

## AN ORRERY OF INTENTIONALITY

P.M.S. Hacker

### 1. *The problems of Intentionality*

The problems of intentionality have exercised philosophers since the dawn of their subject. In the last century they were brought afresh into the limelight by Brentano. Famously he remarked that

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.<sup>i</sup>

Brentano is right in pointing to the scholastic origins of the terminology. The scholastics distinguished between natural and intentional existence (*esse naturale* and *esse intentionale*). The term *intentio* occurs first in a Latin translation of Avicenna's account of Aristotle's theory of knowledge. It was a rendering of Al-farabi's and Avicenna's terms *ma'na*, *ma'qul*.<sup>ii</sup> Aquinas employed the term 'intentio' to signify an 'idea' of the intellect, a likeness in thought of a thing thought. But ideas of the intellect are not mental images ('phantasmata'), and their likeness to what is thought or thought about is not the likeness of a portrait to what it portrays. Rather the characterization of the idea as the idea *that* such-and-such is thus-and-so or as an idea *of* such-and-such is at the same time a characterization of that of which the idea is an idea. The object of thought, therefore, 'exists intentionally' in the intellect whether or not it exists objectively or materially in reality — the being of an *intentio* consists simply in its being thought (*esse intentionis intellectae in ipso intelligi consistit*).<sup>iii</sup> Its existence in thought is an actualization of the powers of the intellect. It was the being of something as an object of thought which was of interest to Brentano when he reintroduced the term 'intentional' in 1874.

One may, however, be sceptical of the claim that intentionality is the defining feature

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<sup>i</sup> F. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. L.L. McAlister, trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister, originally published 1874 (Routledge, London, 1995), pp. 88f.

<sup>ii</sup> See P. Engelhardt, 'Intentio' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 4 (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1976), pp. 466-74, and C. Knudsen, 'Intentions and Impositions' in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg eds. *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), pp. 479-95.

<sup>iii</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 11. See W. Kneale, 'Intentionality and Intensionality', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. vol. XLII (1968), pp. 73f.; A.J.P. Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (Routledge, London, 1993), pp. 101 - 110.

of the mental. If we classify sensations such as pains, tickles, feelings of nausea or giddiness as mental, then there is no reason to suppose that they possess this feature of being directed at an object.<sup>iv</sup> If we count moods such as cheerfulness, feeling depressed or gloomy as ‘mental phenomena’, then they can be objectless, for one can feel cheerful, depressed or gloomy, without feeling cheerful, depressed or gloomy *about* anything.

One may be similarly sceptical about the claim that intentional in-existence characterizes even all those psychological predicates which *are* ‘directed towards an object or content’. Intentional in-existence is often understood to be exemplified either (i) by sentences containing a substantival expression such that neither the proposition expressed nor its contradictory implies either that there is or that there is not anything to which the substantival expression truly applies, or (ii) by sentences that contain a propositional clause such that neither the proposition expressed nor its contradictory implies that the propositional clause is true or that it is false.<sup>v</sup> But if so, then some important epistemic expressions lack this feature. If we take a person’s knowledge, memory, recognition or acquaintance to be something ‘mental’ or ‘psychological’, then although if these are present, there is someone or something which a person knows, remembers, recognises or is acquainted with, what he thus knows, recognises or is acquainted with does not possess the peculiar feature of mental in-existence. For he can know, remember, recognise or be acquainted with X only if X exists, and he can know or remember that *p* only if it is the case that *p*.

It is noteworthy that Brentano, in this passage, does not distinguish between the *object-accusatives* and the *nominalization-accusatives* of cognitive, affective and conative verbs.<sup>vi</sup> One may know N.N. and believe his story, suspect the accused or his alibi, fear a bully and doubt his word, love one’s friend or hate one’s enemy. In these cases what or whom one knows, believes, suspects, fears, doubts, loves or hates is specified by an object-accusative which indicates the object of one’s acquaintance, belief, suspicion, fear, etc. The object-accusative of the relevant verb ‘V’ must exist for it to be true that A Vs it. One may also know, believe, hope, fear, expect or suspect that *p*. The *that p* which one may know, etc., is a nominalization-

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<sup>iv</sup> Brentano has an argument to the contrary, but it is unconvincing. To argue that ‘in the sensation something is sensed’, for example a pain, so when one is in pain the mind is directed on an object, namely a pain (see T. Crane, ‘Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental’ in A. O’Hear ed. *Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind*, Royal Institute of Philosophy 43 (1998), p. 233) and therefore pain is no exception to the claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental is to abandon what is logically distinctive about intentional concepts, namely the logical role of the object-expressions which complete (formally or materially) the sense of intentional verbs. To feel pain, to be in pain or to have a pain is in no sense an act; and although *to feel* is (materially) specified by its grammatical object in the phrase ‘to feel pain’, that no more makes it intentional than does the fact that *to smoke* is (materially) specified by its grammatical object in the phrase ‘to smoke a pipe’ makes it intentional.

<sup>v</sup> R. Chisholm, *Perceiving* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1957), ch. XI, criticized by A.J.P. Kenny in *Action, Emotion and the Will* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963), ch.9.

<sup>vi</sup> A.R. White, *The Nature of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey, 1982), chs. 2-3, and ‘What We Believe’ in N. Rescher ed., *Studies in the Philosophy of Mind*, APQ Monograph series No.6 (Blackwell, Oxford, 1972), pp.69-84, where he uses the different terminology of ‘intentional-accusative’ and ‘object-accusative’. I am much indebted to both these works.

accusative, which does not signify any existent or non-existent object denominated ‘that  $p$ ’, which one knows, believes, hopes, etc. But one may believe in ghosts, suspect treachery, fear failure, hope for success, expect a triumphant outcome, and be aware of the difficulty — and these too are nominalization-accusatives. For they are variations upon a ‘that-nominalization’, being equivalent to believing that there are ghosts, that there is treachery, that one will fail, that one will succeed, that there will be a triumphant outcome, that there is such-and-such a difficulty. When one’s Ving has a nominalization-accusative, then whether what is Vd is so or not, or whether it exists or not, depends upon the character of the Ving. In the case of intentional verbs with a nominalization-accusative, e.g. ‘believe’, ‘hope’, ‘fear’, ‘expect’, ‘suspect’, ‘doubt’, one may V that  $p$  even though it is not the case that  $p$  (in which case the belief, hope, fear, expectation, suspicion, doubt one has will be false, incorrect, or wrong). And one may believe in ghosts, suspect treachery, fear failure, hope for success, expect a triumphant outcome even though ghosts do not exist, there is no treachery, failure does not ensue, etc. In the case of non-intentional epistemic verbs with a nominalization-accusative, e.g. ‘know’, ‘aware’, ‘recognise’, ‘remember’, ‘conscious’ (and ‘conscious of’), ‘notice’, what is Vd must be so or must exist, even though knowing, being aware or recognising treachery, i.e. that there is treachery, is not at all like knowing, being aware of, or recognising the traitor.

