the comments made by the Baconian philosopher H.L.Mansel, in his fifth Bampton Lecture.

> We cannot say that our conception of the Divine Nature exactly resembles that nature in its absolute exactness; for we know not what absolute existence is. But, for the same reason, we are equally unable to say that it does not resemble; for, if we know not the Absolute and Infinite at all, we cannot say how far it is or is not capable of likeness to the Relative and Finite. We must remain content with the belief that we have the knowledge of God that is best adapted to our wants and training. How far that knowledge represents God as He is, we know not, and we have no need to know.[2]

1 See 4.6

2 Mansel 1858. p.146.

DONALD DAVIDSON'S PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS.

1. *COLLECTED IN ESSAYS ON ACTIONS AND EVENTS* (1980)

Actions, Reasons and Causes	(First Published 1963)
How is Weakness of the Will Possible?	(1970)
Agency	(1971)
Freedom to Act	(1973)
Intending	(1978)
The Logical Form of Action Sentences	(1967)
Criticism, Comment and Defence	(1967-70)
Causal Relations	(1967)
The Individuation of Events	(1969)
Events as Particulars	(1979)
Eternal vs. Ephemeral Events	(1971)
Mental Events	(1970)
Appendix: Emeroses by Other Names	(1966)
Psychology as Philosophy	(1974)
Comments and Replies	(1974)
The Material Mind	(1973)
Hempel on Explaining Action	(1976)
Hume's Cognitive Theory of Pride	(1976)

2. *COLLECTED IN INQUIRIES INTO TRUTH AND INTERPRETATION (1984)*

Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages	(1965)
Truth and Meaning	(1967)
True to the Facts	(1969)
Semantics for Natural Languages	(1970)
In Defence of Convention T	(1973)
Quotation	(1979)
On Saying That	(1968)
Moods and Performances	(1979)
Radical Interpretation	(1973)
Belief and the Basis of Meaning	(1974)
Thought and Talk	(1975)
Reply to Foster	(1976)
On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme	(1974)
The Method of Truth in Metaphysics	(1977)
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