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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
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GRADE / DEGREE

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Idiolect and Common Language

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Idiolect and Common Language

by

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B.A. University of Carleton 1996

M.A. University of Carleton 1998

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the
Faculty of Arts

University of Ottawa

March 2006



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Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-15036-8

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-15036-8

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APPROVAL PAGE

ABSTRACT

This dissertation concerns the debate on the priority of idiolect over common language. In the course of this work Michael Dummett's argument for the priority of common language will be elucidated and some of the misunderstandings that have pervaded the debate will be identified. A number of ways to deflate the disagreement between Dummett's position and various philosophical approaches he criticizes will be suggested where possible. One of the main goals of this work will be to assess the strength and the fairness of Dummett's argument as it relates to the work of Quine. It will be argued that given a certain reading of Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation Dummett's argument may apply to it, but ultimately remains ineffective. It will be argued that an alternative argument, based on Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein, would be more effective against the idiolect conception of language.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has seen the emergence of language as the leading contender for solving or, in some cases explaining away a host of philosophical questions. The Linguistic Turn was a shift in philosophical development that relied on the analysis of language as a way of framing metaphysical and epistemological issues in a new way. Almost inevitably, the mounting pressure on linguistic analysis has led to questions regarding the reliability and the explanatory potential of this approach. In his book *Philosophy of Language* Alexander Miller suggests that: “If there are two main themes in twentieth-century philosophy of language, they perhaps can be termed systematicity and scepticism” (Miller, 1998, p. XI).¹ Concerned with objectivity of sense, Alexander Miller contrasts the formalism of Frege and Donald Davidson with the scepticism of Quine and Kripkenstein.

However, if this is a dichotomy, it is a false one. Language might be as systematic as one could wish, and yet scepticism with regards to the success of linguistic analysis could be as unabated as ever. This is so because linguistic analysis or systematization is not a goal in itself. The importance of The Linguistic Turn lies not in linguistic analysis for its own sake, but rather in the assumption that it opens the door to the analysis of meaning and thought. In other words, the linguistic use of speakers of a language could be systematic, but it will amount to nothing unless it ensures the communication of

¹ For Alexander Miller an important aspect of the distinction is that one position is defined by a drive to provide a formalized theory of meaning for a language, while the other puts the possibility of such a

objective content. As a result, systematicity cannot be a response to scepticism, unless it is accompanied by some claim as to the nature of the relation between language and thought.

The misleading dichotomy between systematicity of language and scepticism has obscured the nature of another debate in the twentieth century philosophy: the debate on the priority of idiolect over common language.² More specifically, an argument advanced by one of the main proponents of priority of common language – Michael Dummett – is frequently misconstrued as an argument for the systematicity of language rather than as an argument regarding the relation between language and thought.

In this regard Karen Green – a commentator on the work of Michael Dummett – represents a good example. She suggests that the main challenge of Dummett's philosophical program is to produce a successful marriage between the formalism of Frege and the conventionalism of Wittgenstein. In her opinion, his primary goal is to address the following problem: if language is conventional and therefore subject to the fluctuations contingent on evolving social interaction, then it can neither be systematic nor produce the kind of lasting results needed to solve the metaphysical problems.³ While

general and formal theory into doubt.

² In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993) Dummett explains his notion of idiolect to be language as understood by some one individual. He further characterizes it by saying that prioritizing idiolect involves first explaining what it is for the individual to attach meaning to the words of his idiolect, and then explaining common language as an overlap of such idiolects.

³ Dummett's dilemma has been formulated by Martin Montminy in his book *Les Fondements empiriques de la signification* (1998). There he says: Le dilemme auquel Dummett doit faire face est le suivant: ou bien il affirme que la signification est fixé par la theorie de la signification independamment des particularités de l'usage propres à certaines époques ou sous-groupes linguistiques, ou bien il concède que la signification peut évoluer suite à certain decouvertes en mathématiques ou en science. S'il choisit la première option, il est en position de soutenir qu'une reponse univoque aux diverses questions métaphysiques qui nous interessent est possible, mais pour cela il doit invoquer une notion transcendante de signification, qui est potentiellment contraire au principe de l'immanence de la signification, et à son affirmation selon laquelle une théorie de la signification doit être conforme à nos pratiques linguistique. En tout cas Dummett ne donne nulle part d'indication sur le façon de caracteriser une telle notion. Par ailleurs, si Dummett choisit la seconde option, il permet à la théorie de la signification de se rapprocher de la pratique linguistique, mais

this characterization is not false, Karen Green's treatment of Dummett's argument against the idiolect conception of language suggests that she takes it as an argument for the systematicity of language, and therefore as means of 'fixing' Wittgenstein, rather than rehabilitating Frege. On this interpretation, Dummett's appeal to the priority of common language is an attempt to defend the idea that language is not merely a collection of various idiolects, and that there is meaning beyond what a given individual might mean by his words. While Dummett's position in this debate could be extended to defend such a view with additional arguments, this interpretation remains a shallow understanding of his true intent. Dummett's real problem with the idiolect conception of language is not that it implies no meaning beyond what an individual means by his words, but rather that it implies a picture of meaning that undermines the very point of The Linguistic Turn, and, in his opinion, undermines the possibility of a successful account of thought.

Dummett is concerned that a considerable number of contemporary philosophical positions endorse a certain view of language, which implies the priority of idiolect in its explanation. According to Dummett, this explanation could only take a psychologistic turn by appealing to mental states. Being convinced that this is a dead end, in raising the debate over the priority, he is motivated, in part, by a desire to reveal the hidden implications of endorsing this view, and showing that it reverses the order of explanation established by The Linguistic Turn.

According to Dummett, the idiolect view of language implies a view according to which the significance of an utterance is explained by the appeal to mental or

peut difficilement espère atteindre les objectifs qu'il y avait attachés: les diverses question métaphysiques, ainsi que la question de justification de la logique, ne peuvent recevoir que des réponses contextuelles, relatives à l'usage de la communauté linguistique considérée.

psychological states. Therefore, he warns against this direction by arguing that the objectivity of thought could be explained only by appeal to intersubjectively established rules of linguistic use. In this regard he formulates an argument against the idiolect position, which ties objectivity of thought to communication and suggests that the idiolect position fails because, by appealing to publicly inaccessible subjective states to explain meaning, it gives up on the verifiability of communication.

Dummett's success varies depending on the philosophical position he engages, and he engages a good number of them. Among philosophers whom he sees as sliding in the direction of psychologism are thinkers from Grice and Strawson to Davidson and Quine. While some would take the criticism as due, others would be surprised by it, if they realized the true foundation of his objections. This is particularly true in the case of Dummett's objections to Davidson. But as matters stand, the debate continues, riddled by numerous misunderstandings.

This dissertation is concerned with the debate on the priority of idiolect over common language, particularly as it relates to the work of Quine. In the course of this work Dummett's argument for the priority of common language will be elucidated and his criticism of Quine as well as some other philosophical positions will be assessed. It will be shown that in some cases there is no genuine disagreement and that the debate should be deflated. However, it will also be shown that in the case where Dummett's argument does apply, particularly, given a certain reading of Quine, the argument is ineffective. An alternative, and a more effective argument, based on Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein, will be articulated.

The first chapter will deal with the elucidation of Dummett's argument against the

priority of the idiolect conception of language. The chapter will start by looking at the historical background of the argument, which is rooted in Frege's argument against psychologism. The chapter will proceed to examine the true foundation of Dummett's argument against idiolect as an argument directed at a philosophical position that reduces the role of language from being the vehicle of thoughts to being a mere code for its transmission. This chapter will address some of the positions proposed by J. Fodor, Stephen Schiffer and others.

The third chapter will examine the debate between Dummett and Davidson on the priority of idiolect. The questions pertaining to the relation among Language, Conventions, and Idiolect will be addressed and a misunderstanding at the foundation of the debate will be identified and resolved. It will be argued that there is no genuine disagreement between the positions of Dummett and Davidson and that the debate should be deflated.

The fourth chapter will examine the nature of the charge Dummett makes against Quine and whether his identification of some of Quine's philosophical positions is fair. This chapter will examine the genesis of Quine's approach to meaning and language with the goal of determining whether Quine explicitly gives priority to an idiolect conception of language.

The fifth chapter will examine Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation with a particular attention given to the notion of indeterminacy of translation at home language.⁴ It will be argued that the notion of indeterminacy of translation at home opens the door to Dummett's criticism of Quine as relying on an idiolect conception of language. It will be shown that Dummett's argument is relevant only given certain

assumptions about the role of analytical hypotheses in the cognitive life of the speaker. That is to say Dummett's argument would apply only if analytical hypotheses actually determine the speaker's interpretation and hence understanding of speech and put a constraint on what the speaker intends to communicate. It will also be argued that if these assumptions were correct Dummett's argument would be relevant, but ultimately, less than effective. It will be argued that the reason for this failure is that Dummett does not argue against the plausibility of the idiolect conception directly, but only derivatively through the failure of verifiable communication between them.

The final chapter will argue that a different approach against an idiolect conception of language would be more effective. This approach will be based not on the argument that communication between idiolects is unverifiable, but on the denial of the possibility of idiolect, or solitary language, as such. The argument that meaning and thought are public will be based on the rejection of the very possibility of private rule following. This argument will be based on Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein, and particularly, his formulation of the sceptical paradox and its solution. It will be argued that there can be no private rule following and, therefore, there can be no private meaning. If Kripke's argument withstands criticism, then it will undermine the idiolect conception of language.

⁴ Quine uses the phrase "home language" to refer to the mother tongue of the speaker.

Chapter I: Idiolect and Common Language

1.1 Objectivity and Communication

Dummett credits Frege with one of the most significant steps towards the Linguistic Turn: the extrusion of thought from the mind. Frege spent a significant amount of his career battling the popular approach to the analysis of thought through the analysis of psychological states. It is Frege's argument against psychologism that serves as the foundation of Dummett's argument against idiolect.

In "Thought" the first essay of *Logical Investigations* (1918) Frege develops one of his most focused attacks on a mentalist conception of thought. His argument turns on the observation that a mentalist account undermines itself. Frege starts his argument by granting the psychologist his contention that thought is an idea in the mind and that the mind can only come into contact with ideas. But the ideas in the mind are essentially private, that is to say if the content of the mind is limited to ideas, which are the only object of awareness, then the individual knows with confidence only immediate impressions, and can know nothing of their causes. As a result, the world of the psychologist shrinks to the confines of his mind:

Properly speaking this stimulation of the visual nerve is not immediately given; it is only a hypothesis. ... If we call what happens in our consciousness an idea, then we really experience only ideas, not their causes. And if a scientist wants to avoid all mere hypothesis, then he is left just with ideas; everything dissolves into ideas, even the light-rays, nerve-fibres and ganglion-cells from which he started. So he finally undermines the foundation of his own construction. (Frege, 1918, p. 339)

Yet, in communicating to us his theory, the psychologist is not attempting to convey the information to his idea of an audience. He assumes the existence of an audience that his

theory, which insists that only ideas are the object of awareness, does not allow. Furthermore, in constructing and then conveying his theory, the psychologist assumes that it is fully independent of his mind; that it is something that can be entertained by others. In Frege's words, the psychologist is convinced that his cells and nerve endings are not mere ideas in the mind, but rather the hard scientific evidence. What follows is that:

Either the thesis that only what is my idea can be the object of my awareness is false, or all my knowledge and perception is limited to the range of my ideas and the stage of my consciousness. In this case I should have only an inner world and I should know nothing of other people. (Frege, 1918, p. 338)

Indeed, for Frege, solipsism is the consequence of the psychologist's approach. What Frege notices is that the psychologist fails to make a distinction in the content of the mind between ideas, which belong properly to the mind and depend on the mind, and thoughts, which the mind can grasp, but cannot own in the way it owns ideas. The psychologist lacks the means to give an account of the objectivity of thought. In a sense, the efforts of the psychologist to communicate are frustrated because there is nothing in his theory that would allow for anything external to the mind. Apart from effectively eliminating the audience, the lack of a mind-independent medium would not allow communication even if there were other minds. For, how can an idea, which belongs to my mind, and is dependent on my mind, also belong to someone else? Furthermore, even if that were possible, it could never be established that the idea is the same, since the contents of minds cannot be compared. On the assumption that thought is mind-dependent in the same way as the sense-impressions are, the fact of successful communication can never be verified. Communication on this view must rest on an irreducible residue of faith. This is the gist of Frege's argument against psychologism; in order for the psychologist to

make his point he must make sure that the audience understands what he says as he intends it, but ideas, just as impressions, are not communicable; therefore, he must rely on something that is not merely an idea.

Frege's solution as it stands in "Thought" is rather interesting. After arguing with the psychologist, Frege deals with the solipsist, who is really the psychologist trying to accept the implications of his own theory. "But what if everything were only a dream?... Perhaps the realm of things is empty and I do not see any things or any men, but only have the ideas of which I myself am the owner" (1918, p. 337). As Frege points out, this is the direct consequence of the psychologist's view. Frege proceeds with this argument along Cartesian lines. He asks: if everything is an idea, then am I, the owner of ideas, also an idea among others? He rejects this possibility:

An owner would anyhow be something essentially different from ideas that were just owned, something independent, not needing an extraneous owner. If everything is an idea then there is no owner of ideas...If there is no owner of ideas then there are also no ideas, for ideas need an owner and without one they cannot exist. (Frege, 1918, p. 339)

According to Frege, the awareness of oneself is essentially different from the awareness of ideas. This resembles the well known argument against the Cartesian radical doubt; the argument is based on the idea that an illusion or a dream needs something real in counter-distinction; otherwise, it loses its ground. The point of the argument is that one cannot doubt all of the ideas in the mind at the same time; in order to doubt something, one must assume at least something as true. While this contention seems reasonable it does not supply us with a starting point, to wit, what is to be assumed as true. For Frege, it is the awareness of oneself that must provide a partial foundation; this however, also serves to re-affirm his position against psychologism:

But then there is something which is not my idea and yet can be the object of my awareness, of my thinking, I myself am such a thing....Therefore the thesis that only what belongs to the content of my consciousness can be the object of my awareness, of my thought, is false. (Frege, 1918, p. 340)

The first step is made; the content of the mind can include something that is not merely an idea. This is the thought that I exist as the necessary spectator of the ideas; this thought differs from the ideas in so far as the latter might be only illusions that do not exist in the sense that they pretend to exist, that is independently of mind.

1.2 Thoughts and Ideas

But where does one go from here? Should one proceed to formulate the *clarity* and *distinctness* criteria in order to be able to pick thoughts out and separate the chaff from the grain? What if Cartesian clarity and distinctness are accidental properties of thoughts? What one really has is just one thought that one can be certain of; how does one go from this thought to the identification of other thoughts among the ideas?

What seems as a solution to this quandary is often overlooked in the studies of Frege's work; perhaps because this solution seems unimportant in the framework of things that are really interesting about Frege. In "Thought", Frege suggests that in order to step out of solipsism, and, as he puts it, gain the environment of thoughts and objects, one must make the assumption of other minds:

By the step with which I win an environment for myself I expose myself to the risk of error.... Nothing now stops me from acknowledging that other men to be owners of ideas, just as I am myself. And once given that possibility, the probability is very great, so great that in my opinion is indistinguishable from certainty. (Frege, 1918, p. 341)

One immediate benefit of this assumption is the provision of a platform on which to

differentiate ideas from thoughts. It seems that only after the assumption of other minds can Frege differentiate between the entities or ideas that he is the only owner of, and ones that he can share with other minds. It is this differentiation that runs through “Thought” as one of the main pillars on which the discrimination (but not the grasping) of thoughts is based:

I now return to the question: is thought an idea? If other people can assent to the thought I express in the Pythagorean theorem just as I do, then it does not belong to the content of my consciousness, I am not its owner; yet I can, nevertheless, acknowledge it as true. However, if what is taken to be the content of the Pythagorean theorem by me and somebody else is not the same thought at all, we should not really say ‘the Pythagorean theorem’, but ‘my Pythagorean theorem’, ‘his Pythagorean theorem’ and these would be different... In that case my thought may be the content of my consciousness and his thought the content of his. Could the sense of my Pythagorean theorem be true and the sense of his false? (Frege, 1918, p. 336)

It is important to keep in mind that sharing a thought with other minds is not the ground for the objectivity of that thought for Frege. This sharing rather facilitates the epistemological task of distinguishing thoughts from ideas. The thoughts are thoughts, rather than ideas independently of recognition of them as such, and researchers or mathematicians can grasp thoughts that no one else has ever grasped. However, what also seems to be implied here is that thought has an intrinsic property of being something that can be shared. The relative importance of this solution also seems to be implied by the fact that, without the assumption of other minds that allows for this discrimination, it is rather difficult to deal with the solipsist position. So, on this reading, for Frege, this assumption is necessary and seems, at least in part, pragmatically justified since the gains far outweigh the possible losses, for it legitimizes history, science, etc.

But the probability is nevertheless in many cases hard to distinguish from certainty, so we can venture to judge about things in the external world. And we must make this venture even at the risk of error if we don’t want to fall

into greater dangers....Thus the reflections I have set forth on the assumption that there are other men besides myself, who can make the same thing the object of their consideration, their thinking, remains in force without any essential weakening. (Frege, 1918, p. 341)

These ‘reflections’ are basically the conditions for distinguishing thoughts from ideas, and it seems to follow that for this the other minds are essential. The presence of the other minds allows for the discrimination of ownership of a thought and separates thoughts that belong to all from ideas that belong to individuals. For Frege, the fact that thoughts, unlike ideas, can be shared is one of the reasons for introducing the notion of “third realm”. While ideas belong to the individual mind, thoughts belong to the “third realm” through which they are accessible to all minds:

A third realm must be recognized. Anything belonging in this realm has it in common with ideas that it cannot be perceived by the senses, but has it in common with things that it does not need an owner to belong to the content of his consciousness. (Frege, 1918. p. 337)

The third realm was introduced in part to explain the fact that one and the same thought can be grasped by different people. Frege is not at all troubled by the fact that the third realm must be assumed in order to explain the objectivity of thoughts. This assumption is not particularly different from the assumption of other minds in the grounding of external reality.

1.3 Common Language viz. Third Realm

Frege lays the philosophical foundation for his work by calling attention to the fact that thoughts have properties unlike those of mental states and that no amount of analysis directed at the subjective contents of an individual would explain their objective character. This position strikes at the heart of the approach adopted by the psychologists

who direct their efforts towards the elucidation of the mind within the narrow framework of the individual. Frege's challenge could be extended to such thinkers as Brentano, who, according to Dummett (1993, pp. 28-42) struggled with the implication of his position on intentional objects and their in-existence, unsure what status to grant them. However, Frege's thought may have had greater effect on changing the course of Husserl, the student of Brentano and founder of phenomenology, who, as Dummett claims, changed his position on logical objects as a result of his correspondence with Frege. Nevertheless, at the time of Frege's publications, the psychologism that Frege ridicules had great popular sway in academia and his objections were only heeded by a few.

The major obstacle to accepting Frege's position was his claim that "a third realm must be recognized" to give a proper account of thought. Clearly, not everyone has so little trepidation when introducing new realms. The idea of resurrecting Platonism to explain thought can hardly be appealing to academics who increasingly saw themselves as part of a scientific community. As a result, the reaction to the very formulation that Frege employed in "Thought" of *Logical Investigations* (1918) has overshadowed the major importance of his message. As Dummett emphasizes:

The importance of the denial of the mental character of thoughts common to Bolzano, Frege, Meinong and Husserl, did not lie in the philosophical mythology to which it gave rise - Frege's myth of the third realm, or Husserl's of "ideal being". It lay, rather, in the non-psychological direction given to the analysis of concepts and of propositions. (Dummett, 1993, p. 25)

What sense can be made of the "third realm"? The point of introducing it was to explain, or perhaps to point out, the particular status of thoughts as shareable and independent of the individual. What needs explanation is that thoughts are accessible to anyone, they are common property. In this light, it becomes obvious that Frege's very

method of analysis of thoughts through the analysis of linguistic expression, has laid the ground for dispensing with the “third realm”, or at least turning it into merely an insightful metaphor. Frege claims that it is necessary that in order to grasp the thought, human beings must clothe it in the sensible form of a sentence that expresses it. “It thus appears,” Dummett says, “that, for him, the philosophy of thought and of language are not merely closely related, but indissolubly entangled with one another: they can be pursued only simultaneously” (Dummett, 1981, p. 50). Language and thought are characterized by a certain isomorphism; consideration of one is also the consideration of the other.

If thought and language are “indissolubly entangled” then the communicability of thoughts can be explained not by “latching on” to an identical non-sensible object of the “third realm”, but by the understanding of the sentences of the language. The objectivity of thought can be explained by the supposition that the meaning of the sentences is determined not by the individual who grasps it, but by the use determined and maintained within the community. Therefore, the idea of common language makes appeals to third realms unnecessary. Dummett says that:

One in this position has therefore to look about him to find something non-mythological but objective and external to the individual mind to embody the thoughts which the individual subject grasps and may assent to or reject. Where better to find it than in the institution of a common language? The accessibility of thoughts will then reside in their capacity for linguistic expression, and their objectivity and independence from inner mental processes in the common practice of speaking the language, governed by agreement in the linguistic community on standards of correct use and on criteria for the truth of statements. (Dummett, 1993, p. 25)

To explain thought one can turn to language. This is the Linguistic Turn according to Dummett. Frege was the father of the Linguistic Turn in as much as he laid

the groundwork and showed that the explanation of thought must not proceed inward towards the examination of the mental character of ideas, but outward towards a medium that can explain the objective character of thoughts and the possibility of communication.