In response to Brentano’s observation, we must accordingly distinguish between the something that is affirmed or denied in judgement, namely *that  $p$* , and the something that is loved or hated, e.g. N.N., the Centre Pompidou, or the paintings of Bacon. Hence there are at least two different kinds of answer to the question ‘What is Vd?’. One kind of answer gives a nominalization-accusative, which may or may not be in the form of a that-clause, but must be paraphraseable into such a form. Such an answer characterizes the knowledge, belief, hope, fear, expectation, suspicion, etc. that a person has by specifying its content, as the nature of advice given, question asked, statement, allegation or declaration made is characterized by the ‘that-clause’ offered in response to the question ‘What was advised (asked, stated, alleged, declared)?’. Another kind of answer gives an object-accusative, which must signify something that exists, indeed some genuine object towards which it makes sense to have an epistemic, affective or conative attitude. (This simple dichotomy leaves open the myriad cases of Ving (wanting, intending, aiming, planning, etc.) to do, be or become something or other.) The terminology of ‘object’ of Ving equivocates therefore between the nominalization-accusative and the object-accusative of Ving. Some clarity can be introduced by differentiating between the *content* of Ving, as given by a that-clause or its equivalent, and the *object* of Ving as given by an object-accusative. As Alan White pointed out, outside philosophy it is the butler, rather than foul play, that is the object of one’s suspicion; a man’s word, rather than his sanity, that is the object of one’s doubt; a man or his story, rather than *that  $p$* , that is the object of one’s belief.

The topic of intentionality exercised philosophers from the turn of the century, both Brentano’s pupils, such as Meinong and Husserl, and writers in the phenomenological tradition stemming from Husserl, such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, as well as philosophers in the analytic tradition, such as Moore, Russell and Wittgenstein. In recent years it has been brought upon the carpet afresh, especially in the writings of American philosophers such as Searle, Dennett, Fodor and Davidson.

The philosophical interest of the logico-grammatical features of intentional verbs is great. A large range of puzzles clusters around them. These puzzles are interwoven, and the solution or resolution of any one of them affects (or infects) the solution or resolution of all the others. In this paper I shall attempt to survey them. A clear picture of the problems will also serve to rule out many proposed solutions. The battery of puzzles can be presented in the form of a series of concentric circles centered on the focal point of a cluster which I shall refer

to as the problems of *the relation of thought to reality*. This might be viewed as the central sun, around which related problems circle like the planets of an antique orrery. As we shall see, many of the planets carry further epicyclical satellites.

## 2. *The relation of thought to reality*

We may think, believe, hope, fear, expect or suspect that *p*. For ease of reference, our language provides us here with pairs of homonymical nominals: ‘belief’, ‘hope’, ‘fear’, ‘expectation’, ‘suspicion’. On the one hand, a belief is something we *have* when we believe something to be the case. It may be firm, tentative, passionate or typical, if we believe firmly, tentatively, or passionately, or if it is typical of us to believe thus. To ‘have a belief’, in this sense, is simply a matter of *believing* something to be so. On the other hand, *what* we V, namely *that p*, is also called ‘belief’, ‘hope’, ‘fear’, ‘expectation’ or ‘suspicion’, as in sentences of the form ‘*That p* is A’s belief (hope, fear, suspicion)’. But *qua* what is believed as opposed to what is had, A’s belief cannot be firm, tentative, etc., although it may be likely, improbable or certain.<sup>vii</sup>

Note that while to have a true or correct belief is to believe truly or correctly, it is not the believing that is true or correct. A’s believing may be wise, foolish or thoughtless, if it is wise, foolish or thoughtless *of A* to believe that *p*, in which case A believes wisely, foolishly or thoughtlessly that *p*. But it is not wise, foolish or thoughtless *that p*. If A believes truly that *p*, it is not true *of A* to believe that *p*. ‘Truly’ does not characterize the believing as do ‘wisely’, ‘foolishly’ and ‘thoughtlessly’, nor does it characterize the manner in which the belief is held, as do ‘passionately’ or ‘tentatively’. Rather, it is what is believed, namely *that p*, which is true or correct — if it is true or correct (to say) that *p*. Hence it is mistaken to suggest, as Davidson does, that ‘Much of the point of the concept of belief is that it is the concept of a state of an organism which can be true or false, correct or incorrect.’<sup>viii</sup> For what can be true or false is what can be advanced, asserted, stated, claimed, supposed or conjectured, i.e. nothing mental or neural, in particular not a mental state or state of an organism.<sup>ix</sup>

A person’s belief (what he has), i.e. his *believing* whatever he believes, is *essentially individuated* by *what* he believes, namely *that p*. A’s belief may or may not lead to his success or downfall, may be acquired on Monday or on Tuesday, may be firm or tentative, but these are external, inessential, properties of his belief. By contrast, that his belief is the belief that *p* rather than the belief that *q* is an essential characterization of his belief by reference to its content as given by a nominalization-accusative.

It is in this sense of ‘belief’ that one’s belief (*pace Russell*<sup>x</sup>) is *internally related* to what is the case if it is true (Wittgenstein, early and late). For it is inconceivable that one might believe truly that *p* and yet it not be the case that *p*. One might put this in the following way: it is inconceivable that the belief that *p* be made true by anything other than the fact that *p*. But it is noteworthy that this way of putting matters can lead directly to the misguided ontology and metaphysics of logical atomism (Russell and the *Tractatus*) and the classical

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<sup>vii</sup> White, ‘What we Believe’, p. 82.

<sup>viii</sup> D. Davidson, ‘Rational Animals’, repr. In E. Lepore and B.P. McLaughlin eds., *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1985), p. 479.

<sup>ix</sup> B. Rundle, *Mind in Action* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997), p. 40.

<sup>x</sup> B. Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1921), ch. XII.

correspondence theory of truth (Moore<sup>xi</sup>). The belief that *p* is similarly internally related to what is the case if it is false. For to believe falsely that *p* is to believe precisely what is *not* the case. This pair of internal relations can readily seem to indicate what Wittgenstein called a ‘pre-established harmony’ (BT 189)<sup>xii</sup> between thought and reality. If one believes that *p* and one’s belief is true (i.e. it is true that *p*), then what is the case is that *p*; but if one believes that *p* and one’s belief is false (i.e. it is false that *p*), then what follows is not that *q* or *r* or *s* (something wholly unrelated to what one believes) but only that it is *not the case that p*. Seen thus, it seems as if thought prepares a place for reality to fill or not to fill: if it fills that place, then one’s thought is true; if it fails to do so, then one’s thought is false. What must thought be like, what must reality be like, and how must thought and reality be related for this match-and-mismatch, agreement-and-disagreement, to be possible? The picture theory of the *Tractatus* was designed specifically to meet these requirements. So too was the diametrically opposed account of the autonomy of grammar in the *Philosophical Grammar* and the *Investigations*.<sup>xiii</sup>

Following through this idea, it seems as if thought and what make it true *fit* each other like a glove and the hand that fits into it. It is natural to conceive of thought, belief, expectation, etc. as mental states, events or processes (cf. Russell, the *Tractatus*, Searle, Dennett, Fodor, Davidson *et al.*). They are commonly conceived to obtain, take place or go on in the mind (Russell, the *Tractatus*) or, if the mental is thought to be token-identical with the neural, in the head (Quine, Searle, Davidson, *et al.*). Whether one or other or neither of these claims is correct is to be seen only from a grammatical investigation, which will clarify whether the relevant intentional verbs and their nominalizations uniformly satisfy the grammatical requirements for signifying a state, event, process, disposition or dispositional state. Thus, for example, only if ‘A believes that *p*’ can be construed as describing a person as being in a mental state (like feeling cheerful or depressed) or as having a disposition (like being irascible) can believing be thought to be a mental or dispositional state, and only if believing that *p* is indeed a mental state can it be even a candidate for being token-identical with a state of the person’s brain. I have argued elsewhere that these conditions are not satisfied.<sup>xiv</sup>

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<sup>xi</sup> G.E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1953), ch. XV. It should be noted that Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, did not succumb to the temptations of the correspondence theory of truth (*Tractatus* 4.062, cf. *Notebooks 1914-16*, pp. 9, 94, 112). Both then, and later (*Philosophical Grammar*, p. 123, *Philosophical Investigations* §136), he cleaved to the view that a proposition is true if things are as it says they are, i.e. that “‘*p*’ is true’ or ‘It is true that *p*’ says nothing other than what ‘*p*’ says.

<sup>xii</sup> References in the text to the works of Wittgenstein will be as follows: BT — ‘The Big Typescript’; LWL — *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1930-32*; PG — *Philosophical Grammar*; PI — *Philosophical Investigations*; RPP I — *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. I.

<sup>xiii</sup> For detailed discussion of Wittgenstein’s elucidations of the problems of intentionality, both in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations*, see P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996), ch.1. The essay in that chapter has been republished, with corrections and modifications, in the paperback edition *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will, Part I: Essays* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2000), pp. 1 - 48.

<sup>xiv</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, ‘Malcolm and Searle on “Intentional Mental States”’, *Philosophical Investigations* 15 (1992), pp. 245-275 (reprinted below, chapter ?), *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996), pp. 408-27, and ‘Davidson on the Ontology and Logical Form of Belief’, *Philosophy* 73 (1998), pp. 81 - 96.

It seems as if, when a thought, belief or expectation is true, correct or right, two distinct items are matched — one subjective (i.e. pertaining to a subject) and the other objective. If the state of affairs that *p* obtains, then the thought that *p* is true. If that state of affairs does not obtain, then the thought that *p* is false. The state of affairs in reality exactly matches the thought, as a piston matches the cylinder into which it fits (PI §439). Even more bafflingly, it seems that one can read off from the thought the very state of affairs that will make it true in advance of the state of affairs obtaining, just as one can say what it is that one expects in advance of its happening. But how can that be, given that the thought in one's mind exists quite independently of what does or does not obtain in reality, as one's expectation exists independently of whether it will or will not be satisfied by future eventualities in the world? What is the nature of this perfect fit between two ostensibly existence-independent items? If, *pace* Russell, one grants that the relation is an internal one, one might think that just as the formula which describes the inner wall of a cylinder also describes the outer wall of the piston which fits into it, so too the intrinsic description of a thought as the thought that *p* is also a description of the fact that makes it true (LWL 33). But tempting as that is, it is misconceived.

First, 'that *p*' is not a *description* of the thought I have when I think that *p* (which may be described as sapient or foolish, if it is sapient or foolish of me to think that *p*) and to state that it is a fact that *p* is not to *describe* a fact (which may be fortunate or deplorable).

Second, neither thoughts nor facts are kinds of things which might fit or fail to fit each other on the model of a piston and cylinder. A piston and cylinder are independent objects which may or may not stand in the relation of being fitted one into the other, and the identity of each is independent of whether they can fit (the piston may expand yet be the same piston). But the thought that *p* and the fact that *p* cannot 'exist' without 'fitting', and cannot cease to 'fit' without losing their identity.<sup>xv</sup>

Thirdly, although there is a kernel of truth in the conception of 'fit', it is misconstrued. The truth is that there is an internal relation between thought and fact (or state of affairs that obtains), and that the intrinsic individuation of thought and fact alike employs the same form of words 'that *p*'. But this is not a matter of two objects matching each other, like a piston and cylinder, for the indisputable internal relation is forged *within language*, not *between language and reality* — by the grammatical equivalence of the phrases 'the thought that *p*' and 'the thought that is made true by the fact that *p*', which are two different ways of characterizing one and the same thought. As Wittgenstein observed, expectation and its fulfilment make contact in language (PI §445), and the same holds with respect to thought and the fact that makes it true. So the 'harmony between thought and reality' is orchestrated *within* language, not between language and reality.

One's thought does not merely have a content, but also has an object or objects, may be *about* something or other. In the case of singular thoughts, one's thought may be about a person or thing. When one thinks that X is F, one thinks *of X*, who or which may be distant or long since dead or destroyed. One's thought, as it were, reaches right out to X and no other — one, so to speak, pinpoints X with one's thought. But how is it possible for thought to effect this? What mechanism guides one's thought so unerringly on to its target? What *makes* my thought that X is F a thought about X? Various answers have been essayed. One may hold that one's thought consists of images (the British empiricists), which represent their object either by similarity (i.e. that the mental image, like a picture, represents X in as much as it is a likeness or copy *of X*) or by way of causal genesis (i.e. that the mental image is *of X* because it was originally caused by X (Locke, in the case of simple ideas)). Or one may hold

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<sup>xv</sup> For more detail, see P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will*, pp. 49 - 53, 93 - 7.

that a thought is an abstract entity — a Fregean *Gedanke* — which is composed of ‘senses’ (*Sinne*) which are modes of presentation of an object (or function, assuming that function-names have a sense which is a mode of presentation). Or one may claim that thought too is a kind of language, consisting of thought-constituents which stand to reality in much the same way as the words of a natural language (the *Tractatus*, and, more recently, Fodor). The temptation to answer, rather than to dissolve, these misbegotten questions is great, but should be resisted. One should rather reject the question and deny that anything *makes* one’s thought of X a thought of X. What must be done is to elaborate the criteria for a person’s thought to *be* a thought of X, while denying that the criteria are *features* of the thought (the later Wittgenstein). So, for example, if I think that I must write to N.N., my old friend who lives in New York, then what shows that my thought is about my friend N.N. is that I address my letter to N.N. in New York (and not to someone of the same name in London), that if I am asked to whom I am writing, I explain that it is to my old friend, etc.

The final problem in the central cluster stems directly from the previous reflections. Precisely because thoughts not only have a content but are commonly also directed at or are about certain objects, indeed, have the content they then have because they are directed at or are about such and such objects, it seems that thoughts, beliefs, hopes, fears and suspicions, unlike mere sensations such as pain, cannot be, as it were, amorphous. They must have an internal structure, must consist of elements (ideas, senses, or thought-constituents in the language of thought) arranged in a certain way in order for the thought to be the very thought it is. Those elements, it seems, must be related to whatever objects in reality are thought of or about. If so, then thoughts, beliefs, etc. are representations — either by way of similarity or by projection or by causal generation. This is a tempting picture, but before succumbing to it, one must investigate whether it makes sense to conceive of thoughts, etc. as representations (the British empiricists, Frege, Russell, the *Tractatus*, Searle, Fodor), or to deny that they are representations (later Wittgenstein, Davidson), and to construe them as being neither amorphous nor structured (later Wittgenstein). For it is the *expression* of a thought that is a ‘representation’, which can be said to have a logico-grammatical structure and which has constituents arranged in a certain way.

### 3. *The first circle: what do we believe?*

If we V truly (rightly or correctly), then what we V to be the case is what is the case. As Wittgenstein put it in the *Investigations*:

“Thought must be something unique.” When we say, *mean* that such-and-such is the case, we — with what we mean — do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean that *such-and-such is thus-and-so*. (PI §95, my translation)

If we V falsely (wrongly or incorrectly), then what we V is precisely what is *not* the case. Again, as Wittgenstein put it, ‘this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: one can *think* what is not the case’ (ibid.). This pair of logical requirements must be respected. But they can readily seem to conflict for two reasons. If we rightly insist that when we believe that *p* and our belief is true, then what we believe is what is the case, it seems to follow that when we believe that *p*, and our belief is false, then what we believe is not what is the case — that what we believe does not exist, i.e. that we believe nothing. But, as Socrates already pointed out in the *Theaetetus*, even if our belief is false, we believe *something*, not *nothing*. Equally, if our belief is incorrect, then what we believe is distinct from what is the case. But how can what we believe both be what is the case when our belief is correct and yet distinct from what is the case when our belief is incorrect? For we surely believe the very same thing, no matter whether our belief is right or wrong. So the first orbital question revolving around the core problems of the relation of thought and reality is: what is it that we believe (expect, fear, hope, expect, etc.) when we believe that *p*?