According to Dummett, Frege himself never took thought for granted. Rather, he sought the explication of thought through the analysis of sentences, thus paving the way for analytical philosophers and the conviction that the route to the solution of philosophical problems lies in the analysis of language. Dummett emphasizes that throughout his work Frege never assumes thought as given; his analysis of meaning is always carried out through the analysis of language. Frege is always consistent in that the mythical grasping of the thought, which many philosophers find so objectionable, is characterized by the process of understanding the meaning of a sentence:

When the matter is viewed through the imagery of the third realm, it indeed appears acute. But when we come down to earth, and consider the expression of thoughts through language, it evaporates. Frege believed that the only access we human beings have to thoughts is through their verbal expression; so the question of how we grasp thoughts resolves into a question of how we understand sentences. (Dummett, 1993, p. 63)

However, Dummett suggests that one should modify this view by saying that grasping is not merely characterized, but is explained by the understanding of the sentence. The third realm falls away as unnecessary when the meaning can be explained by the understanding of the sentences of the common language we use. Objectivity of the third realm is replaced by the intersubjectivity embodied in the common language. Grasping a thought is understanding a sentence as it is or can be understood by others.

Frege's only shortcoming, on this view, was that he did not recognize language as something that can stand in place of the "third realm"; "Frege refused to recognize any category of intersubjective short of wholly objective" (Dummett, 1993, p. 143). On the

contrary, he viewed the task of a logician as a constant struggle with language. However, even this struggle he characterizes as a struggle with subjective elements in language. In a footnote to “Thought” Frege says: “The pictorial aspect of language presents difficulties. The sensible always breaks in and makes the expressions pictorial and so improper. So one fights against language, and I am compelled to occupy myself with language although it is not my proper concern here” (Frege, 1918, p. 13). Frege’s concern is thought, and he strived to emphasize that his proper goal is the analysis of thought, not merely of language. This tension indicates that Frege himself never made the last step to bridge the gap between language and thought. His treatment of language is characterized by a certain ambivalence: the thought needs the sensible form of a sentence, but the content is not explained by it. By insisting on the indissoluble entanglement of thought and language - on the fact that in analyzing language he is analyzing thought - Frege laid the groundwork to explain communication. However, by treating language only as a form of the content whose origin is the “third realm”, Frege has left that content and its independent nature unexplained. Dummett claims that it is the task of the analytical school to complete the Linguistic Turn, by explaining content in terms of the rules of use established within the linguistic community:

If the approach to the philosophy of thought through the philosophy of language is to serve the purpose of safeguarding the objectivity of thought without a platonistic mythology, language must be conceived as a social institution, as a common possession of the members of a community. (Dummett, 1993, p. 147)

Dummett’s philosophical position and particularly his argument against the idiolect conception of language is derived from his reflections on Frege’s objections to psychologism. Two major conditions need to be satisfied if the objections in “Thought”

are to be met in such a way that the solution does not, nevertheless, get saddled with an overpopulated ontology. First, one must recognize that the relationship between language and thought is characterized by isomorphism; language is the vehicle of thought. Second, the meaning of linguistic expressions must be explained by the rules of use within the community of users. The next section will deal with the elucidation of these conditions and the relationship between them.

1.4 Language: Vehicle of Thought or Means of Communication?

The task of semantic theory is to explain the meaning of sentences. Perhaps somewhat oversimplifying matters, one might approach this task in two ways: one way is to explain the meaning of sentences by “looking inside” the mind and appealing to the mental representations that constitute the thought, which are responsible for the content of a given sentence; another way is to look outside into the social setting and appeal to the role that the sentence and its constituents play, thus, explaining the content of thought associated with the sentence. These positions represent two opposed directions of explanation. According to Dummett, the first way amounts to the abandonment of the Linguistic Turn and the adoption of psychologism, the second way is the logical completion of the Linguistic Turn.

The status of language in relation to thought might be considered as a sort of litmus test of the direction of explanation. If the direction of explanation goes from language to thought, then it is imperative that language be shown to be the embodiment of thought, so that the analysis of linguistic meaning is also the analysis of thought. On the other hand, if the idea that language embodies the thought is rejected - if language is

not considered as the vehicle of thought but as a mere means of its communication - then it is the linguistic meaning that should be explained by appeal to thought. Therefore, one of the most important questions for semantic theory is whether language⁵ is to be seen as the vehicle of thought or only as means of communication of thought.⁶

The view of language as a means of communication takes the purpose and actual function of natural language as the codification of thought into messages. Dummett (1993b), and John Ellis (1993) call this minimalist approach to language the *code theory of language*. As Ellis describes it, the view is that “language is a code that conveys messages through the twin process of encoding (by the speaker) and decoding (by the listener)” (Ellis, 1993, p. 16). Thus, a creature that has a particular thought decides to communicate that thought to another, puts it in words, and utters the expression. Another creature hears the expression, and by decoding the expression gets a token of the same thought. Dummett identifies Saussure as giving a particularly telling representation of this view in his *Cours de linguistique générale*:

Suppose there are two people, A and B, talking to one another. The circuit begins in the brain of one of them, say A, in which the objects of consciousness, which we may call concepts, are located, associated with representations of the linguistic signs, or auditory images, that serve to express them. We may suppose that a given concept releases in the brain a corresponding auditory image; this is an entirely *psychic* phenomenon followed in turn by a *physiological* process: the brain transmits an impulse corresponding to the image to the organs of sound production; the sound waves are propagated from the mouth of A to the ear of B: a purely *physical* process. Next, the circuit continues in B in the reverse order: from the ear to the brain, a physiological transmission of the auditory image; in the brain, the psychic association of the image with the corresponding concept. (Saussure, 1985, pp.17-18)

⁵ One must not be misled by the emphasis on language, the question is rather whether thought needs an external carrier that could be served by any sign.

⁶ There are intermediate positions that claim that for some thoughts, language is the vehicle, for others it is not.

What's wrong with this picture? In and of itself: nothing. Simply as a picture of communication it is not problematic, unless it is qualified in a certain way. In unqualified form this picture simply suggests that for every meaningful token one speaks there must be an internal representation as a token of neural states. Anyone arguing against this position must make sure not to make the brain completely irrelevant to thinking or speaking. The involvement of neural states as representing particular mental states seems to be undeniable. In the philosophy of mind, this internal representational system came to be known as the Language of Thought. This internal language is supposed to be structured along the same lines as the natural language. As Dummett explains:

For language to be a code for thought, thoughts have to be like sentences, and have constituents analogous to words, and the thought-constituents must be matched to the words by some process of association. A word will then evoke the associated thought-constituent in the mind of the hearer, and, for one who wishes to communicate his thought, its constituents will evoke the corresponding words. (Dummett, 1993b, p. 169)

Again, in and of itself, the theoretical postulation of a system of internal representation, called the Language of Thought is not too problematic. While it is true that for a theorist who takes language to be a code for thought, it is necessary to postulate an inner language, which gets coded in communication, this postulate is still not sufficient to make the theory interesting. What qualifies a view of language as the code conception of language is not the presence or absence of the internal language of thought, but the role that this language is supposed to play in the explanation of semantic contents. Unless this role is defined, the theory itself is not interesting, and, in fact, is compatible with the view of language as the vehicle of thought. This is why in *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (1991) Dummett claims that: "doctrines concerning meaning can be fairly readily transposed into doctrines concerning thoughts, and vice versa. An analysis of the logical

structure of sentences can be converted into parallel analysis of the logical structure of thoughts....” (Dummett, 1991, p. 3)

Indeed, the fact that the language of thought is compatible with the view of language as vehicle of thought is evidenced in the work of Gilbert Harman. In his book *Thought* (1973), Harman also speaks of the language of thought as a mental representational system. Schematically, mental representations within the inner language stand for concepts and meaningful terms in the outer language. As Harman points out “Mental states have structure in the way that sentences have structure.... Mental states are part of a system of representation that can be called a language of thought” (Harman, 1973, p. 65). Yet, Harman, as opposed to, for instance, Fodor or Colin McGinn, is a natural ally of Dummett, for he claims that: “language provides not only a vehicle of communication but equally importantly a medium of thought” (Harman, 1973, p. 67). In *Thought*, this claim exists side by side not only with Harman’s overt psychologism, but also with his acceptance of the inner representational system constituting what he admits to be the language of thought.⁷ This position makes it clear that in and of itself the postulation of the inner language is not what makes the difference between the views of language as vehicle of thought and the view of it as vehicle of communication. While the former is a necessary condition for the code conception view, it is not sufficient. Stephen Schiffer, in his book *Remnants of Meaning*, complains that in this regard a certain ambiguity pervades the philosophical discussion of the language of thought. He says:

The empirical hypothesis that we think in a language of thought is considerably weaker than the hypothesis we are interested in - the hypothesis that, in the sense explained, propositional attitudes are relations to mental representations, formulae in the inner code. For the former

⁷ The idea that notion of the language of thought is compatible with almost any explanation of the content of propositional attitudes is maintained by some others, including Stephen Schiffer (1987).

hypothesis is consistent with *any* hypothesis about the objects of propositional attitudes: someone who holds that believing is a relation to propositions, or to public-language sentences, can allow that the neural states that realize our beliefs have a sentence-like structure. (Schiffer, 1987, p. 74)

The real difference, to come to the point, is that in the code conception of language, the language of thought takes priority in the explanation of semantic contents, that is - to borrow the words from Fodor - “the formulae of natural language inherit their semantic properties from those mental representations...” (Fodor, 1981, p. 260). This qualification the real issue behind the question of the priority between thought and language in the order of explanation of meaning. Schiffer calls the qualified language of thought view the *strong language of thought* hypothesis, or SLT. Thus, for Schiffer, the language of thought hypothesis becomes interesting only when the mental representational structures are the source of the intentional mental states, or to put it along Dummett’s lines, when the “semanticity” of language is inherited from the mental representations. Schiffer specifies the second part of SLT in the following way:

There are features of mental representations that a) determine the intentional features of beliefs (those features ascribed in ‘that’-clauses) and b) are themselves explicable without reference to the contents, the intentional features, of mental states, or to the semantic features of public-language expressions. (Schiffer, 1987, p. 75)

This order of explanation is the most important feature of the SLT theory. The philosophical view that attributes to language the role of a passive medium for the transfer of ready made semantic content, implies on Dummett’s view that language is not necessary for the possession of thoughts.⁸ “For, if we should not need language but for

⁸ One could object by saying that language is necessary for the possession of some mental representations, in the sense that mental representations become activated by language. One could proceed to give an account of activation along the lines of Fodor’s triggering hierarchy. The pressure, then, is on the theory to

the need to communicate our thoughts we must be capable of having naked thoughts, thoughts devoid of linguistic or representational clothing; thoughts may represent the world, but, to have thoughts we need nothing to represent them” (Dummett, 1993b, p. 166). Dummett, on the other hand, sees language as having an active role in determining the semantic contents. Learning language is acquiring semantic contents in a non-trivial way, that is to say, it is not a matter of triggering semantic representations in the individual in a purely causal manner, but rather a rational and constitutive process. The acquisition of language explains the acquisition of concepts. That is precisely why Gilbert Harman does not qualify to be in the SLT group; for him, the semantic content of linguistic expressions cannot be explained by the features of mental representations. On the contrary, the order of explanation is reversed: on Harman’s view, language is what makes thought possible.

...[I]n learning a language we learn to think in words... . Language makes thought possible. Learning a language is not just learning a new way to put our thoughts into words; it is also learning a new way to think. In learning our first language we acquire a vast array of conceptual resources we did not have before. And learning a second language is not just learning to translate between it and the first language. We have not fully learned a language until we can think in it so that translation is no longer necessary. (Harman, 1973, pp. 67; 84)

The idea that in learning a language an individual acquires new conceptual resources is just a reflection of the underlying notion that semantic contents are determined by language and not merely triggered by intentionally arbitrary events *à la* Fodor.⁹ Thus,

given a plausible explanation of the nature of such dormant representations and the mechanisms of activation, as Devitt & Sterelny state in *Language and Reality* (1987). Fodor’s triggering hierarchy (Fodor 1981) is explained at the expense of plausibility.

⁹ In “The Present Status of the Innateness Controversy” (1981) Fodor gives an account, which claims that most of the linguistic concepts are not acquired from experience in a rational way, but rather triggered in a brutal/causal manner. One of the implications of this view, apart from the innateness of concepts, is that concepts do not have to be intentionally related to their triggers, that is concepts of emus could as easily

when a creature learns a language, it does not merely increase its capacity for transmitting thoughts, it increases its capacity for thinking new thoughts. On this view, then, the meaning of mental contents should be specifiable in terms of intentionally relevant experiences that brought them about. The problem with triggers, on the other hand, is that they do not need to be intentionally related in this manner to the concepts they trigger; similarly, the linguistic conventions do not need to be intentionally related to the mental states they bring into correspondence. According to Dummett, that is the core difference between a code and a language. “It is an essential feature of anything properly called a ‘language’ that its phrases and sentences genuinely express their meaning. That is the difference between a language and a code; and that is why the mastery of language enables speakers to grasp new thoughts expressed in it” (Dummett, 1993b, p. 173). Ellis echoes this sentiment when he says: “Codes merely transmit information; languages make information what it is” (Ellis, 1993, p. 18).

After clarifying the distinction between the view of language as vehicle of thought and as vehicle of communication, it is reasonable to ask how this position fares against Frege’s argument. Once we assume that there is a gap between language and thought, a pertinent question to ask is: how can the communication of the thought from creature A to B take place? Can creature B be sure that it got the same thought creature A had, and not some other? As Dummett points out, it would be useless to ask questions regarding the content, since the answers would be subject to the same scepticism:

For if my hearer’s understanding of what I say depends on what is in his head, how can I know, save by faith, that he understands me as I intend? It

been triggered by elephants. For the critical discussion of triggering hierarchy see Devitt & Sterelny (1987); Sterelny “Mental representation: What language is Brainese?”, (1983) for the *Qua* problem, see Loar (“Can we explain Intentionality?” 1991) on issues with reference borrowing; Fiona Cowie (1999) for review of criticisms and a critical treatment of Fodor’s solution in the form of the Constitution Hypothesis.

would be no use his trying to tell me what his theory of meaning was: for, if he did, I should still be in doubt whether I understood his explanation of it as he intended.... (Dummett, 1993, p. 155)

Frege's answer to that problem was that we grasp the same sense, and we can know it because we use language, which has the logical structure that allows us to "latch on" to the same sense. However, this approach simply takes for granted what needs to be explained. Dummett wants to eliminate the "third realm". His answer, in a schematic form, would be that the shared language is what determines the contents of our thoughts, and languages are shared when the same linguistic forms are used in the same way. In short, semantic content is explained by observable linguistic use, shared use guarantees the identity of mental contents. Thus, the external, observable agreement on the use of linguistic elements is the guarantor of the identity of meanings we manipulate.¹⁰ As he points out in "What is Theory of Meaning (II)":

Sense is supposed by Frege to be something objective; that is, it can be definitely ascertained whether two speakers are using an expression in the same sense, and one speaker can effectively convey to another the sense which he attaches to any expression. This is possible only if the sense of a word is uniquely determined by the observable features of its linguistic employment (that is only if sense is use); it follows that a grasp of its sense is fully manifested by the manner in which the speaker employs it. (Dummett, 1976, p. 91)

Yet, Frege has failed to grasp the relevance of use and the importance of language. While, as Dummett points out, difference in use corresponds to difference in sense, nevertheless, their relationship is not explained in such a way that would make plain the determining role of use. Because such an explanation is lacking, this position fails to

¹⁰ There is one particular way to avoid making the question of priority a dilemma. One could claim that the same cognitive mechanisms are responsible for language as for thought. Dummett could possibly take this approach with the qualification that language increases the capacity for thought, that is to say that thought is not independent of language.

connect the speaker and the hearer in a non-ambiguous manner. As one may recall, for Frege, two individuals share a thought because they both can recognize it as being true. They can recognize it to be true because they share the sense and can determine the reference. But how one is supposed to cash out the *sense* and the purported *sharing of sense*? If sense is something that is not determined by use in all of its relevant aspects, then for Frege communication is as much an assumption as it is for the psychologist. If use does not constitute sense then nothing is gained by the substitution of the objects of the “third realm” for the psychologist’s mental objects, except, perhaps a more abstract character of the alleged objects. Indeed, in “The Present Status of the Innateness Controversy” (1981), Fodor genuinely wonders why in “Thought” Frege came to the conclusion that since concepts are abstract they cannot be mental: “I cannot imagine why he found this line persuasive” (Fodor, 1981, p. 332). On the contrary, Fodor suggests that his innate concepts should be viewed on the model of Frege’s sense, with the qualification that they are mental objects. In this way, Fodor’s work can be considered as an attempt at rehabilitating Frege’s program:

It is worth emphasizing, however, that the mental entity account of concepts is independent of, not incompatible with, Frege’s view that a concept is an abstract entity: a Sense. Qua mental representations, concepts have semantic properties. It is thus open to you, if you are so inclined, to run RTM (hence classical theory) on a Fregean line. To wit: the word ‘dog’ expresses the concept DOG; the concept DOG expresses the sense *dog* (that is expresses a certain Fregean concept); the relation *expresses* is transitive. On this account (to which I am in fact partial) expressing a Fregean concept is a semantic property par excellence, and the formulae of natural language inherit their semantic properties from those mental representations... . It is an agreeable suggestion that *attaining* a concept (mental-object sense) is de facto a necessary condition of becoming *acquainted with* a concept (Fregean sense); that is that our acquaintance with Fregean concepts is mediated by our mental representations. (Fodor, 1981, p. 260)

Frege's argument in "Thought", in the form that it is put there, does not work against Fodor because it turns on the idea that concepts are abstract and cannot be reduced to physical properties of brain states or sense impressions. At least part of the argument, as it is formulated there, is directed against a naive empiricism and physical reductionism that Fodor subjects to similar criticism (Fodor, 1975 and 1981). Fodor, of course, does not attempt to reduce concepts to physical properties; his concepts are mental representations with semantic content. However, sense does not gain in explanatory value simply because it has been transposed from the "third realm" to the brains of the individuals, nor can it account for the communication that Dummett wants it to explain. That is because Frege's argument, as reworked by Dummett, still poses a problem for Fodor, as in fact it poses a problem for Frege. How do we know - save by assuming that sense is constituted by linguistic use - that the speaker attaches the same sense to his words in speaking as the hearer attaches in understanding them?

The problem of giving a satisfactory account of communication for the code conception of meaning is that the meaning of the word is explained by the kind of concept it calls up in the mind. However, since there is no way of comparing the mental states directly, one is left with at least two sceptical possibilities: on the one hand, the identical processes of coding and decoding call up different concepts in the minds of the interlocutors; on the other, the procedures of coding and decoding are different from individual to individual, with the same end result. For Fodor, if he wants to avoid these results, the response should be that it is just a matter of brute neurological fact that identical mental representations attach to the same words in coding for the speaker and

decoding for the hearer.¹¹ That is why Dummett says:

Psychologism of this kind is forced to invoke an *assumption* that the private events occurring in the consciousness of any one subject are essentially similar to those occurring in the consciousness of another: it must represent this as an assumption (or, at best, a probable but untestable hypothesis) precisely because it holds, as Frege did, that there is no way of comparing two sets of mental events. (Dummett, 1993, p. 142)

So, suggesting that this correspondence is a *brute fact* remains an assumption, since mental states cannot be compared. As a result, no adequate account of communication – and, consequently, semantic theory – can be given if there remains a gap between thought and language. Schematically, this gap is characterized by the direction of determination from thought to language – the Inheritance Thesis, as Stephen Schiffer has dubbed it. No such gap is implied when language is viewed as the vehicle of thought. For if language is the vehicle of thought then speakers have the same beliefs if they stand in the same relation to the sentences of the language they share. If language is what enables the acquisition of concepts, then learning the language under relevantly identical conditions will guarantee the identity of mental contents. In fact, no appeal to mental contents is necessary beyond the appeal to the dispositions to use the linguistic forms in the same way. On this assumption, the discernment of meaning starts from what is external and already common to both parties involved in communication.

Nevertheless, perhaps it is sufficient to say that mental representations of the inner code attach to the linguistic terms in some determined manner, and to give some neurological explanation that would avoid appeals to the natural language in accordance with the principles of SLT. The next section will examine this attempt.

¹¹ In his 1998, *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong*, Fodor brings in brute metaphysical facts in an attempt to explain that concepts like DOORKNOB are triggered by intentionally relevant experiences like actual doorknobs and not by elephants. F. Cowie (1999) calls this Fodor's Constitution Hypothesis.

1.5 Strong Language of Thought Theory

In one of his major and most interesting works, *The Language of Thought* (1975) Jerry A. Fodor explains with refreshing candor the mentalist position that underlies the code conception of language, which, as he claims in the preface, is implied by “most of what every sensible linguist and sensible psychologists accept these days” (Fodor 1975, p. ix). Fodor sees himself as doing the dirty work for the majority of psychologists and linguists whose intellectual position is committed to the views on language and concept acquisition that he examines, but who are unwilling to trace out the commitments implied by their assumptions. One of the commitments of their general approach towards examination of the mental states is the code conception of language:

Verbal communication is possible because, when U is a token of linguistic type in a language that they both understand, the production perception of U can effect a certain kind of correspondence between the mental states of the speaker and the hearer. The ultimate goal of the theory of language is to say what kind of correspondence this is and to characterize the computational process that brings it about... (Fodor, 1975, p. 103) ...The present approach to communication is, however, mentalist in a stronger sense as well. For it is asserted not only that nonbehavioral processes mediate the communication relation between speaker and the hearer, but also that communication consists in establishing a certain kind of correspondence between their mental states. (Fodor, 1975, p. 108)

The role of language as a whole and of a sentence in particular, is limited to being the vehicle of communication. According to Fodor, the speaker has a message - a certain mental state - which must be evoked in the hearer. The question is how could one achieve such a task? In order to explain communication, and in a way provide an answer to the kind of question asked by Frege and reiterated by Dummett, Fodor appeals to the

Her book *What's Within* (1999) lays out an argument that Fodor's solution is viciously circular.

conventions of language. In particular, Fodor needs to claim that the relation between the message and the sentence is characterized by a certain determinism. A message is mapped onto the sentence in coding, and then the sentence is mapped back onto the corresponding message in decoding. Communication is possible because of the shared “knowledge” of the mapping function between speakers:

What I am saying (to come to the point at last) is that a natural language is properly viewed in the good old way: viz., as a system of conventions for the expressions of communicative intentions.... (Fodor 1975, p. 106) The character of each mapping is determined, inter alia, by the conventions of the language that the speaker and hearer share. Verbal communication is possible because the speaker and hearer know what the conventions are and how to use them: What the speaker knows allows him to pick the value of U which encodes a given value of M, and what the speaker knows allows him to pick the value of M which is encoded by a given value of U. The exercise of their knowledge thus effects a certain correspondence between the mental states of the speaker and hearer: The speaker is enabled to construct utterances which *do* express the messages which he intends them to express; the hearer is enabled to construe the communicative intentions of the speaker. The speaker, in short, has a value of M in mind and the hearer can tell which value of M it is. (Fodor, 1975, p. 108)

Fodor compares language to “a sort of a cookbook” which specifies how to map a particular thought to a linguistic form, which in turn will serve as an appropriate value for the input system of the hearer. This cookbook specifies a number of descriptions $D_1, D_2, \dots, D_n$ that a given utterance must satisfy in order to communicate a given message C. In order for the hearer to retrieve the message C he must know that an utterance that satisfies descriptions $D_1, D_2, \dots, D_n$ also *standardly*¹² satisfies the description “produced with the intention to communicate C” (Fodor, 1975, p. 106). At another point, Fodor compares language to a compiler program in a computer. Today, a better analogy would

¹² It is very important for Fodor to make sure that the mapping is determined. He acknowledges that language could be used in a non standard way to express communicative intentions, but such moves are done at a risk of failing to communicate. Therefore, communication *proper* depends on a notion of standard

be served by the protocol stacks that allow for the internet transfer of information between computers in a network. A given message undergoes a systematic transformation as it descends the hierarchically arranged protocol stack, eventually ending up in a form ready for transfer over cable. On reception it undergoes the transformations in the ascending order. This analogy is right for Fodor's purposes because, as he points out, the processes of mapping is characterized by two conditions "1) wave forms are paired with messages via computation of a number of intervening representations, and 2) among these intervening representations there are several which correspond to the structural description of messages which generative grammar provides" (Fodor, 1975, p. 110). For internet protocol stacks, the higher order protocols could differ in form to a significant degree,¹³ but the protocols at the bottom of the stack, the ones dealing with the physical medium, have to be considerably more similar to each other. Fodor incorporates Chomsky's proposal of the universal grammar, and general suggestions of the followers of generative grammar, into his position, since these suggestions provide for a certain universality and systematicity of the relation between messages and structural descriptions. For, as he points out: "whatever else these messages are, they must exhibit a systematic relation to structural descriptions and that relation must be computable by such information handling processes as speaker/hearer have available" (Fodor, 1975, p. 111). In this light, Fodor's insistence on the identity of 'mapping functions' among speakers of a language is understandable; it is necessary to explain the communication of mental states, that is the formulae in the language of thought.

ways of using language.

¹³ This not only allows for different computer systems such as Apple and IBM to communicate between each other, but also allows for communication between different operating systems (Windows/Linux) of the same computer system and even different browsers (Netscape/Internet Explorer) for computers sharing

The purpose of the semantic theory is to make clear the inner workings of the compilers, or the mapping functions, that match mental states, or what Fodor calls the formulae in the language of thought, with the sentences of the language employed in communication. Researchers into generative grammar, who Fodor sees as his natural allies, already carried out a considerable part of this work:

...[A] compiler which associates each formula in the input language *I* with some formula in the computing language *C* can be usefully thought of as providing a semantic theory for *I*, taking *C* as the metalanguage in which the semantic properties of the sentences of *I* are represented. In effect the theory of meaning for formulae in *I* is simply the translation function, which maps them onto the formulae of *C*. (Fodor, 1975, p. 119)

The semantic theory for a public language is, on this picture, a matter of mapping the sentences of the public language onto the formulae constructed from the elements of the inner code. As it was succinctly put by C. McGinn “The picture, then, is that the inner sentences are the basic objects of interpretation; their content confers content upon thoughts; and thoughts transmit their content to outer speech” (McGinn, 1982, p. 70). The semantic features of the inner code are inherited by the sentences of the public language and the order of explanation is from inner code to the outer linguistic forms.

In *Remnants of Meaning* (1987), Stephen Schiffer considers an example of how this function-relation subsisting between inner formulae and sentences of the language is supposed to work. He considers the following attribution of a propositional attitude:

[1] Ralph believes that flounders snore.

To say that Ralph believes that flounders snore is to say - on the SLT view - that there is an inner formulae σ in Ralph’s system of mental representation which is related by a

the same operating system.

function to the phrase “flounders snore” contained within the ‘that’ clause, and Ralph stands in a belief-relationship to the mental formulae. Thus, [1] should be represented as:

[2] $(\exists \sigma) (R(\sigma, \text{‘flounders snore’}) \& B(\text{Ralph}, \sigma))$

For Schiffer, the problem is precisely this relation R that obtains between the sentence and the inner formulae. The problem is that if [1] is to be replaced by the substitution instance [2] in a manner consistent with the Inheritance Thesis, then the relation R should be specifiable without reference to the meaning of the sentence “flounders snore”. But how can this be done?

The problem has the same essential features of Frege’s argument against psychologism or, at least, Dummett’s reworked version of it. To explain communication one must show that the semantic contents of the inner formulae that are brought into correspondence by the sentences of the public language are the same. But this has to be done without presupposing the meaning of the sentence within the ‘that’ clause as given. That is to say the relation must not be specified in semantic terms. As Schiffer points out: “One wants a nonsemantic relation between mental representations and public-language sentences that will in fact secure that the formulae related by this relation will have the same content” (Schiffer, 1987, p. 77).

As was evident in Fodor’s account of the rigid structure of message coding and linguistic conventions, Fodor would probably want to address this problem by claiming that each message attaches to its linguistic carrier in a determinate manner. On this view communication of mental states is secured by the causal determinism of the mechanism responsible for coding and decoding. Indeed, according to Schiffer this is the most natural recourse in this position. As he notes, given the situation, “one naturally thinks to

exploit the fact that each Mentalese sentence will be uniquely correlated with a “synonymous” public-language sentence via a potential causal chain that contains the mental representation, stored as a belief, and terminates in an assertive utterance of the spoken sentence” (Schiffer, 1987, p. 77). In his article “Propositional Attitudes” (1981),¹⁴ Fodor gives just such an account. As a result, according to Schiffer, the specification of the content asserted in [1] would be something like this:

[3] In uttering [1] a speaker S asserts that Ralph is in a belief state that has the same content as the belief state S would be in if he were to utter ‘flounders snore’ sincerely and assertively.

Thus, subject to the conditions of sincerity and assertiveness, a link is forged between the individual’s idiolect and certain mental formulae. But what is the use of telling the hearer that the speaker means whatever he says, when what is needed for the identity is to know that he means the same thing that Ralph would mean, were he in his shoes. According to Schiffer, this account fails. It fails because it would be true only if Ralph’s believing that flounders snore was *entailed* by him being in a state with the same content as the state S would be if he uttered “flounders snore” sincerely and assertively:

But, it is very clear that this is not entailed: it might be a peculiar fact about S that, for some reason or other, he would not utter ‘flounders snore’ sincerely and assertively unless it meant that flamingos were flying south early this year. What is needed to patch [3] up is precisely the reference to the content of ‘flounders snore’, precisely what the SLT theorist cannot have. I strongly suspect that *any* attempt to concoct a nonsemantic specification of R would founder on this problem... . (Schiffer, 1987, p. 77)

Whatever the causal chains linking the individuals in communication, even on the

¹⁴ In *Representations: Philosophical Essays on The Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Similar accounts given by Stich in “On the Ascription of Content” (1982), in Woodfield (1982) and in *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science: the Case against Belief* (1983) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

assumption of a non-arbitrary connection between language and thought, no adequate account of communication can be given unless the semantic content of the sentence “flounders snore” is given and understood. That is why Dummett says that on any such strong language of thought view, the claim that the agents mean the same thing remains an unverifiable assumption.

Perhaps, the SLT theorist can appeal to the sentences of the public language to bridge this gap. On this suggestion the nature of the relation between formulae of the inner code and the sentence within the ‘that’ clause would be represented in the following manner:

$R(\sigma, \text{‘flounders snore’})$, iff σ , means in Mentalese what ‘flounders snore’ means in English.

However, in this case the Inheritance Thesis goes by the board. As Schiffer points out: “the meaning of ‘flounders snore’ is to be explicated in terms of its potential for expressing the belief that flounders snore, and that project will spin for eternity if [1] can in turn only be explicated by reference to the meaning of ‘flounders snore’” (Schiffer, 1987, p. 77). Besides, were such a route a legitimate option one might wonder - as Schiffer indeed wonders - about the motivation for postulating the mental representations and not sentences of public language as objects of belief. There are other reasons to reject such an approach. According to Schiffer, such a position would be coherent only if one of the following conditions were satisfied:

- 1) the expression ‘what “flounders snore” means in English’ were a singular term that referred to some object that was the meaning of both the English and the Mentalese sentence, or
- 2) the conditions for meaning such-and-such in language of thought were the same as conditions for meaning such-and-such in a public language. (Schiffer, 1987, p. 282)

However, the first condition would imply a theory of propositions in order to give ‘the meaning of’ an appropriate object, and it is doubtful that the SLT theorist wants to be saddled with the theory of propositions. The second condition is false because meaning in the public language is at least in part a matter of convention, and the same cannot be said of the formulae in the inner code (Schiffer, 1987, p. 282). That is to say, if the formulae of the inner code are explained by reference to the conditions that determine the semantic features of the public language, and those are a matter of convention, then it would imply that the formulae in the inner code are also a matter of convention. As a result this would be a rejection of the Inheritance Thesis, and an admission that it got the directions back to front. Therefore, Schiffer concludes that it is incoherent for the STL theorist to appeal to the meaning of the public language sentence in specifying the content of the neural formulae.

In the end, Schiffer’s verdict regarding the plausibility of SLT is not encouraging. There seems to be no plausible way in which to satisfy the Logical Form principle that stipulates that the object of propositional attitudes are mental representations, and there is no way of satisfying the Inheritance Thesis, - “no way, that is, of accounting for the representational features of neural states from scratch” (Schiffer, 1987, p. 75). If that is so, there can be no adequate, and at the same time interesting thesis regarding the language of thought and its relation to the public language. Finally, if there can be no adequate account of the inheritance thesis that is at the heart of the view of language as Vehicle of Communication, then it is the public language that is the bearer of the semantic properties, and language, therefore, must be properly viewed as the Vehicle of Thought.

In conclusion, one could say that the code view of language seems to enjoy a wide currency. For instance, John Anderson, in his textbook *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications* (1980), claims that “it is certainly true that language can influence us (or else there would be little point in writing this book) but its effect is to communicate ideas not to determine the kind of ideas we can think about” (Anderson, 1980 p. 386). He continues to say that there is little evidence to support the view that thought depends on language but ample evidence to the contrary. As he points out:

Every language has a phrase structure. The basic phrase units of language tend to convey propositions... . This phenomenon itself - the existence of a linguistic structure, the phrase, designed to accommodate a thought structure, the proposition - seems to be clear example of the dependence of language on thought. (Anderson, 1980, p. 387)

Anderson does not engage in the elucidation of the notion of proposition or provision of an independent account of thought that is supposed to underlie language-use. He concludes that the dependence of thought on language “may be an illusion that derives from the fact that it is hard to obtain evidence about thought without using language” (Anderson, 1980, p. 384). John Ellis subjects such views to severe criticism. In his book *Language, Thought, and Logic* (1993) he states that the assumption that the role of language is limited to the purpose of communication is pervasive in philosophy and linguistics. He identifies a number of thinkers from fields of semiotics, philosophy of language, and generative grammar who take this code view of language as the most basic assumption.¹⁵ In his opinion, this assumption is the most fundamental mistake that undermines all subsequent efforts to achieve a coherent theory of language:

¹⁵ According to Ellis the list of those whose positions imply the code conception of language include, to name but a few: David Crystal (*Linguistics*); Scott Soames (“Direct reference and Propositional Attitudes”); Jon Barwise and John Perry (*Situations and Attitudes*); Josef Almog, John Perry, Howard Wettstein (*Themes from Kaplan*); Jerrold Katz (“Common Sense in Semantics”) This list should be

There are a small number of initial missteps in theory of language that are so subtle that those who make them never realize they have made any move at all, but so destructive and far-reaching that, once taken, they make it impossible to achieve a coherent theory of language, and these missteps are virtually universal... . The first of these missteps can be stated very simply: it is the assumption that the purpose of language is communication. This is perhaps the most important of the three, since it immediately misdirects all subsequent effort in linguistic theory... . No misstep is more pervasive than this one; virtually all organized schools of thought are permeated by it. It is pervasive in philosophy of language. It is ever present in the field of linguistics.... (Ellis, 1993, pp. 15-16; 19)

As was already mentioned, Ellis is not alone in thinking that there is something strange in accepting the view of language as communication as the basic premise without any argument. In his review of a collection of papers (Steinberg & Jakobovits, 1971) entitled *Semantics*, Charles Caton comments on this “particular feature of the current situation in philosophical research” (Steinberg & Jakobovits, 1971, p. 12). He describes this feature as the “apparent disregard of the Meaning-as-Use Doctrine of Wittgenstein”, by the “recent developments of Grice, Ziff, Katz, Fodor, and others”. As he points out, in the end, these theories “simply assumed without discussion” that this thesis is incorrect (Steinberg & Jakobovits, 1971, p. 12). However, complete despair on the part of Caton is unwarranted, since it might be that a mark of a good philosophical doctrine is that it will come to haunt the ones who ignore it.

Much of Dummett’s criticisms of various thinkers are centered on the analysis of their views that ultimately places them on either side of the barricade, which, for Dummett, stretches along the fault lines of the vehicle of thought/vehicle of communication distinction. In his 1970, *Meaning and Truth*, P. F Strawson spoke of a ‘Homeric Struggle’ between the “theorists of communication intention” and “theorists of

extended to J. Fodor, Colin McGinn, S. Stich, and Hartry Field.

formal semantics” that began with Grice’s 1957 article “Meaning”. Devitt and Sterelny have recast the issue in their *Language and Reality* (1987) as a question of priority between speaker-meaning and conventional meaning. Intention-Based Semantics attempts to explain the meaning of a sentence in terms of the psychological notion of a speaker’s communicative intention, that is to say as speaker-meaning. According to Dummett, an approach that attempts to reduce semantic properties to psychological ones is fundamentally misdirected and could proceed only by falling in line with the code conception of language. As a result, such philosophical strategy is subject to the same objections. Since the consideration of this issue elucidates Dummett’s argument against the idiolect conception of language, the next chapter will be dedicated to the examination of this problem.

Summary:

This chapter dealt with the exposition of the background of Dummett’s argument against the idiolect conception of language. It was shown that the argument is a version of Frege’s argument against psychologism. Frege’s argument maintains that since psychological states are incommunicable, a philosophical position that undertakes to explain thought through psychological states undermines itself because it puts in doubt the communication of its own content. Just like Frege’s, Dummett’s argument based on failure to communicate targets a certain philosophical position that explains thought and meaning by reference to the subject’s inner states. The point of the argument is that since inner states are not publicly accessible, verification of the communication of meaning cannot be made. It was also suggested that Schiffer’s argument against an approach that

undertakes to explain semantic content by appeal to mental states is based on a similar argument. The argument shows that an attempt to explain semantic content by appeal to mental states cannot succeed because it requires an independent specification of the content of representational mental states.

While Frege appealed to the existence of the third realm in his explanation of objectivity and communicability of thought, Dummett's solution is to appeal to intersubjectively established rules of linguistic use. If communication of thought is to be verifiable and hence objective, it is essential that the semantic content be determined by publicly accessible linguistic use and not by the psychological states of the speakers. The difference between these two philosophical positions can be explained as the difference between two competing views of language: language as vehicle of thought and language as means of communication of thought. While the latter view implies a passive role of language as the medium of transmission of semantic content, the former view implies a view of language as the determining factor of that content.

Chapter II: Intention-Based Semantics and Idiolect

2.1 Intention-Based Semantics (IBS)

In his 1957 article “Meaning”, H. P. Grice laid the foundation to what Stephen Schiffer later called Intention-Based Semantics or IBS. The paper noted a certain inadequacy in the traditional approach towards the analysis of meaning and suggested modifications that introduce the psychological notion of intention as a necessary part of this analysis.

Grice drew a distinction between a natural and a non-natural - abbreviated as meaning_{NN} - sense of “meaning”. The distinction comes down to the distinction between conventional meaning that is marked by a certain arbitrariness in the relation between sign and the signified (e.g. traffic signs), and natural or symptomatic meaning, which has a necessary relation to what it signifies (e.g. spots and measles).¹⁶

Grice wants to see if a traditional approach to the analysis of meaning is adequate to capture meaning_{NN}. In particular, what needs to be explained are:

- 1) x meant_{NN} something on a particular occasion
- 2) A meant_{NN} something by x on particular occasion
- 3) x means_{NN} (timeless) something / A meant_{NN} (timeless) something by x

The analysis he suggests as a possible candidate is something like this:

[1] x meant_{NN} F if x was intended by its utterer to induce a belief in some audience and to say what the belief is would be to say what x meant_{NN}.

Grice rejects this attempt at analysis because it fits certain interactions between agents

¹⁶ While accepting the consequences that Grice draws from this distinction would indicate that the difference between these senses of meaning is more dramatic than if one refused to accept these consequences, the distinction itself does not imply these consequences. As a result, one might accept the distinction without accepting Grice’s analysis of it. So we might as well grant it.

that would not qualify the induced belief as the meaning_{NN} of x. Thus, in his example, if someone leaves B's handkerchief at the scene of a crime with the intent to induce a belief in the investigators that B committed the crime, one would not claim that the meaning_{NN} of the handkerchief, or the meaning_{NN} of leaving the handkerchief, was that "B committed the crime". Therefore, [1] cannot be the appropriate way to deal with x meaning_{NN}. What is needed in order to make sure that an induced belief qualifies as the meaning_{NN} of x is that the utterer intends the audience to recognize that x was uttered with the intention of inducing this belief:

Clearly we must at least add that, for x to have meant_{NN} anything, not merely must it have been 'uttered' with the intention of inducing a certain belief but also the utterer must have intended an 'audience' to recognize the intention behind the utterance. (Grice, 1957, p. 56)

Acts, including speech acts, which are not accompanied by the utterer's intention that the audience recognizes the primary intention behind the speech act, do not qualify as meaningful_{NN}, and cannot be considered as communicative acts. Recognition of this pair of intentions is necessary to the correct analysis of communicative acts in general, and linguistic communication in particular.

There is, however, a stronger sense in which intentions are fundamental in the analysis of meaning_{NN}, and not just communication. Grice considers the effects of deliberate and spontaneous frowns. A spontaneous or inadvertent frown is not intended to convey displeasure to the audience; nevertheless, the audience might get that impression anyway. To the sceptic, who suggests that intentions are irrelevant to meaning, Grice responds by saying that the spontaneous frown would produce the same effect on the

audience “only provided the audience takes it to convey displeasure”¹⁷ (Grice, 1957, p. 57). In a sense, meaningful acts are parasitic upon intentional acts.