To ensure that there is something for us to believe, irrespective of whether our belief is true or false, it is tempting to suggest that what we believe, when we believe that  $p$ , is a Fregean *Gedanke*, or a Moorean or Russellian proposition, or — with a Tarskian preference for austerity — a sentence. And an immediate subsidiary question, as it were an epicycle on the question of what is believed, is whether, if what we believe when we believe that  $p$  is one of these items, belief is a relation between a person and an object of the preferred type. Russell's question-begging terminology of 'propositional attitude' has disposed many philosophers to think that intentionally occurring verbs signify *attitudes* towards some thing. Philosophers, who argue that what one Vs when one Vs that  $p$  is a *Gedanke*, a proposition or a sentence, typically hold that Ving that  $p$  is a relation between a person and an object, the object in question being either an abstract entity referred to by the noun-phrase 'that  $p$ ' (which, according to Frege, refers to the customary sense of the sentence ' $p$ ', and according to others, signifies a proposition) or a class of inscriptions (or sounds) of similar form (Tarski) or an utterance-sentence.

Other philosophers deny that when one Vs that  $p$  there is any *object* signified by ' $p$ ' or 'that  $p$ ' which is Vd and hence deny that Ving that  $p$  is a relation of any kind. Rather, it is suggested, 'believes' in 'A believes that  $p$ ' is not transitive, and the sentence is to be parsed in the form 'A believes-that /  $p$ ', construing 'believes-that' as a predicate-forming operator on sentences (Quine and Prior).<sup>xvi</sup> But one may insist on the transitivity of 'believes' (White), yet nevertheless emphasize that although when one Vs that  $p$ , there is something one Vs (namely *that p*), there is no thing (viz. a proposition, class of sentences or utterance-sentence) one Vs. Yet another route to the same happy conclusion is to argue that while the logical form of belief-attributing sentences is relational, relating the believer to an utterance-sentence of the attributer which is picked out by the 'that' in 'A believes that  $p$ ', construed as a cataphoric demonstrative, nevertheless believing that  $p$  is not a relation to anything, but a dispositional mental state which has a content (Davidson).<sup>xvii</sup>

Although for some Vs (e.g. believe) it makes perfectly good sense to V propositions (but not sentences or classes of sentences), there is an important difference between believing that  $p$  and believing the proposition that  $p$ , namely the difference between believing something to be so and believing something to be true (White and Rundle<sup>xviii</sup>). In the first case the focus of one's belief is on how things are, and one's belief is true or correct if things are as one believes them to be. In the second case, the focus of one's belief is on how things have been or might be said to be. For other Vs (e.g., expect, suspect, fear, hope) it makes no sense to V propositions, even though one may V that a certain proposition is true or false. And for yet others (e.g., understand) it makes sense for one to V that  $p$  and it makes sense to V the proposition that  $p$ , but there is a quite distinctive shift in the meaning of 'V' between Ving that  $p$  and Ving the proposition that  $p$ .

Introducing Fregean thoughts (senses of sentences), propositions or utterance-sentences to fill the role of what we V when we V that  $p$  ensures that we V something, indeed some *thing*, when what we V is not the case, but the price that has to be paid for this is

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<sup>xvi</sup> See W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 216; A.N.Prior, *Objects of Thought* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), pp. 19f.

<sup>xvii</sup> I have questioned Davidson's analysis of the logical form of belief sentences in 'Davidson on Ontology and the Logical Form of Belief', *Philosophy* 73 (1998), pp. 81 - 96

<sup>xviii</sup> For an illuminating discussion of the grammatical complexities, see B. Rundle, *Grammar in Philosophy* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), ch. 7.



twofold. First, this immediately conflicts with the requirement that when we V truly that  $p$  what we V *is* what is the case, that our thought should not fall short of the fact that such-and-such is thus-and-so. For if what we V is a sense, a proposition or a sentence, then what is Vd is not what is the case, but something else which is related in some further way to what is the case, e.g. by way of singling out the True as the reference or *Bedeutung* of the sentence which expresses that sense, or by being true if and only if it is the case that  $p$ . Similarly, what we V when we falsely or wrongly V that  $p$  does not clash directly with what is the case, but only indirectly, via the intermediary of the putative object introduced. But, as Prior remarked apropos Frege's interpolation of thoughts between the Ving agent and what is the case, 'we must resist above all things the madness which insulates what we think from any possibility of clashing directly with what is so'.<sup>xix</sup>

Secondly, if what we V when we V that  $p$  is a Fregean *Gedanke*, a proposition, a class of sentences or an utterance-sentence, then the intrinsic individuation condition is distorted. For if what we V is one of these items, then the content of our Ving is not *that*  $p$ , but rather *that*  $q$ , i.e. that the *Gedanke*, proposition, class of sentences or utterance-sentence is true.

It is misguided to hold that whenever we V that  $p$ , we V the proposition that  $p$  (let alone the sentence ' $p$ '), since it makes no sense to expect, fear, hope, or suspect propositions. It is equally wrong to suppose even that *whenever* we believe that  $p$  what we believe is the proposition that  $p$ . It is of course possible to believe the proposition that  $p$ , as one may believe the declaration, allegation, story or rumour that  $p$ . But the content of one's belief when one believes the proposition (declaration, story or rumour) that  $p$  is not the proposition (etc.) that  $p$ , but rather *that the proposition (declaration, story or rumour) that  $p$  is true*. The question 'What does one V when one Vs that  $p$ ?' is a confused question. Taken one way, it contains its own answer, namely: one Vs that  $p$ . Taken another way, the only answer must consist in rejecting the question, for although there is something one Vs, given by the nominalisation-accusative, there is no thing that one Vs. But, of course, for many Vs, one may V all manner of things, given by an object-accusative — for one may V people or institutions, V stories, rumours, declarations, allegations, etc.

#### 4. *The second circle: the relation of language to reality*

We use our language to represent things. But words and sentences are sounds and inscriptions — parts of the material world, as it were. Hence the question arises how such an object *can* represent, stand for or mean something? How can a thing such as a sound or mark on paper point to something else beyond itself? What makes a sound or mark the name of a particular? A sentence can be said to describe a certain state of affairs. But how can a string of sounds or marks represent a state of affairs — indeed represent one which may not even exist? In short, the intentionality of language calls out for explanation no less than the intentionality of thought.

It is platitudinous that signs represent whatever they represent only in the use which living creatures, language users, make of them. This truism is of little avail, for by itself it does nothing to explain how it is that a mere sign, a sound or mark, used by a living creature *can* represent anything beyond itself. It is overwhelmingly tempting to ask how the signs of a language thus used must be *connected* to reality in order for them to be capable of representing what they represent. It seems plausible to hold that the signs of language must be mapped onto entities in reality, that simple referring expressions must be correlated with particulars, predicates with properties, relation-terms with relations, and so forth. The combinatorial rules of the syntax of the language must then ensure that the combinatorial possibilities of

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<sup>xix</sup> Prior, *ibid.*, p. 52.

signs coincides with the combinatorial possibilities of the corresponding entities in reality, to ensure that what makes sense neither exceeds nor falls short of what is possible in reality. (The pressure which this picture exerts in the direction of a logico-pictorial conception of representation (e.g. the *Tractatus*) is patent.) How is the mapping, the connection between language and reality, effected? Various possibilities have been explored.