As a result, Grice rearranges not only the analysis of meaning but also the order in which it should be carried out:

- 1) A meant_{NN} by x F on particular occasion is equivalent to ‘A intended the utterance x to produce some effect in the audience by means of the recognition of this intention.
- 2) x meant_{NN} something on a particular occasion is equivalent to ‘Somebody meant_{NN} something by x’.
- 3) x means_{NN} F timelessly / A meant_{NN} F by x timelessly is equivalent to some disjunction of statements about what ‘people’ intend to effect by x.

As is evident, a particular statement x meaning_{NN} something on a particular occasion derives from somebody’s meaning_{NN} something by x on a particular occasion, which is in turn specified by the effect the utterer intended to produce. The same derivation concerns “x meaning_{NN} (timeless) something”. It is supposed to be a disjunction of statements about what effects “people” intend to produce by utterances of x on occasions. But point 3) can stand in place of a linguistic convention. This suggests that there can be no linguistic convention unless it is constituted by the coincidence of x meanings_{NN} on some occasions. This in turn entails that there could be no linguistic convention unless the speakers intended to produce certain effects and the audiences recognized the effects as so intended, and that these effects can be loosely categorized. Transitively, semantic

¹⁷ There is no a fortiori reason to believe this to be true. Dogs recognize snarls as warnings and threats, supposedly because they recognize the possible consequences of these acts, but it is unclear if Grice would attribute communicative intentions to animals. It is clearly not necessarily to postulate that a dog has recognized an intention behind the snarl. Similarly, in the case of frowns nothing more needs to be postulated than empathy on the part of the observer. Nevertheless, Grice does not argue this point but takes it to be somehow self-evident. However, a large proportion of criticism of Grice focuses precisely on the weakness of this assumption that various acts cannot be information-bearing representations without the necessary recognition of intentions. Paul Ziff: (1967); R. G. Millikan (1984); J. McDowell (1980) in Van Straaten *Philosophical Subjects* (1980)

contents of the sentences in the public language are reduced to psychological properties of the individual, which in turn could possibly be reduced to physical properties of the brain. Stephen Schiffer characterizes the reductionist program in these terms:

Thus, the IBS theorist's reductionist enterprise consists of two stages. In the first stage he seeks to identify speaker-meaning - a person's meaning that such-and-such, or that so-and-so is to do such-and-such - with a species of intentional behavior that does not itself presuppose any of the semantic concepts in question... . In the second stage the theorist seeks to define the meaning of linguistic items in terms of speaker-meaning, thereby completing the reduction of the semantic to the psychological. Here the theorist will avail himself of an ancillary concept of *convention*, itself already defined, in wholly nonsemantic terms, as various kinds of self-perpetuating regularities in behavior. (Schiffer, 1987, p. 12)

This derivation structure is at the heart of the *speaker-meaning / conventional meaning* debate. The picture suggested by Grice's account is that speaker-meaning, or what a creature intends on a particular occasion is prior to conventional meaning. The priority of speaker-meaning is not a priority merely in the order of explanation. Speaker-meaning is also antecedent to conventional meaning, and it is because it is antecedent that it has explanatory priority over it. This view is maintained by Devitt and Sterelny, who explain:

Which sort of meaning is more basic or prior? Grice thinks that speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning... a sentence could not have conventional meaning which is not derived from *past* regularities in speaker-meanings. (Devitt and Sterelny 1987, p. 121) (...) We feel a pressing need to understand our environment in order to manipulate and control it. This drive led to our early ancestors, in time, to express a primitive thought or two. They grunted or gestured, *meaning something* by such actions. There was speaker-meaning without conventional meaning. Over time grunts and gestures caught on: linguistic convention was born. (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, p. 127)

The meaning of a public sentence is not merely composed of, but is constituted by the regularities in the speaker-meaning. As Devitt and Sterelny put it, there can be speaker-

meaning without conventional meaning, but there cannot be conventional meaning without speaker-meaning. But, if speaker-meanings produce conventional meanings, then generalizing to languages, idiolects produce common language in so far as they coincide. If speaker-meaning is detachable from conventional meaning, then one could say that the language a given individual speaks is his idiolect, which is composed of his speaker-meanings. The overlap of these idiolects - in so far as the speaker-meanings of the individuals coincide, hence producing public regularity - constitutes the conventional or common language. This view of the common language as constituted from idiolects is based on the fundamental notion that idiolect is prior to common language, which in turn is based on the idea that speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning.

This characterization sketchily draws the connection between speaker-meaning /conventional meaning and idiolect/common language debates, at least as Michael Dummett envisions it. As he himself suggests, the priority of the notion of idiolect over common language, consists in the fact that this view takes "... as the central notion that of an idiolect, that is, a language as understood by some one individual, explaining first what it is for that individual to attach to the words of his idiolect the meaning that he does, and then characterizing a common language as the overlapping idiolects" (Dummett, 1993, p. 148). The next section will examine the implications of taking speaker-meaning as prior to conventional meaning, and the relation of these implications to the debate concerning the priority of idiolect over common language.

2.2 Speaker-Meaning and Conventional Meaning: Circularity

One could argue that to ascribe to the IBS theorist the view in virtue of which he takes

the common language to be an overlap of idiolects is a *red herring*. It is one thing to say that in the order of explanation and as a matter of historical fact speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning and it is quite another to say that they are completely independent of each other and, consequently, that idiolects are independent of common language. If conventional language had no impact on individual idiolects then individuals would end up in the position of cavemen, having to invent the language from scratch. This view would be clearly absurd. IBS theorists maintain that in learning the language the individual inherits the conceptual apparatus of his predecessors, which - as a result - he is now spared the pain of inventing. Therefore, to say that the priority of speaker-meaning over conventional meaning implies that the individual has an idiolect quite independently of the common language, is to caricature the IBS position.

Coupled with the IBS reductionism program, such a caricature would imply, among other things, that a given speaker has a complex system of intentions that would explain the meaning of any given complex sentence, without reference to already established meaningful terms. However, in his celebrated work *Meaning and Truth* (1970) Strawson asks whether we must credit ourselves with “extremely complicated communication-intentions... independently of having at our disposal the linguistic means of fulfilling these desires”. Thus, Grice refuses to fill “all our talking life with armies of complicated psychological occurrences” (Grice, 1957, p. 59). The more complex the structure, the less psychologically real such a structure might seem, the less plausible would be the resulting account.¹⁸ Strawson finds this approach absurd, and suggests a

¹⁸ In “Intention and Convention in Speech Acts” (1964) Strawson develops an argument that shows that normal linguistic use would require highly complex and even infinite chains of nested intentions. For examples of the resulting complexity see also Lewis’s *Convention: a philosophical study* (1969), Schiffer’s *Meaning* (1987) and Bennett’s *Linguistic Behavior* (1964).

different picture, which is based on an alternating model of language development:

I think this is absurd. But the program of analysis does not require it. All that the analysis requires is that we can explain the notion of conventions of communication in terms of the notion of preconventional communication at a rather basic level. Given that we can do this, then there is more than one way we can start pulling ourselves by our own linguistic boot-straps (...) In this way we can picture a kind of alternating development. Primitive communication-intentions and successes give rise to the emergence of a limited conventional meaning-system, which makes possible its own enrichment and development, which in turn makes possible the enlargement of thought and of communication-needs to a point at which there is once more pressure on the existing resources of language which in turn is responsive to such pressure... (Strawson, 1970, p. 93)

The incorporation of conventional meaning in the specification and evolution of speaker-meaning allows for a decrease in the complexity of communication intentions that otherwise would have to be postulated to account for complex thoughts. The resulting system of conventions allows for thoughts that could not have been possible before. The “alternating development” model suggests that speaker-meaning creates the very same conventional semantic “bricks” from which further speaker-meanings are built. This model, formulated by Strawson and partially endorsed by Devitt and Sterelny, not only deals with the problem of complex nested intentions, but also provides other unexpected benefits. In particular, one might possibly respond to the objection that Mark Platts has presented in his *Ways of Meaning* (1979). In this book, he challenged the idea that the meaning of sentences can be given in terms of the accompanying intentions of the utterance because the majority of the sentences of natural languages will never be uttered:

What, then, can Grice say about these unuttered sentences? The obvious move, perhaps the only possible one, is to hold the meanings of such sentences to be definable in terms of hypothetical intentions and hypothetical responses: in terms of the intentions with which they would be uttered were they to be uttered and the responses they would then induce. (Platts, 1979, p. 89)

In his view, the IBS theorist faces a dilemma. Either there are no constraints on the hypothetical intentions or responses, in which case “the meaning of unuttered sentences will be left completely indeterminate: they could mean anything so they do mean nothing” (Platts, 1979, p. 89). Or, there are constraints, in which case the constraints on the intentions with which the sentences can be uttered are “precisely the meaning of the sentence” (Platts, 1979, p. 90). Therefore, according to Platts, the IBS theorist cannot give a non-circular account of speaker-meaning:

Generally, the constraint upon the hypothetical intentions with which a sentence can be uttered, and upon the audience’s responses to such an utterance, is precisely the meaning of the sentence... If this is correct, the attempt to define meanings of unuttered sentences in terms of hypothetical intentions and responses is hopeless: for it presupposes a prior notion of sentence meaning. (Platts, 1979, p. 90)

In *Philosophy of Language* (1998), Alexander Miller hails this argument as conclusive in putting the IBS program out of commission. However, given the “alternating development” model proposed by Strawson, it would seem that conventional meaning does provide certain constraints on further intentions, since they are the ones that make these more complex speaker-meanings possible.

However, given such a significant role of conventional meaning in constraining speaker-meaning one might question what exactly the priority of the latter consists of. From a slightly different angle, one might ask how the *pulling by linguistic bootstraps* is supposed to help to avoid crediting oneself with an overly complex system of intentions. If it is to be of help in cutting down the complexity of intentions, and particularly infinitely complex nested intentions, then, presumably, pulling by boot-straps should amount to the ability to substitute the awkward chain of nesting intentions for the

conventional meaning of a given concept. If complex thoughts become possible because of the conventions that speaker-meanings have created, then analysis of the conventional meaning is all that is needed for the analysis of meaning. The theoretical weight that the alternating development model is supposed to carry is perhaps too much for the thesis of speaker-meaning priority to survive. In this case, one might wonder about the point of the claim that speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning.

Perhaps, the priority of speaker-meaning consists in the fact that it stands at the origins of language and realizing this sheds light on the ultimate nature of language.¹⁹ The speaker-meaning started the process of language development. Ultimately, however complex the language at hand, it is reducible to the speaker-meanings at the source. Thus, Devitt and Sterelny explain their view of the priority:

We could state the primacy of speaker-meaning as follows. Speaker-meanings create the conventional written and spoken forms of the language. But it is because we have learned those conventions that we are able to have the rich variety of thoughts, and hence produce the rich variety of speaker-meanings that we do... . Once created each convention encourages other people to have new thoughts. (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, p. 128)

This formulation of priority avoids attributing to the IBS theorist the naive view that languages are overlaps of individual idiolects. Nevertheless, despite this simplistic initial characterization, Dummett's argument against the idiolect conception of language is not committed to construing this view as claiming that there is no two-way relation between idiolects and the common language. As a result, Strawson's move does not vitiate its

¹⁹ In "Meaning and Truth" (1970), Strawson places an emphasis on the claim of IBS theorists that ADBE or audience directed belief expression is at the foundation of language; therefore, language is primarily public, that is to say it is necessarily audience directed. In *Reflections on Language*, Chomsky challenges this view by pointing out that the function of language is not merely communication, it has a role to play in formulating beliefs in soliloquy. If language can be used in this way without required analysis of intentions then it does not need this analysis when used in communication.

objections; Dummett's argument aims at the priority of idiolect even if the discussion is transposed into the historical context of the origin of language. His objection should be properly construed as claiming that the idiolect conception of language is fundamentally based on the illegitimate notion of a speaker's *meaning-conferring acts*. The ultimate reduction of the conventional meaning to speaker-meaning can work only if meaning is taken as the product of the individual's meaning-conferring act, whereby he attaches ready-made meaning, however primitive, to his words. That this picture must be assumed need not to be taken on faith, since Devitt and Sterelny claim that in the early stages humans "grunted or gestured, meaning something by such actions" in the absence of any convention for communicating these thoughts. As Dummett indicates in *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993), this view "... in effect presupposes Humpty Dumpty's theory, that a word, as uttered on a particular occasion, bears whatever meaning it does because the speaker invests it with that meaning" (Dummett, 1993, p. 49).

Dummett's challenge to Humpty Dumpty is analogous to Frege's argument against psychologism. Superficially, it looks like the challenge to explain communication. However, it is more than this. It is also a challenge to give a non-circular account of meaning. If what Humpty Dumpty means depends on his psychological state, how can Alice understand what he means if she cannot share that psychological state? In other words: if meaning is explicable by intentions and intentions are features of psychological states then "... how can I know, save by faith, that he understands me as I intend?" (Dummett, 1993, p. 155). Any attempt by Humpty Dumpty to explain the meaning he invests into his words would not improve on the situation in the slightest; Alice would not know what his explanations meant any more than what his initial

utterance meant. Mark Platts also formulated this argument, in pretty much the same form in his *Ways of Meaning* (1979). There he notes that the IBS account fails to specify “how this pairing of designated sentence and accompanying intention is to be arrived at” (Platts, 1979, p. 91) and that:

Utterers’ intentions are not recognized by unfailing intuition, nor do Acts of God figure large... . Any explanation of how such intentions are recognized will inevitably rely upon the audience’s recognition of the literal meaning of the sentence: that meaning is the route to the speaker’s intentions, the reverse journey usually being impossible... . This verbal expression of intention or response, if sufficiently precise, will standardly use, in part, the very sentence whose meaning we are trying to detect via the intentions held and responses induced. So, to gain access to the appropriate intentions and responses we must first have knowledge of the meaning of the sentences concerned. (Platts, 1979, p. 91)

In an ordinary linguistic situation, Humpty Dumpty would explain to Alice the unconventional sense he attaches to his words by using words with conventional sense, that is words the understanding of which they share. If Alice knows the meaning Humpty ‘invests’ into the words of his explanation, then such recourse will not generate an infinite regress of questions and unenlightening answers. This could be done without circularity if one accepts the *alternating development* model and its implications.²⁰ But this explanation is not available when one considers the origins of language. The alternating development model postpones the circularity problem, it pushes it into prehistoric times, but it does not solve it. The problem is not simply communication, it is rather the fact that we cannot have a determinate, and yet, non-semantic specification of intentions. Therefore, even with the alternating development model, there remains a

²⁰ In the *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993), Dummett accepts such a view. He clarifies his position by saying that his objections are not against idiolect as such but against taking it as primary. Personal use of language, linguistic improvisation, creative use are undeniable facts, but they must be seen as derivable from the common language, - this use makes sense only when possession of language is taken as their proper background.

vicious circle in this account and Devitt and Sterelny recognize it:

In sum, we seem caught in the following circle: (a) speaker-meaning is explained by thought content; (b) that thought content is explained by the meaning of the thought sentence; (c) that meaning is explained by conventional meaning; and (d) conventional meaning is explained by speaker-meaning. (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, p. 124)

The IBS theorist faces a problem. The semantic content of the speaker-meaning cannot be explained by the meaning of the “thought sentence” couched in conventional language. There are no public language sentences that can represent that thought. On the contrary, if speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning then those original semantic contents were wedded to the words by the internal, meaning-conferring act of the speaker. The meaning-conferring act prior to conventional language implies the code conception of language. As a result, for the IBS theorist language is not the vehicle of thought but merely a means of communication.

It is interesting that Alexander Miller in his *Philosophy of Language* (1998) points out that Mark Platts is completely off the mark with his argument based on the failure of non-semantic specification of intentions, because, as he explains, it is the nature of Grice’s account that mental content is prior to linguistic meaning (Miller, 1998, p. 234). His point - a development of an argument presented by Martin Davis in “Philosophy of Language” (1996) - is that if one takes seriously the idea that mental content is both prior to and independent of language, then nothing serious follows from Platts’ argument, because the epistemological priority of conventional language has nothing to do with the analytical priority of speaker-meaning.²¹ As a result, Grice, who is committed to the

²¹ Epistemological priority of X over Y is defined by the fact that it is possible to find out about X independently of Y, but not possible to find out about Y independently of X. Analytical priority of X over Y is defined by the fact that Y can be elucidated in terms of X, but X cannot be elucidated in terms of Y. These definitions can be found in Martin Davis, “Philosophy of Language” in *The Blackwell companion to*

analytical priority of speaker-meaning, is not committed to the epistemological priority of speaker-meaning (Miller, 1996, p. 235). This is all very true, but to show that a philosophical position - which according to Strawson, counts the later Wittgenstein among its 'gods' and 'heroes' - is committed to a SLT position should be hitting its target. One might take the criticism of the IBS position as revealing that their underlying assumptions are the assumptions of the STL theorist, and therefore require an independent elucidation intentions and mental states. As Dummett points out, the Griceans

...go astray by in effect helping themselves to the specific content of the utterance instead of explaining what confers that content upon it... they purport to explain what it is to make an assertion with a certain content... That is to say, they aim to characterize asserting that something is the case, on the assumption that we already know what it is to have the information that it is the case, or to ascribe to someone a belief that it is the case... . [T]hus this strategy of explanation takes as already given the conception of the thought expressed by a sentence, and, at most, explains what it is to assert that that thought is true... . The Gricean line of explanation is hence essentially no more than a sophisticated version of the code conception of language. (Dummett, 1989, p. 172)

Ultimately, it needs to be explained what these original mental contents are. Nothing is gained by saying that the meaning of a particular speech act is given by the intention to communicate a certain primitive belief, because what we want to know is the content of that belief. The Humpty Dumpty problem reveals the fundamental problem with the Gricean program: it takes for granted what it undertakes to explain. A similar view is expressed by Chomsky in *Reflections on Language* (1975) where he says: "The theory of speaker's intention may well be a contribution to a theory of successful communication... it may help analyze successful communication... but it gives us no way

to escape the orbit of conceptual space that includes such notions as ‘linguistic meaning’”²² (Chomsky, 1975, pp. 64; 73). As a theory of communication, the IBS position has a point, but as a theory of semantic content it is not very illuminating:

[T]he crucial notion, “the utterer believes the proposition that p (not q),” is common to the contestants in Strawson’s struggle, and is in no way clarified by reference to ADBE (audience directed belief expression) contrary to what Strawson suggests. Given this notion, we can (uninterestingly) expound “linguistic meaning” along lines that Strawson reviews, without it, it appears that we cannot. (Chomsky, 1975, p. 67)

Devitt and Sterelny recognize that the inability of the Gricean program to provide a non-circular account of the content of a belief is its most serious weakness. Without substantial supplementation, the program’s only contribution is to the theory of force, not sense. Their assessment of the theory as it stands is fairly bleak:

At best it will help to distinguish communicative acts from other human behaviour (and, perhaps, distinguish the different illocutionary forces of communicative acts). It tells us nothing about the *content* of such acts; *nothing about what distinguishes one speaker-meaning from another* (beyond, perhaps, their illocutionary force). In virtue of what does a speaker mean by ‘Armadillos are dangerous’ that armadillos are dangerous and not, say, that turkeys gobble? Grice answers that the speaker intended to convey the former belief and not the latter. But in virtue of what was it *that* belief that he intended to convey? What makes it the case that the content of the belief he intended to convey was *armadillos are dangerous* and not *turkeys gobble*? The Gricean provides no answer. (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, p. 124)

There are at least two paths that seem to be open to the IBS position to break out of the vicious circle. One direction will take it further along down the SLT road, and will,

²² If all that the program was meant to accomplish was to call the attention to the role of intentions in communication, then it could be considered both true and uninteresting. According to Dummett in “Language and Communication” (1989) and Mark Platts’ *Ways of Meaning* (1979: pp. 93-4) in this case the Gricean programme must be properly seen as the fundamental part of the theory of force which is concerned with the analysis of communication. Considered in this way the programme is only a particular part of the theory of meaning, and has little to do with the theory of sense, which aims at explaining the semantic content and constitutes the main pillar of the theory of meaning. On the other hand, if the programme aspires to be not just a theory of communicative act, but a genuine attempt at explaining

therefore, bring it to face all the implications of this position. Devitt and Sterelny favour this direction. The other direction will lead the IBS position to borrow what it can from the meaning as use theory. This direction, however, might relieve the IBS position from the task of explaining semantic content at the price of reducing it to a position of a theory of communication. In the first case, the IBS position will imply meaning conferring act and therefore will be subject to Dummett's criticism, in the second case it will not.

2.3 A Behaviourist Way Out: Deflation

In his paper "Meaning and Truth" (1970) Strawson briefly suggests something that might not only provide a way out for the IBS, but also disarm Dummett's argument against it.

This solution turns on adopting Strawson's model of the alternating development of language and explaining the emergence of conventions in terms of primitive intentions "at a rather basic level". As Strawson pointed out: "All that the analysis requires is that we can explain the notion of conventions of communication in terms of the notion of preconventional communication at a rather basic level" (Strawson, 1970, p. 93).

Strawson suggests a story of "analytic-genetic variety" in which the "pre-conventional communication success" allows for the establishment of a convention: "Because it has worked, it becomes established, and then it works *because* it is established" (Strawson, 1970, p. 93). However, the mention of communication implies the existence of some mental content leading to circularity. Yet, it does not have to be a "communication success" it could simply be a primitive "coordination success" or what David Lewis has called "coordination equilibrium" (Lewis, 1969). While communication might imply semantic content, coordination does not; all that it requires is an intention to achieve a

linguistic meaning, then it must address the problem of explaining the content of belief.

certain goal. Do dogs snarl because they are trying to communicate a certain belief, or do they snarl because they intend to bring about a certain state of affairs? Does this primitive type of audience directed activity require attribution of semantic content?

Such an approach would allow one to focus on the explanation of a basic stock of conventions, which could serve as the foundation of the alternating development of language and meaning. As a result, one could maintain that primitive intentions to communicate have a priority over conventional meaning not because they are intentions to communicate some pre-conventional meaning, but rather because they are intentions to bring about a certain state of affairs, or in other words, intentions to coordinate with others. This move would reduce the role of intentions from a central position in the analysis of meaning, to a position that plays an explanatory role in the creation of linguistic conventions.

Devitt and Sterelny upheld the priority of speaker-meaning over conventional meaning by suggesting that cavemen grunted, “meaning” something by these acts prior to the existence of public convention. However, this assumption is unnecessary. In other words, there is no need to assume that cavemen meant something by these acts prior to the emergence of convention. A primitive game of coordination as expounded by David Lewis in his book *Convention: a philosophical study* (1969) does not seem to require a prior grasp of some mental content. Depending on how primitive the initial stock of conventions, they could be brought about through natural games of coordination among interacting agents. In other words, all that would be required for the creation of a convention is not an intention to communicate some content, but simply an intention to affect the environment. In his book, Lewis brings a number of examples illustrating

games of coordination, which could give rise to conventions. Among these examples is Hume's point about two people rowing a boat. This example is a good instance of coordination where intent is central but semantic content is non-existent. This type of primitive games of coordination could be instrumental in bringing about basic conventions, which subsequently could be used as tools within more complex games of coordination.

In her book, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* (1984) Ruth Millikan espouses a naturalistic approach to meaning theory in which words are seen as tools. Nevertheless, Millikan dismisses the theoretical importance of complex nested intentions within semantics. Some of her reasons for this dismissal resemble Strawson's reasons for introducing the alternating development model of language; cognitively real, highly complex nesting intentions are implausible. However, since Strawson's solution does not require infinite nesting intentions, their positions could be seen as quite congenial, because both of them, not unlike Devitt and Sterelny, want to pay a tribute to the constructive role of intentions in games of coordination. In "Meaning and Truth" (1970) Strawson suggests that if one were to accept that communicative intentions play no instrumental role in linguistic meaning then "...it will appear as a quite contingent truth about language that the rules or conventions that determine the meanings of the sentences of a language are public or social rules or conventions" (Strawson, 1970, p. 100). Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that to explain the emergence of the basic stock of conventions through games of coordination and intentions to manipulate the environment would preserve the social nature of language, without presupposing some pre-linguistic semantic content. Although intentions would play a role in constituting the

conventions, it does not mean that they would have a central role in the analysis of it.

Whatever Strawson's ultimate goals, it seems that his emphasis on alternating development between speaker-meaning and conventional meaning provides for a possible solution to the circularity problem. It is far from being certain that the psychological reductionism attributed to the IBS position is so profound that it unequivocally commits it to the Strong Language of Thought thesis. This alternative allows for the possibility that the content of the “that” clause is given in terms of the public language rather than Mentalese. One must admit, however, that while this alternative pays tribute to the causal role of intentions in the creation of conventions, it is questionable how much of Gricean analysis - particularly his claim that speaker-meaning is prior to conventional meaning - survives in this version of IBS. Whatever remains of the role of intentions in the analysis of meaning could be taken over by the theory of communication. For as Chomsky concludes: “The point is, I think, that the “communication theorists” are not analyzing meaning but rather something else: perhaps ‘successful communication’” (Chomsky, 1975, p. 68). In the end, there can be little doubt that Dummett's argument would find no target in this reduced version of Gricean program.

2.4 Breaking the Vicious Circle via SLT

As was shown, Devitt and Sterelny believe that Griceans are hard pressed to break out of the vicious circle. However, while recognizing that a behaviourist alternative exists they believe that this approach is “notoriously” incapable of explaining meaning. Therefore, faced with the task of reconciling the conflicting elements of Gricean position, they choose to give up on the idea and the determining role of public language. They suggest

that an answer might be provided if one drops the assumption that meaning is to be explained by convention. As they point out: “To break out of this circle, we need to examine (c) closely. The suggestion that the meaning of a thought sentence is to be explained by conventional meaning makes the thought content depend on convention. This is completely at odds with the Gricean insistence on the priority of speaker-meaning” (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, pp. 124-5).²³ Devitt and Sterelny are willing to embrace the idea that the content of speaker-meaning is to be given as the sentences of the language of thought, whose vocabulary contains limited innate mental concepts or *Mentalese*.²⁴ According to this solution the thought content is determined by the conceptual role it plays in the cognitive life of the speaker, its possible inferential interactions with other thoughts, and the reference determining features of the terms that occur in it (Devitt & Sterelny, 1987, pp. 125-6). On this view, the syntactic structure of thought determines the structure of conventional sentences and the conceptual roles of thought determine the semantic content of the public sentences.²⁵

This view of the language of thought qualifies as an SLT position, since it includes both the thesis that the propositional attitude is a relation to the content of a

²³ According to Devitt and Sterelny (c) amounts to the claim “that meaning is explained by conventional meaning... .” (Devitt and Sterelny, 1987, p. 124)

²⁴ In “The Present Status of the Innateness Controversy” (1981), Fodor claims that the real difference between the empiricist and the rationalist is in the amount of innate mental representations that they allow. The idea is that rationalists allow innate mental representations for all primitive lexical concepts, while empiricists insist that these concepts are constructed from the primitive ‘sensorium’ mental representations, which must still be innate. Devitt and Sterelny accept limited innate mental concepts, or *mentalese*, which is limited because it is supposed to be the same stock as the one available to pre-linguistic children and animals. So, this rules out ‘airplane’ and ‘video’, but it does not rule out ‘tree’, or ‘water’. The problem is that we simply do not know what kind of primitive concepts Devitt or Sterelny are willing to attribute to animals and pre-linguistic children. The question whether animals construct their concepts from their ‘sensorium’ or have primitive innate representations could arise even at this level. As a result, not much is explained by reference to animals.

²⁵ The role of conventions is limited to the added capacity for borrowed reference. The idea is that it is the convention that allows an individual to have primitive concepts of objects never encountered, because they borrow the reference from individuals that have. It seems that the rest is taken care of in terms of

sentence in the language of thought, and that the semantic features of the public or conventional language are inherited from the sentences in the language of thought. Devitt and Sterelny see the circularity as arising from the idea that the belief in the propositional attitude was given in terms of the conventional language, by substituting the public language sentence for the sentence of thought they claim that the circularity is avoided. But, as Stephen Schiffer has shown in *Remnants of Meaning*, the circularity is merely pushed back: there is no obvious way of specifying the content of a sentence in the language of thought without appeal to the semantic contents of the public sentences. In the end, it is precisely the failure of the SLT position that leads this long-time proponent of IBS to reject its program:

I conclude that SLT looks most unpromising. That position has two parts, LF, which claims that mental representations are the values of 'y' in the schema 'x believes y', and the inheritance thesis, IT, which claims that one can account for the content-determining features from scratch, without presupposing anything about the content of beliefs or the meaning of the public-language expressions. But both parts seem false. I further conclude that IBS looks most unpromising. For (a) that program stands or falls on the possibility of accounting for the content of propositional attitudes without appeal to the public-language semantic features of linguistic items; (b) that evidently requires that the content-determining features of the objects of belief (that is, the objects in the range of the belief relation) not be public language semantic features(Schiffer, 1987, p. 109)

In the end, the Intention-Based Semantics program initiated by Grice fails because the strong language of thought program fails. As Schiffer indicates, the success of the thesis that takes speaker-meaning as prior to and explanatory of conventional meaning depends on the success of an independent account of the content of beliefs couched in the language of thought. However, according to Schiffer no such account is forthcoming, and he seems fairly certain that there is a principled problem in getting such account.

The preceding discussion of the debate on the priority of speaker-meaning over conventional meaning is illuminating because it reveals the grounds of Dummett's criticism of the idiolect view of language. The problem with this view is ultimately reducible to the problem with the SLT position as characterized by Schiffer, and that problem has no obvious solution. Thus, in criticizing idiolect, Dummett criticizes the assumptions that underlie this view:

That is, it is what each has in his head that makes the sounds he utters the bearers of meanings, and enables him to construe those uttered by others as carriers of meaning. That is, fundamentally the picture suggested by treating the notion of an idiolect as primary: what gives to the expressions of the idiolect the meanings that they have is what is in the head of the individual whose idiolect it is; communication is possible between two individuals when they have the same idiolect, that is, when they have the same thing in their heads... That picture is vulnerable, as it stands, to the charge of committing the error of psychologism.... (Dummett, 1993, pp. 154-5)

It is important to keep in mind the true origins of Dummett's approach to language, and the real ground for his objections to the view that insists on the priority of idiolect over common language. A great amount of ambiguity creeps into his discussion of this issue due to the fact that he uses the term 'idiolect' as an umbrella concept that sweeps over any view of language that he sees as relegating the role of language to the role of a code for transmitting thoughts. He criticizes the view of idiolect in discussing the vehicle of thought/vehicle of communication distinction, and in discussing the speaker-meaning/conventional meaning distinction. He speaks in this way because he believes that the same problem, the problem identified by Frege in his argument against psychologism, runs through these issues. The exchange between Dummett and Davidson, which is recognized by a number of Dummett's commentators as the gist of the debate on the idiolect/common language distinction, is often misunderstood because it is taken out

of the context of this larger problem. In the next chapter, this exchange will be examined for the purpose of clarifying the misunderstandings and making clear what Dummett believes to be the essential conditions that an adequate theory of language must meet if it is to avoid the pitfalls in which the psychologists fell.

Summary:

This chapter was concerned with the relation of Dummett's argument against the idiolect conception of language to Intention-Based Semantics. The philosophical problems that Dummett identifies with the IBS approach to semantic analysis illustrate his general philosophical position, which maintains that any analysis of meaning based on appeal to psychological states is doomed to failure. In the course of this chapter it was suggested that to the extent to which the IBS position insists on the priority of speaker-meaning over conventional meaning it fails to give a non-circular account of semantic content. It was also argued that given this circularity, two options remain open. Either the content of belief is explained by reference to mental states – and in this case IBS implies that the significance of an utterance is a product of a meaning conferring act – or the content is explained in terms of public language – in this case the priority of speaker-meaning should be dropped. The first choice would imply the endorsement of the Semantic Inheritance Thesis as well as the view of language as code for thought. The second choice would imply giving up on the priority of speaker-meaning over conventional meaning.

Chapter III: Idiolect, Language, and Meaning-Confering Act

3.1 Language and Conventions

In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993), for reasons already elucidated, Dummett insists that language must be understood first as a social institution - a common possession of the members of a linguistic community - and then as the idiolects of distinct individuals. So when Davidson repudiates a philosophically interesting notion of conventional language in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1996) by saying that "In linguistic communication nothing corresponds to a linguistic competence as often described. (...) We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure, which language-users acquire and then apply to cases" (Davidson, 1996, p. 483), he seems to contradict Dummett's claim. Davidson himself identifies the disagreement: "My mistake, in his eyes, is that I take defining a language as the philosophically rather unimportant task of grouping idiolects, whereas he thinks I have no non-circular way of characterizing idiolects" (Davidson, 1994. p. 3). In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993), Dummett also takes the view that there is a genuine disagreement between himself and Davidson, he says: "Davidson turned from considering a theory of meaning for such a language to a theory governing an idiolect; since an individual's linguistic habits alter with time, an idiolect had to be considered as the language of a speaker at a given period, whose duration was left unspecified" (Dummett, 1993, p. 150).

At the heart of this particular disagreement is Davidson's claim that prior sharing of linguistic conventions, or "sharing specifiable set of semantic and syntactic rules.... was neither necessary nor sufficient for successful linguistic communication" (Davidson,

1994, p. 2). On the face of it, the claim rejects the very point that Dummett's argument makes - that communication cannot be explained without appeal to shared meanings. Davidson rejects the idea that conventions are necessary for communication and claims that there is no such thing as a common language. These views must be examined. If Davidson's account is correct and it contradicts Dummett's account, then Dummett must be wrong.

Davidson's criticism of the purported role of conventionalism in language is a result of his investigations into the nature of malapropisms, which include such phrases as "A nice derangement of epitaphs", or "the pinochle of success". His observation is that whether these malapropisms are intended or not, they are often understood, and this understanding is not based on the conventional meaning of the constituent words. The hearer realizes, through the absurdity or inappropriateness of literal meaning, that the 'standard' interpretation will not succeed in interpreting the phrases as the speakers intended them, so they modify their theory of interpretation to accommodate the context:

Malapropisms introduce expressions not covered by prior learning, or familiar expressions, which cannot be interpreted by any of the abilities so far discussed. Malapropisms fall into a different category, one that may include such things as our ability to perceive a well-formed sentence when the actual utterance was incomplete or grammatically garbled, our ability to interpret words we never have heard before, to correct slips of the tongue, or to cope with new idiolects. (Davidson, 1996, p. 476)

For Davidson, the analysis of malapropisms is a useful tool for making clear what is required for linguistic communication. His point is that understanding malapropisms does not require sharing a correct theory of interpretation between language users, in advance of the occasion of interpretation. Sharing the same set of syntactic and semantic rules is neither necessary nor sufficient for communication. If the meaning of a sentence is to be

specified in terms of a precise set of rules, then prior sharing of these rules is not necessary for communication. Since communication nevertheless succeeds, sharing a theory of interpretation and, therefore, sharing a common language is not necessary for the explanation of language and meaning:

But the speaker is nevertheless understood; the interpreter adjusts his theory so that it yields the speaker's intended interpretation. The speaker has "gotten away with it"... . What is common to the cases is that the speaker expects to be, and is, interpreted as the speaker intended although the interpreter did not have a correct theory in advance. (Davidson, 1996, p. 478)

Speakers "get away with it" all the time. James Joyce turned "getting away with it" into a literary style. Ace Goodman and James Joyce invented languages that others did not have in advance; languages that others nevertheless managed to understand. As Davidson puts it, sheer invention in language is possible. What's more, "getting away with it" is essential; understanding of the speech of others depends on it.

These are the main reasons why Davidson rejects the idea of language as a grouping of conventional rules, sharing of which is necessary to explain communication. In "The Social Aspect of Language" (1994), Davidson criticises Dummett's preoccupation with the notion of *common language*. Davidson claims that the amount of attention and the degree of importance given to that notion is unjustified; there is no such thing as language if by language philosophers mean a precise set of semantic and syntactic rules shared by the members of a community:

..[L]et's look at the concept of language I opposed. It was this: in learning a language, a person acquires the ability to operate in accord with a precise and specifiable set of semantic and syntactic rules: verbal communication depends on speaker and hearer sharing such an ability, and it requires no more than this. I argued that sharing such a previously mastered ability was neither necessary nor sufficient for successful linguistic communication. (Davidson, 1994, p. 2)

Davidson does not deny the fact that conventions both have place in the language and greatly facilitate communication by means of it, he simply denies that conventions are essential to success in communication. The question is: what changes must be made in the theory of language in order to account for the fact that communication can get by without such sharing? How can it be explained? Davidson proposes to make the adjustments on the basis of the following analysis: faced with a malapropism, the hearer adjusts his 'standard' theory or what Davidson calls his *prior theory* of interpretation to accommodate the context of the utterance and, thus, in the course of the interpretation forms a new theory of interpretation that Davidson calls *passing theory*. The speaker's *prior theory* is the theory she believes the hearer to employ. However, in speaking she uses her *passing theory*, that is the theory she wants the hearer to use in understanding her:

For the hearer, the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance of the speaker, while his passing theory is how he does interpret the utterance. For the speaker, the prior theory is what he believes the interpreter's prior theory to be, while his passing theory is the theory he intends the interpreter to use. (Davidson, 1996, p. 480)

On this view the communication takes place, but it does not seem to be based on a theory of interpretation that speakers share in advance. The hearer develops a new theory in the course of interpretation, and communication is successful as long as the right *passing theory* is developed. According to Davidson, this sketch of interpretation undermines the view adhered to by many philosophers of language. If there is no need for common language, then presumably, Dummett's argument against psychologism falls apart, since it turns on the need to postulate common language to explain communication.

However, in the account of interpretation presented by Davidson, communication is successful in so far as the hearer uses the same theory of interpretation as the speaker intended her to use. What is interesting in the sketch of interpretation outlined by Davidson is how the development of the correct *passing theory* by the hearer can take place. One must make clear the necessary condition for developing the right theory if the coincidence of passing theories is not to be left completely mysterious. Indeed, Davidson does just that. He explains:

...[A] speaker may provide us with information relevant to interpreting an utterance in the course of making the utterance... . The speaker wants to be understood, so he intends to speak in such a way that he will be interpreted in a certain way. In order to judge how he will be interpreted, he forms, or uses, a picture of the interpreter's readiness to interpret along certain lines. Central to this picture is what the speaker believes is the starting theory of interpretation the interpreter has for him But the speaker's view of the interpreter's prior theory is not irrelevant to what he says, nor to what he means by his words; it is an important part of what he has to go on if he wants to be understood. (Davidson, 1996, p. 479)

The correctness of the speaker's view of the hearer's prior theory is important if he 'wants to be understood'. Indeed, this is the main reason why Davidson says that Humpty Dumpty is "out of it". Humpty Dumpty cannot mean what he says he means because he knows that Alice has nothing to go on to get at his meaning, he has provided her with no clues. Humpty Dumpty admits that much when he replies to Alice's complaint that she does not know what he means by saying "Of course you don't - till I tell you".

Davidson's position does not endorse Humpty Dumpty's view of language because it claims that in order for communication to succeed, Humpty Dumpty must provide sufficient clues for Alice to understand his present meaning. This, as Davidson says, requires that Humpty Dumpty has the right *prior theory*, that is the theory that he thinks Alice employs in understanding linguistic communication. For if the *prior theories*

did not overlap in important respects, Humpty Dumpty could not provide the right clues - he simply would not know what the right clues are for Alice. Davidson comes to the same conclusion in his analysis of the work of James Joyce in his paper "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty":

We cannot intend what we know to be impossible; people can only understand words they are somehow prepared in advance to understand. No one knew this better than Joyce... . Joyce draws on every resource his readers command (or that he hopes they command, or thinks they should command), every linguistic resource, knowledge of history, geography, past writers and styles. He forces us both to look at and listen to his words to find the puns and fathom the references.... (Davidson, 1991, p. 4)

In "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", Davidson outlined three principles that are usually adopted for the construction of a theory of meaning:

- (1) First meaning is systematic. A competent speaker or interpreter is able to interpret utterances, his own or those of others, on the basis of the semantic properties of the parts, or words, in the utterance. For this to be possible, there must be systematic relations between the meanings of utterances.
- (2) First meanings are shared. For speaker and interpreter to communicate successfully and regularly, they must share a method of interpretation of the sort described in (1)
- (3) First meanings are governed by learned conventions or regularities. The systematic knowledge or competence of the speaker or interpreter is learned in advance of occasions of interpretation and is conventional in character. (Davidson, 1978, p. 475)

He emphasizes that the first two principles are not incompatible with the results of his analysis; his major objection is to the third. James Joyce does not employ words to convey conventional meaning. He is capable of meaning improvisation. However, as Joyce himself made clear, his utterances are constrained by considerations of what the hearer can understand, that is what he knows, which also includes his linguistic abilities

and his theory of interpretation - it is a constraint that the speaker cannot circumvent without becoming Humpty Dumpty:

When he uses the word - if that is what it is - "Dyoublong," there is not much chance guessing what Joyce means, despite the capitalization of the first letter, unless one has Dublin in mind, something Joyce's readers cannot fail to do. So one needs at least to know the reference of the name "Dublin" and the meaning of the phrase "Do you belong".... (Davidson, 1991, p. 8)

In order to appreciate exactly how much understanding of *Ulysses* depends on the sharing of a language and other common background one only needs to attempt to read a Russian or some other translation of that book. Quite frequently the number of pages in the endnotes that provide necessary context exceeds the number of pages in the novel itself. Generally speaking, a meaningful violation of a linguistic convention more often than not depends on a common sharing of that very convention. At this point, it is hard to tell exactly where Davidson thinks he differs from Dummett. The linguistic improvisation of the kind practiced by Joyce is parasitic on common language and can be explained only by reference to it. In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993) Dummett says:

Once we have acquired the practice, we can imitate it by inventing words for private use among friends, or even just in soliloquy; but the fundamental concept is not that of the private meaning-conferring act, but of the social practice of using language. (Dummett, 1993, p. 50)

So, when Davidson rejects the standard conception of language, what is it that he rejects? As Dummett points out, if Davidson intended it to oppose a conception which claims that if communication is to take place at all, the interlocutors must share exactly the same set of semantic and syntactic rules, he would score too easy a victory. It is doubtful that any philosopher has ever subscribed to such a view, for in that case one might as well insist that speakers cannot learn new words or construct sentences that they have not before

heard or uttered. Pidgin language is transformed into creole or a fully expressive language in the use of children who are exposed to it as their mother tongue; they transform the language even in isolation from native speakers. New dialects and new forms of slang arise where none existed before. These are facts. However, what is important is to look at what makes such linguistic evolution possible. According to Davidson, what is required is the sharing of background knowledge that goes beyond merely linguistic competence. It is in relation to the necessary sharing of such background that Dummett could establish the connection between communication and common language.