One may conceive of the connection causally, explaining the intentionality of the signs of language by reference to the causal genesis of the mastery of their use by a speaker. This in turn may be construed immediately or mediately. Contemporary philosophers of language who are attracted to behaviourist learning theory, such as Quine or Davidson, construe the connection as immediate. Thus Quine holds that ‘words mean only as their use in sentences is conditioned to sensory stimuli, verbal and otherwise’<sup>xx</sup> and Davidson argues that we learn our first words ‘through a conditioning of sounds or verbal behaviour to appropriate bits of matter in the public domain. ... This is not just a story about how we learn to use words: it must also be an essential part of an adequate account of what words refer to and what they mean. ... it is hard to believe that this sort of interaction between language users and public events and objects is not a basic part of the whole story, the part that, directly or indirectly, largely determines how words are related to things. ... in the simplest and most basic cases, words and sentences derive their meanings from the objects and circumstances in which they were learned.’<sup>xxi</sup> Thinking along these lines, it seems attractive to invoke ostensive teaching as a fundamental part of the process whereby the connection between word and object is behaviouristically instilled in the language learner. One will then be prone to regard an ostensive explanation, as Quine does<sup>xxii</sup>, as a true predication.

Irrespective of behaviourist learning theory, ostensive explanation is often construed (as it was by Schlick<sup>xxiii</sup> and Waismann<sup>xxiv</sup>) as the primary device connecting language and reality. Thus conceived, the definables of language are ultimately analyzable into combinations of indefinables, and the indefinables are explained by way of their connection with reality. Ostensive explanation is thus *the point of exit* from language. But whether this is a correct construal of ostensive explanation or definition is a moot point. An important satellite moving epicyclically on the orbit of the relation between language and reality is how ostensive definition is to be understood. For one need not, and arguably should not, construe it thus. The later Wittgenstein distinguished between ostensive training and ostensive teaching, the latter involving ostensive definitions. Ostensive definitions, he argued, are rules for the use of their definienda, connecting a word with an ostensive gesture, an indexical (which may be

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<sup>xx</sup> W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p.17.

<sup>xxi</sup> D. Davidson, ‘The Myth of the Subjective’, repr. in M. Krausz ed., *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1989), pp. 163f. For criticism of Davidson’s ‘externalism’, see P.M.S. Hacker, ‘Davidson on Intentionality and Externalism’, *Philosophy* 73 (1998), pp. 539 - 552.

<sup>xxii</sup> W.V.O. Quine, ‘Ontological Relativity’, repr. in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1969), p. 39.

<sup>xxiii</sup> M. Schlick, ‘Meaning and Verification’, repr. in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, 1969), p. 341, and ‘The Future of Philosophy’, *ibid.*, pp. 129f.

<sup>xxiv</sup> F. Waismann, ‘Theses’ in *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1979), pp. 246ff.

combined with a categorial term — as in ‘This L  $\square$  *colour* is black’ or ‘This L  $\square$  *shape* is a triangle’) and a sample. They bear a kinship to substitution rules (of which analytic definitions are one kind) in as much as the ostensive gesture, the indexical and the sample can fulfill the role of the definiendum in a sentence expressing a true or false proposition (e.g. ‘The curtains are *this* L  $\square$  *colour*’). That they are rules is patent in the fact that the sample constitutes a standard for the correct application of the definiendum. But the sample employed in an ostensive definition is not thereby *described*; it belongs (at least *pro tempore*) to the means of representation, not to what is represented, and is, in this sense, an instrument of the language. If one cleaves to this account, then one will be prone to deny that there is any meaning-endowing *connection between language and reality* in the sense which concerns us. And that was indeed what Wittgenstein argued, claiming, *pace* Schlick and Waismann, that there is no *exit* from language — that ‘language must speak for itself’ (PG 40). If so, then the received distinction between syntactical rules and semantic rules, inherited from Tarski and Carnap, is misconceived. For it is not a categorial distinction between intra-linguistic combinatorial rules, on the one hand, and rules connecting language with reality, on the other.

The Quine/Davidson behaviourist account suggests an immediate connection between the signs of language and entities in reality. But other strategies opt for a mediate connection. Some versions of classical empiricism embraced a psychologicist account, according to which the intentionality of language is explained via the intentionality of ideas. The causal version of such an account holds that words stand immediately for ideas in the mind of the speaker or hearer, and mediately for the items in reality which are the original causes of the ideas with which the mind is furnished. On such an account, the intentionality of language is derived from the intentionality of thought and thought-constituents.

A cloud-enshrouded satellite revolving around the intentionality of language is the phenomenon of referential opacity. This will not be discussed here.

##### 5. *The third circle: the relation of thought and language*

However the puzzles concerning the intentionality of language are to be resolved, there is a further array of questions concerning the relation of thought and language. We may think, believe, etc. that *p*, and if it is the case that *p* then the thought or belief we had was correct. Similarly, we may assert that *p*, and if it is the case that *p*, then the assertion we made was true. What is the relation between the thought that *p* and the sentence ‘*p*’ which is used to assert that *p*? And what is the relation between thinking that *p* and asserting that *p*?

We distinguish between thoughtless speech — the mere mouthing of the signs of a language — and the intelligent, thoughtful, use of language, i.e. the use of language with understanding. A parrot may emit the sounds of a language, a person may repeat sentences of a foreign tongue without understanding. But this is not to assert that something is thus-and-so — not to say anything. And the reason it is not may seem to be the lack of any process of thinking behind the utterance of the words. It is then tempting to argue that what differentiates the mere marks or sounds from the living signs of language in use, signs that actually say something, mean something, are about something, is the underlying thought which accompanies intelligent speech. The signs of language are alive, possess intentionality, in use, precisely because in use they are informed by thought. On such a conception, the intentionality of language is derived from the intentionality of the underlying processes of thinking. Intelligent, thoughtful speech, speaking with understanding, is accordingly a *dual process*, i.e. of speaking and of thinking.

This conception presupposes that thinking is a process or activity. Hence its correctness can be determined only by an investigation into the nature of thinking, which is to say — a grammatical investigation into the use of the verb ‘to think’ and its cognates. So an important epicyclical satellite of the problem of the relation of thought and language is the

analysis of thinking. Is thinking a process or activity that can go on independently of speaking but which always accompanies thoughtful speaking (speaking with understanding)? To be sure, one can think something without saying what one thinks. But is thinking always (sometimes, or never) a process or activity? And if it is sometimes an activity, is it that activity which renders speech thoughtful?

The dual process conception encourages the idea that thinking is an inner, articulated process — a dialogue of the soul with itself (Plato). If so, then speaking is in effect a matter of translating from the medium of thought into the medium of natural language. If that were right, then the question of the nature of the medium of thought cannot but arise. What does one think *in*? Does one think in English, German or French? (Many idioms press one in that direction, e.g. ‘His German is getting so good now that he even thinks in German’.) Or is there a universal medium of thought’ — perhaps images or ideas? (Other idioms press in this direction, e.g. ‘He has difficulty finding the right words to express his ideas.’) Or is there a universal, perhaps innate, ‘language of thought’? However these questions are to be resolved, the further question of the criterion for correctly translating mental discourse into verbal must also be answered. Alternatively, one may argue that the idiom of ‘thinking in’ is merely a deceptive *façon de parler*.

Wittgenstein and Ryle laboured hard to break the power of the mesmerising picture associated with the dual process conception. On their view, although one can indeed think without saying what one thinks, thought is not conducted *in* anything. Although one can speak without thought, speaking without thinking (understanding) is not one process without its spouse. Although thinking may be accompanied by images or by talking to oneself in the imagination, one can talk to oneself in the imagination without thinking, and think without talking to oneself or imagining anything. Thought cannot be a kind of language, and thinking cannot be a kind of inward speaking. For if it were, then a report of what one thought would leave out what one meant, and one’s own thinking would be subject to one’s interpretation and misinterpretation. But that is absurd, for thinking must be the last interpretation, i.e. for oneself, there is no gap between what one thinks and what one means. There can be no question of misinterpreting one’s own thought — or of interpreting it either. If I think of N.N., there can be no question *for me*, of whom I mean, nor can I think that *p* yet misinterpret myself as thinking that *q* (RPP I, §180).<sup>xxv</sup>

A variant upon the thesis that the intentionality of language is derived from the intentionality of thought is the suggestion that words in use signify what they do, possess intentionality, in virtue of the speaker’s meaning by them what he does. A speaker’s mental acts or activities of meaning constitute the method of projection linking words and world (such a view is implicit in the *Tractatus*). For when one uses a sentence ‘*p*’ with understanding, with thought, one means by the sentence the state of affairs that *p* the obtaining of which will make one’s assertion true. And that in turn is possible because one means by the constituent words of one’s sentence the objects of which they are representatives, and the syntactical structure of one’s sentence reflects the possibility depicted by the sentence. A condition of the intelligibility of this strategy is that meaning something can be construed as a mental act or activity (see section 7 below). One might, however, sidestep this difficulty, and explain the intentionality of language by reference to speakers’ intentions (Grice) without committing

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<sup>xxv</sup> For a general discussion of the dual process conception and of Wittgenstein’s criticisms thereof, see P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), in the essay entitled ‘Thinking: the soul of language’. Ryle’s writings on the subject are in *Collected Papers*, Vol. 2 (Hutchinson, London, 1971), Essays 22, 34-7, and in *On Thinking* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1979).

oneself to the view that intending is a mental act or activity. But a further difficulty then looms up, namely the horizon of possible language-independent intentions. For it is arguable that the limits of what a creature can intelligibly be said to intend coincide with what it can exhibit as so intended in its behaviour. If so, the requisite communicative intentions may be held to presuppose the very linguistic skills and the meanings of linguistic terms which they are here invoked to explain.

The diametrically opposed strategy to pursue here is to adopt the converse priority thesis, i.e. to claim that the intentionality of thought is parasitic upon the intentionality of language — that language mastery antecedes and explains the possibility of thought. This strategy is likely to be adopted by behaviouristically inclined philosophers. However, one may reject both forms of priority theses. One may argue that thought and language, and the intentionality of thought and the intentionality of language, are inextricable interwoven and interdependent.

Wittgenstein's later account of intentionality denies conceptual priority to thought, and hence rejects attempts to derive the intentionality of language from the intentionality of thought. But he conceded that an animal may think, as for example one's dog may now think that it is going to be taken for a walk now (but not that it is going to be taken for a walk next week). What is necessary for the intelligibility of ascribing thought to a creature is that its behavioural repertoire be rich enough for something to count as the expression of its thinking thus-and-so. As noted, Wittgenstein also denied that the intentionality of language is to be explained in terms of causally generated semantic connections between words and world. His later conception of language and linguistic meaning is normative through and through, even though the rules of a language are often loose and open-ended (determinacy of sense being a chimera), terms need not be defined by analytic definition, and not all features of a language are rigidly rule-governed. The central features of intentionality are to be explained by reference to intra-linguistic rules, connections in grammar between expressions, e.g. such intra-linguistic rules as 'the proposition that  $p$ ' = 'the proposition made true by the fact that  $p$ ' or 'the expectation that  $p$ ' = 'the expectation that is satisfied by its being the case that  $p$ '. Other intentional features are determined by speakers' intentions, as exhibited in the ways in which they explain whom or what was meant by the use of a singular referring expression, within constraints fixed by the generally accepted criteria of understanding. It is neither causal links that fix the projection of language onto reality, nor psychic acts of meaning. It is rather the rule-governed practice of the use of the signs of language, explanations of meaning and of what is meant, in the stream of human life.

#### 6. *The fourth circle: the epistemology of intentionality*

Any mature language user who Vs that  $p$  can say so. This may be called *the articulation condition*. Furthermore, a person's avowal that he Vs that  $p$  is, at least normally, *immediate*, i.e. it does not rest on evidence and is not justified by reference to evidence (*the immediacy condition*). Any account of intentionality must elucidate how this is possible. It seems that in order to be able to say what one Vs one must *know* both that one Vs something, and what one Vs (*the cognitive assumption*). If one cleaves to this, one must explain how one knows, or at least how it is that one knows.

Whether the cognitive assumption is correct or not, there is a noteworthy epistemic asymmetry between the first- and third-person cases. When it comes to knowing whether another person Vs that  $p$ , our knowledge rests on familiar kinds of evidence of what he experiences, says and does. Our knowledge claims with regard to the beliefs, thoughts, fears and hopes of others enjoy no special epistemic privilege. Although they are often not inferred from evidence, but made as a consequence of our exercise of our recognitional capacities, if they are challenged, they can be justified by reference to such familiar kinds of evidence. The

first-person case, however, is different. If I believe, think, fear or hope that  $p$ , then, at least normally, it makes no sense for me to be ignorant of the fact that I do, to wonder or doubt whether I do; or, if these epistemic prefixes do make sense, then not the sense they have in the third person case. I cannot say: 'Either I believe that  $p$  or I do not believe that  $p$ , but I don't know which' (or 'but I wonder which it is'). I may doubt whether you fear that  $p$ , but I cannot say 'Perhaps I fear that  $p$ , perhaps I do not -- but actually I doubt whether I do'. I can discover, find out, guess or conjecture that another person Vs that  $p$ , but, at least normally, it makes no sense for me to discover, find out, guess or conjecture that I V that  $p$ . I may be unsure whether you expect that  $p$ , but I cannot say 'Perhaps I expect that  $p$ , and perhaps I don't, but I am not sure which it is'. There are of course, forms of uncertainty. For I can be unsure whether I (really) believe that  $p$ , uncertain whether I (really do) expect that  $p$  — but these are not cases of either believing (or not believing), expecting (or not expecting) that  $p$ , but being unsure or uncertain which. Here what is called for is scrutiny of the evidence for and against its being the case that  $p$  and a decision as to *what* to believe or expect, not examination of the evidence for my believing or expecting that  $p$ . These asymmetries reflect the immediacy condition, and seem to confirm the cognitive assumption. For they suggest that the reason for these epistemic asymmetries is that when one does V that  $p$ , one knows immediately that one does.

Corresponding to the epistemic asymmetry is *first-person authority in utterance*. While my word carries no special weight independently of the weight of the evidence I might have in support of the claim that A Vs that  $p$ , my avowal or averral that I V that  $p$  does carry special weight. If a person avows that he Vs that  $p$ , then, other things being equal, we take his word for it. We do not ask someone who avers that he Vs that  $p$  how he knows that he does, as we might ask someone who asserts that A Vs that  $p$  how he knows this. Of course, such an avowal or averral may be insincere. So first-person authority is defeasible (and, indeed, there are other grounds for defeat than insincerity — such as slips of the tongue, lip-service, self-deception, *arrière pensées*). But if it is not defeated, the speaker's word goes. An explanation of this asymmetry too is necessary.