Dummett draws a similar distinction between the literal meaning of an utterance and the point of an utterance as does Davidson in his treatment of metaphor in “What Metaphors Mean” (1978). To understand an utterance is not simply to grasp its literal meaning but also to discern the intention of the speaker in making the utterance. In *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, Dummett claims that in order to discern the point of an utterance one must be aware of what the speaker knows, the background knowledge that he possesses. Only against such a background could an intention or a belief be attributed to the speaker:

When we converse with others, we are continuously concerned to discern the point of what they say, that is, their reasons or motives for saying what they do... Now we can estimate someone's purpose, motive, or intention only against the background of what we presume him to know. Only by assuming him to understand, or occasionally, to misunderstand the words he uses can we give any substance to attributing him one or another intention in using them... [theory of meaning] must, however, acknowledge the role that estimation of intention plays in communication. (Dummett, 1991, pp. 91-2)

In his “Reply to Davidson”, Dummett reiterates the point in relation to Davidson's claim

that shared knowledge of conventions is neither necessary nor sufficient for communication. Dummett agrees that a shared knowledge of syntax and semantics might not be always necessary nor sufficient for communication, but he asks:

...[W]hy should the falsity of such a claim justify rejecting that concept of a language delineated in the foregoing quotation as needed for a philosophical account of meaning? After all, my estimate of your intention in saying what you did, though no part of my knowledge of the language rests on it; I have to discern why, at that moment, you said something with that meaning. Likewise, if I use words wrongly, your recognition of what I intended depends on *your* knowledge of the language, which tells you whether my utterance meant anything at all, and, if so, whether something I could possibly have been trying to convey, and enables you to guess what mistake I have made. (Dummett, 1994, p. 258)

Davidson emphasizes that something like the sharing of the prior theories is necessary and that these theories will include a lot more than the knowledge of language. If, for a given utterance, the prior theories do not coincide in relevant respects, one will fail to communicate. The question is this: if Davidson admits this, what reason could he have for denying the philosophical importance of the notion of common language? One way of getting the answers is to attend to these words of Davidson:

The sharing comes to this: the interpreter uses his theory to understand the speaker; the speaker uses the same (or an equivalent) theory to guide his speech. For the speaker, it is a theory about how the interpreter will interpret him. Obviously this principle does not demand that speaker and interpreter speak the same language... .[I]n principle communication does not demand that any two people speak the same language. What must be shared is the interpreter's and the speaker's understanding of the speaker's words. (Davidson, 1996, p. 477)

It is quite possible that the stumbling block for Dummett and Davidson is terminological in character. What must be shared between interlocutors is an understanding but not a language. It is possible that Dummett and Davidson cannot agree on what counts as sharing a language. To demonstrate that sharing a language is not necessary, Davidson

brings up an example of his own correspondence in which it often happens that he replies in English to letters written in Spanish.²⁶ Given that both parties passively know each other's language, there is no need for them to settle on a single language, and there seem to be no obvious impediment to communication. But such an objection has no bearing on Dummett's argument. Dummett objects to such a narrow characterization, saying that "What a speaker knows of his language is far from being exhausted by how he is personally disposed to use it" (Dummett, 1994, p. 261). In fact, he claims that it is possible to imagine a community of say twenty individuals each speaking a different language but being able to understand all the languages spoken by the other members - an improbable but theoretically possible situation. In this case, Dummett asks, what prevents the members of the community from actively speaking the language they passively know? It cannot be an inability or lack of understanding; it has to be a social, psychological or physical inhibition. Thus, he concludes:

So we have essentially just a community whose members all know twenty languages; or, if none of the twenty languages are spoken by any other group of people, we may prefer to describe it as speaking just one extraordinary language having a remarkable variety of different forms. In either case, communication rests on knowledge, by both speakers and hearers, of the language or languages being used, even if the language switches with each change of speaker. Thus the primary unit is still a shared language known to all participants in a conversation; and the prototypical case is that in which they all use it in the same way. (Dummett, 1994, pp. 264-5)

It is no surprise to read on the same page Dummett's admission: "it remains somewhat obscure to me how far apart Davidson and I really are on strictly philosophical issues" (Dummett, 1994, pp. 264-5). Dummett never opposed the notion of idiolect; his opposition is to giving this notion explanatory priority over the notion of a common

²⁶ See "The Social Aspect of Language" (Davidson, 1994).

language when it comes to explaining communication. Davidson's alternative theory of communication, based on the formation of passing theories, does not threaten this priority because it dodges the issue by calling on prior theories, only to see the problem repeat itself at that level. Eventually Davidson would have to face the task of explaining what it is for the speaker to understand how the hearer would interpret his utterance, so that by way of well-placed clues he can lead the hearer to adopt a new theory, and this he cannot do without appeal to knowledge of a shared language.

Dummett claims that one might grant everything that Davidson says about communication, and, yet, the question of the priority of idiolect would not be affected. Speaking of what one should properly call a language Dummett says: "The issue I have been discussing may possibly remain in contention between Davidson and me: I have argued that it is irrelevant to the quite different issue whether the idiolect or the common language is primary" (Dummett, 1994, p. 262). As Dummett further points out, Davidson deals with issues of communication that are interesting and must be acknowledged by adherents of idiolect or common language alike. It is also apparent, that even on these issues both Dummett and Davidson are largely in agreement. Davidson attacks a certain naive view of language and Dummett claims that hardly any philosopher holds such a view. This debate ought not so much to be resolved, as it ought to be deflated.

There are good reasons for thinking that this debate was based on a conflation of two distinct issues. When Davidson criticizes the common language view, he criticizes the idea - by to his own admission - that he himself used to hold. The idea is that a certain formal theory for the language can give the meaning of the sentences for any given speaker of that language. His new position is that no such theory can do what is expected

of it; the approach should be changed in favour of theories of idiolects. Alexander Miller (1998, p. xi) describes the tension between such opposing views as the struggle between *systematicity* and *scepticism*, which according to him defines the major debates in the twentieth century philosophy of language. Karen Green sees Dummett as arguing for such a systematic theory of meaning in defiance of Wittgenstein's scepticism towards such attempts (Green, 2001, pp. 58-9). She describes Dummett's argument from communication as making a case for the need for such a systematic account. This is not a correct interpretation of the argument. However, given that this is how the argument is understood, it seems - of course - shallow; as shallow as the view that Davidson rejects and that Dummett simply called naive. It is no wonder that Green finds it unconvincing, as she points out:

Communication, on this view, will rest partly on faith. It will rest on the faith that others are sufficiently similar to me that I can make sense of them by my lights. But this need not be a disadvantage. Communication is often a rather partial and imprecise matter, as anyone who has written an article and been misunderstood, or attempted to teach first-year students, will be aware... . Dummett's attempt to show that those who reduce language to a series of idiolects cannot give an account of the functioning of communication is therefore not convincing. (Green, 2001, p. 161)

The point that Dummett was trying to make is not that communication would be often imprecise - one could live with often imprecise communication - the problem is rather that on this view communication would be in principle impossible, because it would be in principle unverifiable. Dummett is not arguing - in this instance - for a general and systematic account that would explain what any given speaker means, he is arguing against taking the *meaning-confering act* of the individual as primary, since this approach can be grounded only in SLT. Once this is realized it is obvious that to dismiss the argument on such basis would be to misconceive its whole point. This confusion runs

through the whole debate over the distinction between idiolect and common language. The plausibility of a systematic account of language conceived as some idealization of idiolects has nothing to do with the priority of common language over idiolect, and the best illustration of this is Dummett's claim that:

The transition from what an individual speaker says to what he thinks - from what the words he utters mean in the common language to the content of his beliefs - is thus mediated by his personal understanding of the language... . [T]he precise content of the belief that he thereby expresses depends on his personal grasp of those words. (Dummett, 1993, pp. 144; 147)

In stressing the conceptual priority of common language in the explanation of language Dummett addresses an issue at the foundation of meaning. He aims at the question of whether meaning is a fundamentally social and derivatively individual phenomenon or vice versa. At the core of this issue is the question of whether meaning is to be seen as the product of a meaning-confering act of a given individual. It is obvious that Davidson's argument does not address this issue. Dummett's position differs from Davidson's to the extent that the latter is interested in the necessary and sufficient conditions for communication taken in the context of a developed language, while the former aims to inquire further into what makes language, meaning, and communication possible. Davidson admits that his interest does not extend that far:

By comparison, my problem is simple. I want to know how people who already have a language (whatever, exactly that means) manage to apply their skills or knowledge to actual cases of interpretation. All the things I assume an interpreter knows or can do depend on him having a mature set of concepts, and being at home with the business of linguistic communication. (Davidson, 1996, p. 479)

In this context, Dummett's argument is linked to the question of linguistic anthropology, and the question of the genesis of language. Dummett sees his version of Frege's

argument against psychologism as an argument that shows that language is not something that can appear as an idiolect of a single individual. And this is also why language cannot be primarily conceived as an overlap of different idiolects. What is important is that in regard to this fundamental issue Dummett finds himself on the same side of the debate with Davidson. While Dummett concedes that there is a disagreement on whether idealization of idiolects to a common language is justified or not, he maintains that this issue is irrelevant to the question of the priority of idiolect over common language and that as far as that issue is concerned Davidson and he are in agreement. Furthermore, Dummett suggests not only that Davidson's denial of language is irrelevant to the question of the priority of idiolect, but that it would be a mistake to assimilate the idiolect issue to the question whether of there is a language. It is better to understand the issue of idiolect in terms of the distinction between two competing views on the role of language: language as an instrument of communication and language as vehicle of thought.²⁷ On this point, Dummett maintains, there is no disagreement, which implies that there is no disagreement on the issue of idiolect either:

It is more tempting to assimilate that issue to yet a third, namely, which of the two roles of language is primary, that of an instrument of communication or that of a vehicle of thought. The third issue is by far the most important of the three. It is essential to avoid confusing it with the issue that does divide Davidson and me. I greatly fear that I have in the past confused the two As Davidson says (p. 5), "we both insist that verbal behaviour is necessarily social... there could not be anything like a language without more than one person"... . When he maintains that the idiolect is conceptually primary, and the common language is secondary, he does not mean someone's idiolect as a vehicle of inner thought, but as an instrument whereby he communicates with others. (Dummett, 1994, pp.

²⁷ Thus, Dummett identified three issues. 1) Is there such a thing as language? 2) What is prior, common language or idiolect? 3) Is language an instrument of communication or a vehicle of thought? Dummett disagrees with Davidson on the first issue, but says it is irrelevant to the second issue and now he acknowledges that it cannot imply a disagreement on this important second issue. But the third issue is relevant to the second issue, and since they are in agreement on the third issue, it implies their agreement on the second as well.

262-263)

This admission is a pivotal one. In his discussions of common language, Dummett often conflated these issues: after all, it was Dummett who initiated the debate by criticizing Davidson's conclusions in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1996). But throughout his work, it is the latter point that Dummett is trying to make when he engages in the discussions of the priority of common language. At bottom there is no disagreement, but there remain questions as to why Dummett accused Davidson of holding the idiolect conception of language, and what is the nature of the misunderstanding that gave rise to the debate. It is to the analysis of this question that I will now turn.

3.2 The Source of Confusion

So, what is the source of this conflation of issues? Why did Dummett take on the challenge of debating the question of priority with Davidson? The answer to this question is quite illuminating with respect to what Dummett considers as a threat to an adequate theory of meaning and objectivity of meaning in general.

Prior to his 1994 exchange with Davidson, Dummett accused Davidson of prioritizing the idiolect conception of language, citing in support of this conclusion Davidson's "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", "Radical Interpretation" and "Belief and its Basis in Meaning". He also does so in footnotes to his "Language and Communication" (1993b, p. 175) and *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993, p. 150). The nature of Dummett's criticism of Davidson suggests that he draws a strong connection between Davidson's conclusions in "Radical Interpretation" and his position

as presented in “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”. It is this connection that leads Dummett to defend the social nature of meaning and language from Davidson.

In “Radical Interpretation”, Davidson is concerned with developing a theory of meaning as a formal theory using Tarski's truth definition, while at the same time making sure that it is based on the sure footing of available public evidence. As Davidson admits in the endnotes, the project was inspired by Quine's work in *Word & Object* and could be seen as a more formalized alternative, albeit with certain modifications.²⁸ The starting point is also similar to Quine's: a theory of meaning cannot be based on assumptions about beliefs and intentions, all of these assumptions must be weeded out. As a result, just like Quine, Davidson builds this constraint into the project by setting it up as a theory of interpretation subject to the question of empirical justification. As Davidson points out:

Speakers of the same language can go on the assumption that for them the same expressions are to be interpreted in the same way, but this does not indicate what justifies this assumption. All understanding of the speech of another involves radical interpretation. (Davidson, 1973, p. 313)

It is interesting that the question of what one must fall back on in understanding another speaker is also central for Dummett. Davidson proposes to construct a formal theory of interpretation, which will take as evidence sentences held true by the speakers, and will be subject to certain constraints such as the principle of charity and some holistic considerations. Just like Dummett, Davidson insists that intentions or contents of belief cannot figure as the foundation for the theory of interpretation, precisely because for Davidson, just as for Dummett, contents of beliefs and to some extent intentions must be

²⁸ Modifications include the principle of charity as well as semantic constraints, which settle the question of quantification. (Davidson, 1973, p. 328)

interpreted, and therefore cannot be given prior to interpretation in order to ground them. Davidson's position is that belief content and meaning are part of the same grid and can only be arrived at simultaneously. Some readers of Davidson have taken this to be his 'no priority thesis':

But the central difficulty is that we cannot hope to attach a sense to the attribution of finitely discriminated intentions independently of interpreting speech. The reason is not that we cannot ask necessary questions, but that interpreting an agent's intentions, his beliefs and his words, are parts of a single project, no part of which can be assumed to be complete before the rest is. If this is right, we cannot make the full panoply of intentions and beliefs the evidential base for a theory of radical interpretation. (Davidson, 1973, p. 315)

The evidence cannot consist in detailed descriptions of the speaker's beliefs and intentions, since attributions of attitudes, at least where subtlety is required, demand a theory that must rest on much the same evidence as interpretation. The interdependence of belief and meaning is evident in this way: a speaker holds a sentence to be true because of what the sentence means, and because of what he believes. (Ibid., p. 322)

This attitude towards intentions and content of beliefs is at least a partial vindication of Dummett's criticism of Intention-Based Semantics, and in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson directs it primarily against this theory. In "Belief and the Basis of Meaning" Davidson says that the obstacle to using intentions and beliefs as the foundation for the theory of interpretation is not merely practical but principled. He claims that: "the absurdity lies not in the fact that it would be very hard to find out about these things without language, but in the fact that we have no good idea of authenticating the existence of such attitudes when communication is not possible." (Ibid., p. 312).²⁹

²⁹ Yet, at the same time, Davidson does not go as far as claiming that the content of beliefs is given by the meaning of a public sentence as Schiffer claims his position implies. Were he to do so, he would put to rest Dummett's question as to whether Davidson accepts the view of language as a vehicle of thought or merely as vehicle of communication. Instead, Davidson says: "This point is not happily stated by saying that our sophisticated beliefs and intentions and thoughts are like silent sentences. My claim is only that making detailed sense of a person's intentions and beliefs cannot be independent of making sense of his utterances."

However, Dummett criticises Davidson's approach to the theory of meaning through truth theory, for reasons similar to those that Davidson uses to reject the appeal to intentions and beliefs. One of Dummett's chief complaints is that Davidson, in his latter writings, has moved towards a theory of idiolect by insisting that the theory of interpretation, and therefore meaning, must be relativised to a particular speaker at a particular time:

Such a "language" relativised to two individuals, will again be governed by a theory. When X addresses Y, Y will understand X in accordance to the theory by which he rightly or wrongly presumes X to be governed when speaking to Y; and thus, again, Y will need to engage in interpretation, even if by ordinary criteria X and Y are speaking the same language: for Davidson, an utterance has not a speaker and a hearer, but a speaker and an interpreter. (Ibid., p. 150)

Dummett's point is that if the possession of truth theory is to explain the meaning of utterances then communication would be impossible because the grasp of the theory guiding and informing the speaker's utterances would be unverifiable. The point that Dummett is making is that one cannot endorse a view that for a given individual the meaning of his utterances is given by some internalized, even if implicit, theory of truth. As Dummett maintains, asking questions in order to determine the theory that explains the utterances would be no less circular than asking about the contents of his beliefs or the nature of his intentions. Dummett suggests that this account "gains its persuasive force illegitimately, through an appeal to the illicit picture of meaning and understanding as depending on private and incommunicable knowledge of a theory informing a speaker's utterances and his perception of the utterances of others" (Dummett, 1993, p. 156). He concludes: "That picture is vulnerable, as it stands, to the charge of committing

(1974, p. 312) In this regard, it is not entirely clear whether for Davidson the priority cannot be given to

the error of psychologism, however carefully its proponent distinguishes between knowledge of a theory and a state of consciousness....” (Ibid., p. 155) and he drives the point home by linking internalized truth theory with idiolect and private language by saying that “This inner state is his mastery of the idiolect, naturally conceived in this context as consisting in his implicit knowledge of a theory of meaning for it. It is this that constitutes his attaching those meanings to the expressions, and which therefore also constitute their having those meanings, they mean what they do because he understands them as he does” (Ibid., pp. 156-7).

But why does Dummett believe that the theory of interpretation constructed for a particular idiolect is in fact a cognitively real, internalized theory that guides the production of speaker's utterances and determines his understanding of speech? Although Davidson does stipulate in “Belief and The Basis of Meaning” (1974) that “[t]he theory may thus be used to describe an aspect of the interpreter's competence at understanding what is said. We may, if we please, also maintain that there is a mechanism in the interpreter that corresponds to the theory” (Davidson, 1974, p. 309), nevertheless his project is to determine what can be said about language and meaning from the outside, on the basis of public evidence that does not presuppose any semantic concepts. As Davidson seems to admit in his later writings, the theory of truth constructed for a particular language, is a theory that *could* explain the linguistic production, and not a theory that *is* supposed to be responsible for this production, as a matter of fact. Given the view that a theory of interpretation constructed for a particular idiolect is not a hypothesis about an internalized theory, which is guides an individual's speech and grounds his

intentions because of epistemological or analytical concerns, if one views the matter from the perspective of Martin Davis.

understanding, there can be no question of verifying whether it is the *right* theory. In other words, if the theory is not even supposed to represent a cognitive mechanism of some sort, then any theory compatible with the behaviour would have the same status.

This, however, is not the same position as the one Davidson takes in “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”, which, one must note, Dummett lumps together with “Radical Interpretation” when he refers to his work to show that Davidson prioritizes idiolect. In this article Davidson talks of prior and passing theories, that guide the production of utterances of the speakers and inform their understanding of the utterances of others. As he claims in his definition of the passing and prior theories, for the hearer “the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance” for the speaker “his passing theory is the theory he *intends* [my italics] the interpreter to use” (Davidson, 1996, p. 480). In this case, the question of what constitutes the right passing theory is quite legitimate, and it could as well as should be answered.