We saw above that there are independent reasons for holding that Ving that  $p$  is a mental state, process or event. These considerations (misguided or not) may be reinforced by reflection on the articulation condition and the cognitive assumption. For one can surely say that one Vs that  $p$  only if Ving that  $p$  is something present to the mind. Otherwise how could one's avowal be immediate? And, indeed, how could one know that one Vs that  $p$ ? Ving that  $p$  must surely be a mental *phenomenon* possessing *phenomenological features* (as sensations and emotions do). If it is a mental state, process or event with features that are present to the mind, then one may argue that one can read off the fact that one is in a state of Ving and what it is that one Vs from this mental phenomenon by a process of introspection.

The traditional strategy is to cleave to the cognitive assumption in order to explain the epistemic asymmetry. The cognitive assumption also offers an explanation of first person authority in utterance, for obviously if, when one Vs that  $p$ , one knows that one does, then one's word will carry special weight — the weight of the word of someone who is uniquely well-informed about something accessible directly to him but not to others. The temptation to accept the cognitive assumption is great, for to deny it seems tantamount to saying that when one, for example, believes that  $p$ , one is *ignorant* of the fact that one so believes — which cannot be right. But one must now explain how one knows or why one believes that one believes that  $p$ , or how it is that one knows or believes this. Construing the content of Ving as present to the mind in the form of the phenomena of Ving, and taking introspection to be a faculty of inner sense, one may argue that our knowledge of our own 'intentional mental states' is immediate, for they are evident to the mind. The extreme version of this conception represents such alleged knowledge as subjectively indubitable, evident and incorrigible. If a

person Vs that *p*, then he knows that he does, and if he believes that he Vs that *p*, then he does V that *p*. This Cartesian *transparency thesis* was defended by Brentano.

Others, noting the defeasibility of first-person authority in such cases as hypocrisy or lip-service, self-deception and *arrières pensées*, have defended a modified version of the cognitive assumption, viz. that when a person Vs that *p*, he *normally* knows, corrigibly and dubitably, that he does so. The corrigibility and dubitability can now be explained either by faulting the faculty of inner sense or by reference to the possibility of its object's being concealed. James, Galton and Spencer retain the perceptual model of introspection, but reject the idea that it is superior, in terms of infallibility or indubitability, to outer sense. Alternatively, inspired by the Freudian conception of the unconscious, one may argue that objects of inner sense may not always be evident, since they may be hidden in the unconscious. Whether these tactical moves are licit can only emerge from an elucidation of the concept of introspection, on the one hand, and from an investigation of the concepts of unconscious beliefs, desires, fears and hopes.

One may accept the cognitive assumption while rejecting the perceptual model of introspection. Thus Davidson repudiates the transparency thesis, the perceptual analogy and the idea that thoughts are representations, but insists that *normally* if one Vs that *p*, there is a presumption that one knows that one does. Rather than deriving first-person authority from the cognitive assumption, he suggests that the cognitive thesis is to be derived from the requirement of first-person authority, and explains the latter by reference to the presuppositions of interpretation which he holds to be essential for the possibility of communication. For interpretation to be possible, there must be a presumption that the speaker knows what, for example, he believes, since it must be presumed that he knows that he holds true the words he utters and that he knows what he means by them, i.e. is getting his own language right — otherwise there would be nothing for the interpreter to interpret.<sup>xxvi</sup>

A more radical line to take is to deny the cognitive assumption, not in order to argue, absurdly, that when one Vs that *p* one is ignorant of the fact that one does, but rather in order to deny epistemic sense both to knowledge and to ignorance of one's occurrent 'intentional mental states', at least in normal cases. Thus Wittgenstein held that 'I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say "I know what you are thinking", and wrong to say "I know what I am thinking"' (PI p. 222). On this view, the epistemic asymmetries are not explained by the fact that doubt, ignorance, wondering whether, finding out, guessing, etc. are excluded by the fact that when one Vs that *p*, one normally or always knows that one does, but rather are excluded *by grammar*. If it makes no sense to be ignorant of the fact that one Vs that *p* when one Vs that *p*, then it also makes no sense to know that one does, and *a fortiori* it makes no sense to find out, guess or wonder whether one does. Similarly, if it makes no sense to be ignorant of the fact that one Vs that *p*, it also makes no sense to doubt whether one does, and hence too it makes no sense to be certain that one does.

The Wittgensteinian account must give a satisfactory elucidation of the various forms of defeat, compatible with the grammatical exclusion of knowledge and ignorance, either *tout court* or at least in the standard case. It must explain the cases of the hypocrite, of the self-deceiver, of *arrières pensées*, etc. without invoking the idea of agential *error* with respect to a second-order 'epistemic attitude' or *ignorance* with respect to a first-order one. And it must elucidate the possible uses of the epistemic idiom with respect to one's own beliefs, hopes,

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<sup>xxvi</sup> D. Davidson, 'First Person Authority', *Dialectica* 38 (1984), pp. 101-11. For critical examination of Davidson's conception of first-person authority, see P.M.S. Hacker, 'Davidson on First-Person Authority', *Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1997), pp 285 - 304.

fears, expectations, suspicions, etc. compatible with the denial of the cognitive assumption. So, for example, 'I know that I V that  $p$ ' is standardly merely an emphatic or concessive affirmation that one does so believe. (There are other possibilities too, which need detailed examination case by case.)<sup>xxvii</sup>

### 7. *The fifth circle: meaning and understanding*

The final circle consists of a pair of interdependent issues (as it were two planets circling a common point moving on an orbit). We communicate our thoughts, beliefs, hopes, fears and desires to each other by using the signs of a language. In discourse, the speaker uses his words with understanding. It was noted above that it is tempting to construe thoughtful utterance on the dual-process conception, and/or to assume that the intentionality of the words of speech is derived from the processes of thinking and/or meaning that underlie utterance. One may invoke speakers' meaning something by their words in order to explain the intentionality of utterance and/or to explain why we must presume the speaker to know what he Vs when he Vs that  $p$ . But whether such manoeuvres make sense can only be elucidated by a grammatical investigation of the concept of meaning something. One must clarify the relation between the meaning of a word or sentence and speaker's meaning. With respect to speaker's meaning, one must distinguish (a) what or whom a speaker means by the use of an expression, (b) what a person means by a sentence he uses (normally what a speaker means is what he says, i.e. he means by the sentence uttered precisely what the sentence in context means), (c) whether the speaker means what he says, i.e. is serious or merely joking, (d) what a person meant to say (as opposed to what he did say, if there was a spoonerism or slip of the tongue) or to assert (if there was a malapropism), and (e) what a person meant by what he said (what the intended implications of his assertion were). Clarity regarding these distinctions demands antecedent elucidation of the concept of meaning something, in particular it needs to be shown that meaning something is not a mental act or activity, let alone a state or process. Meaning something must be distinguished from both thinking and intending, and the relations between these concepts clarified. It seems evident that unlike Humpty Dumpty, we cannot make words mean exactly what we want. One cannot utter 'There's glory for you' and mean 'There's a nice knockdown argument'. Why not? And what is the nature of the constraints on speaker's meaning?<sup>xxviii</sup>

The correlative of the questions related to speaker's meaning is an array of problems concerning the hearer's understanding which is the upshot of successful communication. How can the hearing of mere sounds yield understanding of what is meant by an utterance? A *telementational*<sup>xxix</sup> conception of communication pervades philosophers' and linguists' reflections on discourse. If one conceives of words as standing immediately for ideas in the mind and only mediately for the objects of which the ideas are ideas, then one will follow the classical empiricists in thinking that 'because the scene of ideas that makes one man's thoughts cannot be laid open to the immediate view of another ... therefore to communicate our thoughts to

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<sup>xxvii</sup> For a comprehensive defense of a Wittgensteinian account of the epistemology of avowals, see Chapters ? and ? above.