The confusion resulting from the conflation of the passing theory guiding the speech of a particular speaker and truth theory that could be constructed for the idiolect of a given speaker is quite understandable. However, they comprise distinct issues. These issues are distinct because, if one takes Davidson's words at face value, passing theory is a definite theory that the speaker intends the hearer to use in understanding his utterances, and truth theories do not represent actual theories that guide speaker's utterances or understanding of speech. If a theory of interpretation constructed for a given idiolect were a theory actually held by the speaker of that idiolect and intended by him to be employed by the hearer in the understanding of his utterances, then there would be only one theory that would result in adequate understanding of the meaning of a given utterance. This one

theory would be the theory held by the speaker of the idiolect. However, given Davidson's limited endorsement³⁰ of indeterminacy of translation, the public evidence would allow for the construction of a number of compatible theories, only one of which would be properly held by the speaker of the idiolect. Since each such theory could provide distinct interpretations of some utterances, there would be distinctions that are grounded in the internalized theory of the speaker, which nevertheless would not be captured by purely empirical methods. If one assumes that a particular theory of interpretation is an internalized theory that guides the production and understanding of utterances, then there will be distinctions which are legitimized for the speaker of the idiolect by his implicit knowledge of the theory, which from the perspective of a theory of interpretation would be "insignificant" because they cannot be settled by the public evidence. As Davidson points out:

Indeterminacy of meaning or translation does not represent a failure to capture significant distinctions; it marks the fact that certain apparent distinctions are not significant. If there is indeterminacy, it is because when all the evidence is in, alternative ways of stating the facts remain open. (Davidson, 1974, p. 322)

In *Origins of Analytic Philosophy* Dummett argues against Davidson on the assumption that the understanding and speech of a speaker of idiolect is guided by some implicit theory internalized by the speaker. This assumption seems to be grounded by an analogy with passing theories that Davidson discusses in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". The conclusion that Dummett draws from this is that indeterminacy of translation amounts to underdetermination of meaning by the public evidence. As

³⁰ Davidson believes that his theory of interpretation can settle the question of quantification. The importance of this point should not be underestimated since it is the inability to determine the translation of quantification that Quine cites as the reason for the indeterminacy in translating the terms within the sentences.

Dummett claims, for those who, like Davidson, accept the thesis of indeterminacy of translation “use, ... does not uniquely determine meaning” (Dummett, 1989, p. 179). He therefore proposes a test, or what he calls a “promissory note”, to make sure that an approach to theory of meaning through theory of interpretation along Davidson's lines is not ultimately based on the same premises as psychologism:

But might there not be some subtle difference between his theory of meaning and mine, which resulted in a persistent but undetected misunderstanding between us? Indeed there might: that actually happens sometimes. Such a misunderstanding might not come to light: but it is essential that it could come to light, and indeed that it would do so if we pursued the topic of discussion sufficiently far. That is what saves this account from the mistake committed by psychologic theories. It saves itself only by issuing a promissory note, however. We need to be told by what means I can recognise the other speaker as having the same theory of meaning as I do.... (Dummett, 1993, p. 155)

For Dummett, the approach to theory of meaning through theory of truth suggests an unnecessary complication of a relationship between meaning and use. If grasp of a theory is necessary to determine the meaning of an utterance, and public evidence cannot determinately settle the question of what theory “informs” that utterance, then public evidence cannot help to determine the intended meaning of an utterance. From an epistemological point of view, there is no way to go from public evidence to meaning because now it is necessary to go through the determination of a theory that “guides” the idiolect, and a number of theories could be equally compatible with given evidence. The reason why Dummett puts his argument in the form of an actual case of two speakers involved in verbal exchange is because he is concerned to establish whether there is something left uncommunicated or misunderstood. If nothing the speaker says or does can reveal the theory that she has internalized and that theory “informs” the utterances, then, as he points out, the communication will rest on faith. But, this argument requires

the assumption that these theories are cognitively real mechanisms that determine the meaning of the utterances for the speakers. Without this assumption there is no reason to claim that there is anything that remains uncommunicated. It is precisely because Dummett makes this assumption that he requires the truth-theoretic approach to issue a promissory note by specifying “by what means I can recognize the other speaker as having the same theory of meaning as I do”.

3.3 The Manifestability of Meaning Argument

In the context of Dummett’s criticism of Davidson the promissory note is meant to bring the truth-theoretic approach as close as possible towards satisfying the condition of the Manifestability of Meaning thesis, and in a sense, save it from the pitfalls of psychologism. The requirement for manifestability of meaning is not a premise but a conclusion that Dummett draws from Frege’s argument against psychologism. It stipulates that if communication is to be explicable, what goes into determination of the meaning of a given message must be external to the speakers of the language; it cannot be confined to the states or processes of the individual mind, because there is no non-circular way of giving that content:

All that goes to determine the meaning of the words of that language must therefore likewise be open to view; their meanings cannot depend on what occurs within our minds, inaccessible to other speakers... . The meaning of an expression of the common language is objective because it is embodied in the use a competent speaker is required to make of that expression. (Dummett, 1993, p. 143)

The manifestability of meaning thesis includes two conditions, which, when applied jointly, would assure that a given theory of meaning avoids the dangers of psychologism. These conditions are the conveyability and the learnability of meaning. Dummett

formulates the conveyability condition in his paper “The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionist Logic” (1973):

An individual cannot communicate what he cannot be observed to communicate: if an individual associated with a mathematical symbol or formula some mental content, where the association did not lie in the use he made of the symbol or formula, then he could not convey that content by means of the symbol or formula, for his audience would be unaware of the association and would have no means of becoming aware of it. (Dummett, 1973, p. 97)

This condition requires that the meaning of an expression can be fully externalized, that is whatever the individual knows or intends should be fully expressible in what he does or says. This formulation depends on the idea of successful communication.

In formulating the learnability condition Dummett looks at communication from the perspective of the learner. While this condition also depends on the idea of successful communication, it goes beyond conveyability condition in its implications. The learnability condition could be applied to all meaning and language acquisition in general. The general implication is that no meaningful distinctions, whether they are deemed significant or not, can be acquired or learned by an individual unless they are determined by some external use. This condition ensures that what an individual knows of the meaning of an utterance cannot be underdetermined by anything that he can learn from the use of the utterance, in other words meaning as an individual can know it, cannot be underdetermined by use. In the same paper Dummett says:

To suppose that there is an ingredient of meaning which transcends the use that is made of that which carries the meaning is to suppose that someone might have learned all that is directly taught when the language of mathematical theory is taught to him, and might then behave in every way like someone who understood the language, and yet not actually understand it, or understand it incorrectly. But to suppose this is to make meaning ineffable, that is, in principle incommunicable. (Dummett, 1973, p. 99)

The Manifestability of Meaning argument is meant to ensure the communicability and therefore the objectivity of meaning, and it does this by bringing into one-to-one correspondence what an individual can mean by an utterance and the external criteria for meaning, that is meaning and its external carrier. In a manner of speaking, the two conditions jointly set the limits to meaning on the way in, during acquisition, and on the way out in expression. If communicability of meaning is to be preserved, then meaning one can acquire could not transcend what can be “gathered up” during the learning processes, and equally, one cannot communicate what cannot be observed in communication.

The Manifestability of Meaning argument forges a connection between meaning and use that disallows the idea that meaning can be underdetermined by use, for if meaning could be underdetermined by use then meaning would be both independent of use and independent of objective and, therefore, verifiable external criteria. Such view of meaning would depend on the idea of a private meaning-confering act, an act whereby ready-made meaning is wedded to an external carrier to which it relates only contingently.

When Davidson acknowledges, in responding to Dummett, that “we both insist that verbal behaviour is necessarily social... there could not be anything like a language without more than one person”, Dummett immediately recognizes that they are not in disagreement on the question of priority as he himself understands it.

Indeed, Davidson's reasons for claiming that there cannot be anything like a language without more than one person are basically Kripkean in nature: Davidson believes that meaning is rule based and rules depend on a notion of error, which in its

turn could arise only through social interaction. Therefore, fundamentally, for Davidson, meaning and language are tied to objective external criteria from the start. Meaning depends on “checkability” not in the sense that it should be verifiable whether correct meaning is attached to the right terms, but rather because meaning, being normative, depends on the notion of correctness, which could arise only through interaction. This position undermines the very foundation of the Inheritance Thesis and strikes at the very heart of the code conception of language. Meaning cannot be only contingently related to its manifestation because the public genesis of meaning requires that manifestation is a necessary ingredient of it.

It looks like Dummett has realized that somewhere the debate went awry. That is why he says about Davidson that “[w]hen he maintains that the idiolect is conceptually primary, and the common language is secondary, he does not mean someone's idiolect as a vehicle of inner thought, but as an instrument whereby he communicates with others” (Dummett, 1994, pp. 262-263). This distinction is important because meaning would be unverifiable only in the first case, but not in the second. That is to say that if one wants to determine what an individual means by his words one should look at what he believes the meaning of his words to be, and to that extent one could say that idiolect has the priority. But, if one wants to elucidate the relationship between meaning, language, and thought, then one could not confine one's attention to an individual and the contents of his mind, because that would imply that the meaning is the product of an individual mind as considered in isolation. This, in its turn, would imply the illegitimate picture of meaning based on the idea that the meaning of terms in someone's idiolect is the result of the individual's meaning-conferring acts.

There is evidence that Dummett recognizes that Davidson's project is not intended as a psychological hypothesis about an implicit theory guiding the idiolect of a speaker.

In *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (1991) Dummett says that:

Although our competence with our language is thus rightly to be classified as knowledge, a meaning-theory aims at providing, not a faithful representation of a speaker's linguistic knowledge, but a systematization of it. This explains the hesitancy concerning the status of a meaning-theory, which we find in writers like Davidson. In his earlier essays, he was disposed to attribute to actual speakers an implicit knowledge of a correct meaning-theory for their language. In later writings, he forswore this attribution, claiming only that the meaning-theory constituted a body of knowledge whose possession by the subject would enable them to speak the language. (Dummett, 1991, p. 103)

As long as this systematization does not pretend to be an elucidation of some state of consciousness or some cognitive mechanism, as long as it does not pretend to represent what one knows when one knows language, it does not fall within the scope of Dummett's criticism. With the removal of this last misunderstanding it becomes clear that Davidson steers clear of any dangerously psychologistic theory of language.

Summary:

This chapter was concerned with the examination of the debate between Dummett and Davidson as it relates to the question of the priority between idiolect and common language. Several important conclusions can be drawn. Despite appearances, Davidson's rejection of the idea that there is a philosophically interesting notion of language has no relevance to the question of the priority between idiolect and common language. A common interpretation of this debate as being concerned with the question of systematic linguistic use and prior knowledge of conventions misses its real point, which is the rejection of the idea that meaning of an utterance can be conceived as the product of

speaker's meaning-confering act. Dummett's commentator Karen Green misunderstands the real import of Dummett's argument and to that extent her response misses its target. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that Dummett and Davidson are in agreement on the necessarily social nature of meaning and language. To the extent to which Dummett's argument against Davidson is based on a dubious construal of his position it has no application to it.

Chapter IV: Cognitive Equivalence and Idiolect

4.1 Dummett's First Case Against Quine

In Dummett's words, Frege's argument against psychologism stands as an "enduring bulwark against any conception which would make the senses we attach to expressions, or the concepts we apply, depend upon incommunicable inner processes or states" (Dummett, 1993, p. 142). The argument as it stands does raise an issue for those who, like Fodor, have taken a thoroughgoing cognitive approach in their explanation of language and meaning. It emphasizes that if our concepts are explained by reference to mental states then communication is based on an *irreducible residue of faith*. However, the argument also raises an issue for those who, unlike Devitt and Sterelny, believe that the Linguistic Turn was right and who hold that language is a social institution. In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993) Dummett says: "This approach need not take a psychologistic form: in particular, it need not involve a rejection of the fundamental axiom of analytical philosophy: the priority of language over thought in order of explanation" (Dummett, 1993, p. 148).

When directed against theories of language that accept the priority of language over thought, the argument becomes a charge of inconsistency: one in such a position must square the rejection of meaning-conferring act with the view that takes common language merely as a collection of idiolects. Because a theorist in this position cannot appeal to the inheritance thesis, he is under a different pressure than the psychologist. He must explain how the semantic content of the expressions of one's idiolect can be both independent of the common language and not inherited from mental representations. If

the theorist does not choose one or the other, then he must provide an alternative explanation. In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993) Michael Dummett claims that W. V. O. Quine had put himself in this position:

In his celebrated article “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, Quine presented an image of language as an articulated network of sentences of a wholly individualistic kind: that is to say, the language in question could only be understood as the idiolect of a particular speaker... Since no account was taken of disagreements between different individuals, or of differences in their experiences, the image could only be understood as intended to represent the changes in the beliefs of a single individual, registered by his acceptance or rejection of the sentences expressing them, under the impact of his personal experiences. (Dummett, 1993, p. 148)

It is no doubt surprising that a philosopher such as Quine, who has invested so much in the defence of behaviourism, would be accused of an idiolect conception of language. After all, behaviourism externalizes meaning; it makes it available for public scrutiny. Quine himself insisted many times that language is a “public institution”. On the first page of *Word & Object* Quine says: “Each of us learns his language from other people, through the observable mouthing of words under conspicuously intersubjective circumstances” (Quine, 1960, p. 1). Indeed, Dummett concedes that in *Word & Object* Quine modified his view to take into account the social character of language. Some of the notions introduced in that book, among them ‘occasion sentences’ and ‘observation sentences’ depend essentially on there being many speakers of the language. And yet, Dummett says: “After *Word & Object*, however, Quine has tended to revert to the perspective of ‘Two Dogmas’, according to which the primary notion is that of an idiolect” (Dummett, 1993, p. 149). As a result, Dummett directs the same argument against Quine as he does against the psychologists. If idiolect is the prior notion in order of explanation, how can the speaker be sure that his message is understood as he intended

it? The pressure on a behaviourist such as Quine is different than the pressure on those like Fodor who take an explicitly psychosemantic approach to language and meaning. Quine must explain how communication is possible between two individuals adhering to different idiolects without an appeal to similar cognitive states or to any mentalist conception of meaning, since he rejects such conceptions as illegitimate.

This chapter will examine the first formulation of Dummett's charge against Quine. This formulation claims that Quine's approach to meaning is based on the prioritization of idiolect from the very start, and goes back as far as "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". In the following pages it will be determined whether there is any evidence in Quine's work which would justify this claim, with particular attention given to Quine's own formulation of the priority. If Quine's conception of language is based on an idiolect conception of language it will be necessary to determine whether it falls within the scope of Dummett's argument. In the course of this chapter, the charge of inconsistency in Quine's work will also be addressed.

4.2 Meaning and Incommunicable Processes

Frege's insight was that thought cannot be explained by private subjective states like impressions, because this would downgrade thought to the level of subjective ideas. Dummett concludes from this that meaning cannot be made contingent on incommunicable inner processes like impressions or mental representations. For Dummett, this is the gist of the mistake committed by psychologism.

After reading the first few pages of *Word & Object*, it becomes clear that Quine essentially shares the position of Frege with regards to the communication of inner

processes. He says:

The motivating insight, viz. that we can know the external things through the impacts on our nerve endings, is itself based on our general knowledge of physical objects - illuminated desks, reflected light, activated retinas. Small wonder that the quest for sense data should be guided by the same sort of knowledge that prompts it. (Quine, 1960, p. 2)

In his discussion of the problem of idiolect and the dangers of making meaning dependent on private inner processes, Dummett emphasizes that it is a mistake to take the sentences referring to inner states as incommunicable; yet, this is the picture implied by considering meaning as contingent on mental events. Thus, if sensation is essential to meaning, the speaker's reference to his sensation of a red object cannot be understood in the same way as he intends it, for sensations cannot be shared. Dummett's position is that sentences about private sensations are understood not because sensations can be shared, but because our thoughts about sensations can be shared, and those can be shared only because communication is based on intersubjectively established rules of language use (Dummett, 1993, p. 141). Yet, this also seems to be the approach taken by Quine:

Talk of subjective sense qualities comes mainly as a derivative idiom. When one tries to describe a particular sensory quality, he typically resorts to reference to public things-describing a colour, as orange or heliotrope, a smell as like that of rotten eggs. (Quine, 1960, p. 1)

For Quine, the talk of subjective qualities and mental events is made possible by reference to publicly observable objects and a socially established framework of reference, in which language plays an essential role. The actual memory of an individual is composed, not of past sensations, but of past conceptualizations or verbalizations; and "...[c]onceptualization on any considerable scale is inseparable from language...." (Quine, 1960, p. 3). This seems to extend to all mental events in general. The inner world is

refined, ordered and classified on the basis of the conceptual and referential framework made possible by the employment of language (Quine, 1960, p. 3).

However, while this position seems to preclude the idea that conceptualizations of external or inner objects and events are ‘bottom-driven’, that is determined in content in virtue of private sensations; it does not rule out that these conceptualizations are based on language conceived as idiolect. This is so, because, while it is clear that conceptualizations are contingent on the conceptual framework provided by language, the character of that language is not yet clear. Since idiolect is not defined as some ‘private-sensation-driven’ language, there is no circularity in acknowledging the possibility that concepts, while not based on private sensations, are nevertheless determined by idiolect. Quine might hold that mental events such as sensations play no considerable role in the determination of the meaning of terms, and yet maintain that meaning is contingent on the notion of language as idiolect - thus, the problem remains. What one must do is consider Quine’s view of language.

4.3 Language: Intersubjectively Established or Learned?

So, what is the character of language according to Quine? Dummett has claimed that Quine has an idiolect conception of language, that is to say that common language is just a collection of individual idiolects that happened to overlap in important respects.

But if one reads Quine, one will see that for him language is a social art and a public institution (Quine, 1969b, p. 26). This claim is fairly strongly reiterated in *Word & Object* (1960) and in *Ontological Relativity & Other Essays* (1969b). As Quine puts it:

Meanings are, first and foremost, meanings of language. Language is a social art, which we acquire solely on the evidence of other people’s overt

behavior, under publicly recognizable circumstances... Once we appreciate the institution of language in these terms, we can see that there cannot be in any useful sense, a private language. (Quine, 1969b, pp. 26-7)

If we treat this identity as transitive, then meanings via language are also public and a matter of social art, and if there can be no private language, there can be no private meanings. It is probably in relation to these claims that Dummett recognizes that for Quine of *Word & Object* language as a public institution plays a prominent role. Yet, the reiteration of this point in *Ontological Relativity & Other Essays*, a later work, seems to undermine Dummett's claim that after *Word & Object* Quine has reverted to his earlier position as articulated in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1953). Dummett's interpretation raises questions, which will be dealt with later.

The reasons that Quine adduces to support his claim that language is public are most often related to the process of learning language; our acquisition of meanings. The reason why there is no private language 'in any useful sense' is because a newly born human being is - to use Heidegger's metaphor - *thrown into* the language. Being bombarded with communications, it is little wonder that the child learns the kind of language that allows her to interact successfully with the people around her. This by itself says nothing about the nature of language. That is to say, Robinson Crusoe, who comes up in the discussion of private language between A. J. Ayer and Rush Rhees, is a bad example for the consideration of the possibility of private language, since his knowledge of language is rooted in his earlier years, when he was part of a community. The question of the social character of language is better addressed in the consideration of a jungle boy, who grows up isolated from the community. Nothing said so far rules out interpreting Quine as saying that language is public because that is how we learn it and

not because it cannot be otherwise. The really interesting question is whether it is an essential or an accidental property of language to be social. To say that language is social because it is learned under intersubjective circumstances does not imply that being public is an essential property of language. After all, Fodor also claims that public language is conventional and therefore social - the interesting question is if it is necessarily so.

A tentative answer to this question could be found in *Word & Object*. According to Quine, a society, using the method of penalty and reward, conditions the individual to respond appropriately to different stimuli regardless of what the source of them is supposed to be: external such as a house, or purely internal such as pain (Quine, 1960, p. 5). While the connections between words and experience among individuals can be highly diverse, these differences will have no bearing on the fairly uniform application of terms in communication. Hence, Quine's famous elephant simile:

Different persons growing up in the same language are like different bushes trimmed and trained to take the shape of identical elephants. The anatomical details of twigs and branches will fulfill the elephantine form differently from bush to bush, but the overall outward results are alike. (Quine, 1960, p. 8)

This of course is nothing but the reiteration of an earlier point: the peculiarity of sensory experience has no bearing on the meaning of words. There is, however, an important additional point - the social conditioning seems to favor uniformity in the use of language. This is so because "...[w]ords being social tools, objectivity counts towards their survival" (Quine 1960, p. 7). If words are social tools, this could be read to imply that there can be no question of words, or consequently language, where society is lacking. So, the major reason for language being public, is not that it is learned by each new member under the cumulative efforts of the community already possessing a

language, but rather that the primary function of language is communication. In this case social setting would be essential to the emergence of language. It is the drive towards successful communication that shapes the 'twigs and branches' into identical elephants. As a result, when Quine mentions the "uniformity that unites us in communication" (Quine, 1960, p. 8) it is not unreasonable to understand him as also implying that it is "communication that unites us in uniformity".³¹

It is already becoming apparent that it will not be a simple matter to 'match' Dummett's accusation to Quine's work. This task is particularly aggravated by the reading of Quine's conception of language as public due to the function of language as communication.³² On the other hand, there is nothing in the claim that words are social tools to commit Quine to common language rather than idiolect, since this claim is trivially compatible with something that Fodor might say.

Dummett himself recognized that Quine vacillates between common and idiolect conceptions of language. Quine himself might not fully recognize this inconsistency. Therefore, the point of the exposition must be viewed as consisting not so much in an effort to show where Quine gives priority to idiolect, but in exposing the roots of the tension in his work that lead to this conclusion.

4.4 To Mean or Not to Mean?

In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine is concerned with the notion of analyticity,

³¹ Obviously, the first formulation does not imply that uniformity is achieved under intersubjective circumstances, while the second does. Therefore, only second characterization implies the social character of language.