<sup>xxviii</sup> See P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will*, pp. 679 - 702 for an attempt to clarify these matters.

<sup>xxix</sup> I owe the felicitous epithet to Roy Harris, *The Language Machine* (Duckworth, London, 1987), pp. 7f., 29-36.



one another ... signs of our ideas are also necessary; those which men have found most convenient, and therefore generally make use of, are *articulate sounds*.<sup>xxx</sup> Successful communication ensues when the words uttered ‘excite in the hearer, exactly the same idea they stand for in the mind of the speaker’.<sup>xxxi</sup> Wittgenstein nicely illustrated this conception: ‘The sentence is like a key-bit whose indentations are constructed to move levers in the soul in a particular way. The sentence, as it were, plays a melody (the thought) on the instrument of the soul’ (PG 152) — on the keyboard of the imagination (PI §6). The same telementational conception was enshrined in the work of the founding-father of modern theoretical linguistics, in de Saussure’s famous ‘speech circuit’<sup>xxxii</sup>, but with ideas replaced by concepts linked to representations of sound patterns. More recently, Chomsky has argued that to know or understand a language ‘is to be in a certain mental state, which persists as a relatively steady component of transitory mental states. ... to have a certain mental structure consisting of a system of rules and principles that generate and relate mental representations of various types.’<sup>xxxiii</sup> To understand an utterance ‘the mind/brain must determine its phonetic form and its words and then use the principles of universal grammar ... to project a structured representation of this expression and determine how its parts are associated.’<sup>xxxiv</sup> To understand the sentence is then to interpret it ‘by a computational process of unconscious inference’ (ibid. p.55) which takes place virtually instantaneously (ibid., p.90). Contemporary philosophers of language are similarly possessed by the telementational conception. If the ‘input’ in discourse (for the hearer) consists of sound waves impinging upon nerve endings (Quine) or of mere sounds (Davidson), how can the ‘output’ be understanding what was said, viz. that such-and-such is the case? The favoured answer is that understanding must consist in radical translation (which allegedly begins at home) or interpretation. Thus Davidson holds that ‘speaker and hearer must repeatedly, intentionally, and with mutual agreement, interpret relevantly similar sound patterns of the speaker in the same way’, and ‘a theory of interpretation ... allows us to redescribe certain events in a revealing way. ... a method of interpretation can lead to redescribing the utterance of certain sounds as an act of saying that snow is white.’<sup>xxxv</sup> The theory is a model of the interpreter’s linguistic competence, but ‘some mechanism in the interpreter must correspond to the theory’.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Whether this venerable picture in any or all of its variations makes sense will only become clear in the light of an acceptable account of the concept of understanding. If it is misguided to construe understanding a language as a state or to conceive of understanding an

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<sup>xxx</sup> J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. IV, ch. xxi, sect.4.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ibid., Bk. III, ch. ix, sect. 6.

<sup>xxxii</sup> F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Duckworth, London, 1983), pp. 11f.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> N. Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1980), p. 48.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> N. Chomsky, *Language and the Problems of Knowledge* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 136.

<sup>xxxv</sup> D. Davidson, ‘Communication and Convention’, p.277 and ‘Thought and Talk’, p. 161, both repr. in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> D. Davidson, ‘A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs’, in E. Lepore ed. *Truth and Interpretation -- Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), pp.437f.

utterance as a process or activity of interpreting, then it must be rejected. Wittgenstein argued that understanding a language consists in the mastery of a technique, hence is a complex ability, not a state. He suggested that understanding an utterance is akin to an ability (not a process or activity), an ability to say what it means and to respond appropriately to it.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The grammar of the verb ‘to understand’ is not that of verbs signifying mental states or processes, therefore understanding is neither a state nor a process.

Wittgenstein mustered powerful arguments against the view that all understanding is interpreting. The two are categorially distinct, since understanding, unlike interpreting is not something we do or engage in. To give an utterance an interpretation is to explain it in more perspicuous terms. We engage in interpretation only when an utterance is not understood because obscure or ambiguous. There is no such thing as interpreting mere sounds or marks, for interpreting is not deciphering or decoding. Interpreting *presupposes* understanding, and hence cannot explain it. For an utterance stands in need of an interpretation when there is more than one way to understand it, and the interpreter opts for the more plausible.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

It is a mistake to suppose that what we are given in intelligible discourse is mere sounds, let alone auditory stimulation of nerve endings. That is a dogma of empiricism, akin to the empiricist dogma that what is given in visual experience is mere patches of colour and shapes, or visual stimulation of retinæ. What is given in discourse are significant utterances, not mere sounds, let alone the sound-waves that impinge on our ear drums. What is given in perceptual experience, including what is given in discourse, is not given in the sense in which influenza is given — the given is what can be argued from, and need not be argued to. What we hear in our communicative transactions is meaningful discourse, and we cannot hear such discourse as mere sounds, even if we wanted to.

#### 8. *Locating the orrery in the library*

The structure of the orrery is complex, and the pattern of relations of the problems that revolve around the central core of questions concerning the relation of thought and reality is rich and subtle. It should be evident that mistaken answers to questions on one orbit typically ramify throughout the whole model, distorting the metal bands and jamming the cogs. The orrery will only work if all the pieces are put into their correct places. (Only then can one hope to hear the music of the spheres.)

A moot question, however, is what is the model a model of? Most philosophers who have engaged with any part of this complex array of problems have taken themselves, as Quine puts it, ‘to be limning the true and ultimate structure of reality’.<sup>xxxix</sup> They would locate the orrery in the psychology bay of the library; or, if they are very up to date, in the new theoretical linguistics bay. If they are old-fashioned, they might put it in the metaphysics bay — if their library has one. Whether this is correct is too large a question to debate here. For it turns on one’s overall conception of the nature of philosophy, of what, if anything is its subject matter, of whether it is an extension of the sciences or an autonomous subject in its own right. It turns on whether there are philosophical propositions and whether there is any such thing as philosophical knowledge. If one mislocates the orrery, if one has a mistaken

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<sup>xxxvii</sup> For a discussion of his views, see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1980), in an essay entitled ‘Understanding and ability’.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see P.M.S. Hacker, ‘Davidson on First Person Authority’, pp. 285 - 304.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Quine, *Word and Object*, p.221.

view of what it is a model of, then one's labours in constructing it may all be in vain.

My own view, which I shall not defend here, is that the orrery is to be located in the old-fashioned grammar bay — albeit with an idiosyncratic, Wittgensteinian, understanding of 'grammar'. The model is not a model of how things stand in reality, for we are not trying to limn the ultimate structure of reality at all. Rather, our endeavours are aimed at giving a perspicuous representation of a segment of our language — at depicting the pattern of internal relations among a large battery of concepts pertaining to human beings and to their thought and talk about the world. Our investigation is a conceptual or grammatical one, and its successful upshot can only be a description of the familiar interlocking rules for the use of the vocabulary of intentionality. And that is as it should be, for philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge, but to human understanding.

#### Footnotes

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