³² This should not be understood as being necessarily in conflict with Dummett's view that language is primarily a vehicle of thought. Dummett agrees with Strawson's fundamental contention that language could arise only out of social setting where communication and coordination was a common need. In "Language and Communication" (1989), Dummett says that an interesting question is whether language

which he sometimes defines with reference to Kant: “a statement is analytic when it is true by virtue of meaning and independently of fact” (Quine, 1953, p. 21). So in his concern with the notion of analyticity, Quine is also concerned with the question of meaning. What does it mean to say that a statement is analytic or true in virtue of its meaning? What sort of things are meanings?

In the first pages of “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, Quine says that what meanings are not is the extension of the terms in question. This point is strongly reiterated throughout *From a Logical Point of View*, *Word and Object* and his other works. Quine brings on Frege’s example of the “Morning Star” and the “Evening Star” in relation to singular terms, and his own example of the “creatures with kidneys” and the “creatures with hearts” in relation to general terms, to illustrate that the identity of reference does not imply the identity of meaning. In “The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics”, Quine seems to suggest that it is the confusion of reference with meaning that has led to the treatment of meaning as something on a par with external objects, as mental counterparts or ideas in the mind. Yet, according to Quine, such a view of meaning only engenders the illusion of having explained something (Quine, 1960, p. 48). Then, what are meanings if not mental entities? According to Quine:

Once the theory of meaning is sharply separated from the theory of reference, it is a short step to recognizing as the primary business of the theory of meaning simply the synonymy of the linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements; meanings themselves, as obscure intermediary entities, may well be abandoned. (Quine, 1953, p. 22)

As Quine also emphasizes in the “On What There Is”, he does not disagree with the contention that there are meaningful statements. While arguing with a hypothetical

could have become the vehicle of thought if it was not also a vehicle of communication.

philosopher McX he objects to his hypostasis of meanings as abstract, universal entities, which can be grasped by different people regardless of circumstances and the conceptual frameworks implicit in their languages. Furthermore, Quine claims that he could agree with McX in the classification of the linguistic form into meaningful and meaningless sentences and yet disagree on whether there are such things as meanings. The point of Quine's position seems to target the type of Fregean hypostasis of meaning into *actualities* on an analogy with objects of the physical world:

...McX construes meaningfulness as the having (in some sense of 'having') of some abstract entity which he calls a meaning, whereas I do not. I remain free to maintain that the fact that a given linguistic utterance is meaningful (or significant, as I prefer to say so as not to invite the hypostasis of meanings as entities) is an ultimate and irreducible matter of fact; or, I may undertake to analyze it in terms directly of what people do in the presence of the linguistic utterance in question, and other utterances similar to it. (Quine, 1953, p. 11)

In "Thought", Frege lamented the fact of being forced to deal with language: "So one fights against language, and I am compelled to occupy myself with language although it is not my proper concern here" (Frege, 1918, p. 13). Unlike Frege, Quine does not consider language as an impediment to the analysis of meaning; on the contrary, it is the analysis of language or *what people do* with language that is the proper concern of a philosopher if he is to get at meaning. Just like Dummett, Quine wants to avoid the mythology of the third realm and yet retain the idea that sentences can be meaningful or significant, this he does by directing his attention to language and use.

In his article "Use and Its Place in Meaning" Quine draws attention to the word 'mean' as an intransitive verb. To mean is to do something:

An expression means; meaning is what it does, or what some expressions do. To say that two expressions are alike in meaning, then, is to say that they mean alike. Some expressions sound alike, some mean alike. (Quine,

1981, p. 45)

If one keeps the verb as intransitive, there is no temptation to assume something that gets meant. Quine adopts essentially Wittgenstein's position with regard to meaning: meaning is use, or to put it in Dewey's terms, meaning is a property of behaviour. As a result, he says: "...we can take the behavior, the use, and let the meaning go" (Quine, 1981, p. 46).

The reduction of Frege's ontology, the undermining of the view of meaning as independent of language entities remained a common and unifying theme throughout Quine's work. But is there no legitimate way of talking of meaning of sentences if one is careful not to assume an overpopulated ontology? In "Use and Its Place in Meaning", Quine suggests that one can treat the verb 'mean' as transitive, on the condition that one keeps in mind that its intransitive use is primary.

...[O]nce we understand what it is for expressions to mean alike, it is easy and convenient to invoke some objects arbitrarily and let them be meant - thus reconstituting our verb as transitive. In choosing a domain of objects for this purpose and assigning them to expressions as their so-called meanings, all that matters is that the same ones be assigned always and only to expressions that mean alike. If we can manage this, we can blithely say thereafter that expressions that mean alike have the same meaning. We should merely bear in mind that 'mean alike' comes first, and the so-called meanings are then concocted. (Quine, 1981, p. 45)

The reconstruction of the verb 'mean' as transitive is contingent upon the success of the investigation of what it is to *mean alike*. This reconstruction can be justified only if sufficient sense can be made of synonymy. Quine's preoccupation with the notion of synonymy reflects his concern with the ontological status of meaning and the objectivity of sense.

It is not hard to notice that ontological preoccupations seem to play a great part in Quine's theory of meaning. What seems to come through, as a prelude to almost any

discussion of meaning, is Quine's insistence that meaning is not different in its ontological status than any of the physical or theoretical objects. Ultimately, meanings and objects are in the same boat; meanings are posits, on a par with physical objects, their number is subject to pragmatic considerations of economy and convenience. It is not unreasonable to see Quine as trying to level the field, to defend the physical world from the secondary place assigned to it by the Cartesian *Cogito*, or Frege's insistence that the objectivity of the external world is itself based on the objectivity of thought. While Quine does not deny the justice of the latter claim, he denies the difference and priority in ontological sense.

From this point of view, it is also easy to see the purpose of the project that Quine undertakes in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". The main target is the notion of analyticity: the idea that some statements are true in virtue of their meaning alone. The notion of analytic truth is misleading insofar as it implies a vision of meaning as independent of language and circumstances of use. In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine gives the background for analyticity with reference to Aristotle's notion of essence, there he says: "Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word" (Quine, 1953, p. 22) suggesting the recurrence of the same phantom of meant entities. It is not surprising that the key to the treatment of analyticity in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" is the same as the key to the treatment of meaning in "Use and Its Place in Meaning" - one must understand what it is for expressions to *mean alike*. In both cases, the concern is with the notion of synonymy. What is at stake in this understanding is the notion of meaning and its ontological status.

4.5 Making 'Sense' of Analyticity and Synonymy

One of the purported ways to show when statements *mean alike* is to point to analytical statements, the truth of which is purportedly based on the synonymy of expressions contained within them. From the beginning, Quine divides analytic statements into two major categories: logically true, such as 1) *No unmarried man is married*, and the second category typified by such statements as 2) *No bachelor is married*. As Quine points out, if we presume a prior inventory of logical particles, the first statement will be unproblematic, that is true under any conditions. In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", unlike "Truth by Convention" (1936), Quine is interested in the second and not the first sort of statements. Presumably, the second category can be turned into the first by the substitution of synonyms for synonyms. If this can be accomplished, and an adequate account of synonymy can be given, then presumably analyticity could be defended.

In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine's approach to the consideration of the notion of analyticity can be characterized in two ways. The first way is an attempt to explain synonymy by appeal to analyticity and analyticity by appeal to Carnap's notion of semantic rule. This approach fails.³³ The other approach is to explain analyticity by

³³ The attempt to explain analyticity of statements for an artificial language L by reference to a semantical rule for that language that stipulates that a statement K is analytic for L, contains the expression 'analytic for' which remains unexplained. Therefore, such an attempt is uninformative. Another avenue that this approach can take is to explain analyticity by saying that a statement is analytic for L if it is true according to a semantical rule; thus, avoiding the mention of unexplained 'analytic for' in the formulation. The problem is that in this case we have the unexplained notion of semantical rule, which takes the place of 'analytic for'. The expression 'semantical rule of' is as much in need of clarification as 'analytic for'. An apparent escape can be seen in the comparison of semantical rules to a notion of postulate. Given a set of postulates, we can say what a postulate is. Similarly, given a set of semantical rules, a semantical rule is defined simply as a member of the class. But given simply a notation, who is to say which statements count as postulates or semantical rules? Quine says: "... But from this point of view no one signalization of a subclass of the truths of L is intrinsically more a semantical rule than another; and if 'analytic' means 'true by semantical rules'", no one truth of L is analytic to the exclusion of another. (Quine, 1953, p. 35) For Quine, the notion of semantical rules cannot explain analyticity, and can be of interest only in so far as the notion of analyticity is already understood.

appeal to synonymy, and synonymy by appeal to lexical,³⁴ explicative,³⁵ or conventional definitions,³⁶ state descriptions,³⁷ interchangeability *salva veritate*,³⁸ or methods of verification.³⁹ This second approach also fails, because each of these attempts fail. For

³⁴ The approach that could be called *contextual* or *lexical* definition, attempts to explain analyticity by reducing the supposed synonyms to a relation of a definiens to definiendum. This approach fails since in reality it presupposes the synonymy instead of explaining it. What is overlooked in such an approach is the explanation of the “necessary and sufficient connections “that must exist between two phrases to count them as synonymous”. As Quine points out “whatever these interconnections may be, ordinarily they are grounded in usage”. Therefore, “Definitions reporting selected instances of synonymy, come as reports upon usage”. (Quine, 1953 p. 25) However, to appeal to usage is not to explain it. While this approach can account for the phenomena of synonymy in language, it cannot explain the traditional notion of analyticity, with which Quine is concerned in the “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”.

³⁵ A fate similar to lexical definition befalls the attempt at *explicative definition*, where a definiendum is shown to be synonymous with a definiens that supplements, and to a certain extent, explains the definiendum. This approach, while seemingly avoiding an outright synonymy of definiendum and definiens, nevertheless depends on the synonymy of contexts in which the terms are used. According to Quine, the synonymy of contexts is essential for the explicative function that definiens is supposed to provide. This approach generates the relation of synonymy between definiendum and definiens that did not exist before, but this relation owes its genesis to relation of synonymy between contexts.

³⁶ The definition by *convention*, while mentioned, is not seriously considered by Quine. This approach does not rest on a prior notion of synonymy. On the contrary, the definiens becomes synonymous with the definiendum because it is expressly made so. While this approach makes no assumptions about prior synonymy, it also can add nothing to the explanation of synonymy relations in cases that do not fall under stipulative definitions.

³⁷ Quine finds that Carnap’s proposed solution based on state descriptions is not apt to the task of explaining analyticity. The solution, based on an exhaustive assignment of truth-values to all non-compound statements of the language, attempts to explain analytic statements as statements that are true under any possible state description. According to Quine this solution could, at best, reconstruct the logical truth of analytic statements, but fails to capture their analyticity. This approach cannot take into account the fact that statements are not mutually independent, and, as a result, could assign the same truth values to “John is married” and “John is a bachelor”, and, as a result, make “No bachelor is married” a synthetic statement. While perhaps adequate to explain the issues of induction and probability, this approach cannot carry the burden of explaining analyticity in the desired sense.

³⁸ According to this view “Bachelor” and “unmarried man” are synonymous since they can be substituted for each other in various contexts without a change of truth-value. Quine is interested in the notion of *cognitive synonymy*; a type of equivalence between expressions such that when they are interchanged, the truth values of the propositions in which they appear remain unaffected. As Quine points out, the substitution must allow for the equivalence between “a) Necessarily, all and only unmarried men are unmarried men, and b) Necessarily, all and only bachelors are unmarried men”. The problem, according to Quine, is that this argument is based on a modal adverb such as “necessarily”, which in turn is defined in relation to analyticity. But how can the use of such an adverb be allowed when the notion of analyticity is what is in question? So according to Quine, the argument “is not flatly circular, but something like it. It has the form, figuratively speaking, of a closed curve in space”. (Quine, 1953, p. 30) Alternatively, for an extensional language any two predicates true of the same object will be interchangeable *salva veritate*. However, the problem is that such an account of synonymy will put such statements as “all bachelors are unmarried men” on a par with “all creatures with kidneys are creatures with hearts”, and thereby throw out the baby with the bathwater. An extensional agreement may perhaps guarantee the truth of a statement such as “all bachelors are unmarried men”, but it will neither explain, nor guarantee the analyticity of it.

³⁹ The verificationist approach claims that two expressions mean alike or are synonymous if the method of verification for one is the same as the method of verification of the other. And indeed, according to Quine, this method could succeed if it were not based on a dogma that claims that every statement has an

Quine, no clear sense can be made of analyticity.

One of the consequences of erasing the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements is that the distinction drawn by Carnap between questions of ontology and scientific hypothesis is also undermined. With the fall of the second dogma it turns out that there are no statements that are immune to revision, the difference between physical objects and abstract classes is only one of degree:

Moreover, the abstract entities, which are the substance of mathematics - ultimately the classes of classes and so on up - are another posit in the same spirit. Epistemologically these are myths on the same footing with physical objects and gods, neither better nor worse except for differences in the degree to which they expedite our dealings with sense experience. (Quine, 1953, p. 45)

Is Quine's claim that there is a difference only of degree between abstract and physical objects, theoretical, and observation sentences, related to his claim that the intransitive use of 'mean' is primary? There seems to be definite evidence to suggest this. The main upshot of denying this that certain statements (that is the analytic statements) are true in virtue of their meaning is that the truth of statements is not determined in isolation from the interconnected web of beliefs that form the fabric of language. A change at the periphery can cause changes in the logically related concepts in the interior of the language or it can cause changes in the statements of logical relations themselves. Pragmatic considerations are the guide to the route the readjustment takes. But, in general, what this view implies is that statements do not have their own, independent

independent basis of verification. This approach fails because reductionism fails: statements about experience could not be translated into statements about our immediate experience. Quine's criticism of verificationism reveals the dogma on which it is based, allowing Quine to formulate the alternative as holism. "A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field. Truth-values have to be readjusted over some of our statements. Re-evaluation of some statements entails re-evaluation of others, because of their logical interconnections-the logical laws being in turn simply certain further statements of the system.." (Quine, 1953, p. 42)

fund of significance, whether statements are like “bachelors are unmarried men” or “Dr. Phil graduated from Princeton”. The ontological status of abstract objects in the interior of the field is on a par with the ontological status of the physical objects closer to the periphery; both are equally subject to revision in accordance with pragmatic considerations.

According to Quine, all attempts to make sense of meaning alike by making sense of analyticity fail. But where they fail, Quine lays a foundation for his own position on what it is for two expressions to *mean alike*.

One of the important points made by Quine in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, was to show that *meaning alike* or the relation of synonymy on which the analytical statements seem to be based, cannot be taken for granted. The argument had a direct relevance to Frege’s notion of proposition, and, in general, undermined the hypostasis of meaning into entities. It is not without reason that in *From A Logical Point of View*, the paper “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” follows “On What There Is”, which deals extensively with the question of ontology and particularly the question of Frege’s hypostasis. In this paper Quine says:

The problem of explaining these adjectives ‘significant’ and ‘synonymous’ with some degree of clarity and rigor - preferably, as I see it, in terms of behavior - is as difficult as important. But the explanatory value of special and irreducible intermediary entities called meanings is surely illusory (...) I have argued further that we can view utterances as significant, and as synonymous and heteronymous with one another, without countenancing a realm of entities called meanings. (Quine, 1953, p. 12)

Quine has shown that the decision to consider some statements as analytic and not others cannot be made without a certain degree of arbitrariness. One cannot defend a view of analyticity by appealing to the assumption that the two parts of the statement ‘mean the

same thing'. Quine's analysis exposes the arbitrary character of that assumption.

Yet, this is not to be taken as a sign that synonymy and, as a result, the significance of statements cannot be explained. As is obvious from Quine's statement, his approach to the explanation of the intransitive use of 'to mean' aspires to do so in terms of behaviour or the use of the terms and expressions made by the speakers. As Quine puts it "we can take the behavior, the use, and let the meanings go" (Quine, 1981, p. 46). The essential question for Quine at this point is what course such an explanation is to take. If the behaviour of the speakers is to explain the significance of terms and expressions, the question for Quine is, what feature of that behaviour is to be taken as the criterion. Is the meaning of a word constituted by the use of that word in all possible contexts? Would possible use of the word in novel contexts count towards its fund of significance? What Quine needs is to decide on an effective approach to giving the meaning of expressions.

In "The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics", Quine picks up on the fact that there are two main ways in which it is common to speak of the meaning of expressions: expressions as "having" a meaning and expressions as "sharing" a meaning. To give an explanation of the synonymy of two expressions, to explain in virtue of what the two expressions *mean alike*, is to give an account of meaning of expressions in terms of "sharing" of the meaning. To catalogue all of the synonymy pairs is the task of the lexicographer. To make sense of the significance that an expression has, independently of its synonymy relations, to catalogue all the possible significant forms and rules of their composition is the task of a grammarian. Both of these tasks, Quine reminds us, can be carried out without the hypostasis of meaning.

Quine finds that the grammarian's approach is hampered by the lack of a non-

circular definition of a phoneme. In enumerating significant forms, the grammarian must delimit the units of significance. However, the grammarian cannot do this by appeal to the interchangeability of utterances within contexts without in effect giving up on the approach in favor of the lexicographer. In his reconstruction of all the significant sequences, the grammarian becomes dependent on the notion of a phoneme, and the the notion of a phoneme depends on that of synonymy. In short, the grammarian needs an independent and a non-semantic way of determining the identity of phonemes, which he lacks. Even if he did succeed in obtaining such a definition (Quine, 1953 p. 51), the new problem will be that of specifying the class of morphemes or the class of all short significant forms that are not resolvable into shorter significant forms, and this will depend on the notion of a significant sequence. Quine says: “We are thus squarely confronted with one of the twin offspring of the problem of meaning, namely, the problem of defining the general notion of significant sequence” (Quine, 1953, p. 53).

Quine considers a way of delimiting a significant sequence; significant sequences are those sequences “which could be uttered without reactions suggesting bizarreness of idiom” (Quine, 1953, p. 53). According to Quine, the problem with this approach is that the ‘could’ in this definition cannot be reduced. The reconstruction that is the aim of the grammarian requires him to include the classes of sequences that include all of the observed and unobserved utterances, as well as all those utterances that will ever be observed in the future, but, in addition, it requires him to include the class of utterances that ‘could’ possibly be uttered without the bizarre reaction. But as Quine puts it, the membership of the last class is infinite and only a small finite part of it will ever be specified. As a result, the final form of the grammatical theory will be determined by

pragmatic considerations:

Our basis for saying what ‘could’ be generally consists, I suggest, in what *is* plus *simplicity* of the laws whereby we describe and extrapolate what is. I see no more objective way of construing the *conditio irrealis*. (Quine, 1953, p. 54) (...) I urged that the operational content of this ‘could’ is incomplete, leaving the scope for free supplementary determinations of a grammatical theory in the light of simplicity considerations. (Quine, 1953, p. 64)

The second route to explain what it is “to mean” is to take the lexicographer’s way and look at what it is to *mean alike*. This approach targets the meaning in the sense of the “sharing of meaning” and is based on the exploration of the relation of synonymy. For Quine, this seems to be the preferred course of action, since he uses this approach most frequently. Yet this does not mean that this approach is unproblematic. As Quine is careful to note, if the grammarian requires the possession of the prior notion of significant sequence, the lexicographer, whose work consists in cataloguing the synonymous forms, requires a prior notion of synonymy. In “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, Quine has shown how elusive this notion can be, in “The problem of Meaning in Linguistics”, his work is to reconstruct the notion in empirical terms.

In “Use and Its Place in Meaning” (Quine, 1976) Quine asks: If meaning is primarily a feature of behaviour, as Dewey rightly pointed out, then what property of this behaviour should be taken as primary? In this paper Quine simply reiterates the question he asked in “The problem of Meaning in Linguistics” (Quine, 1953). The answer Quine gives in “Use and Its Place in Meaning” is the same as the one he advances in “The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics”:

The behavioral doctrine tells us that this relation of synonymy or sameness of meaning, is sameness of use... . How, then, may we go about studying the use of words? (...) For a provisional solution, consider what we often actually do when asked the meaning of a word: we define it by equating it

to some more familiar word or phrase. (Quine, 1976, pp. 46-7)

The lexicographer proceeds by cataloguing the pairs of synonyms. However, Quine adds that direct synonyms would account only for a limited number of entries in the dictionary. Therefore, the cataloguing process is characterized by paraphrases or glosses or rather giving partial synonyms and stage directions. One such instance is the gloss: “addled” is “spoiled”, with the added stage directions “said of an egg” (Quine, 1953, p. 58). So, the lexicographer knows how to catalogue the synonyms but how to pick them out? The problem at this point is to obtain a credible and non-circular definition of synonymy; when do the expressions count as synonymous? In search of such a definition Quine turns to the device he considered in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”: *interchangeability salva veritate*. Two expressions are synonymous if their interchange within a sentence preserves the truth of the sentence. Quine finds this definition lacking since it obviously fails to preserve what we need. He says:

...[T]he lexicographer cannot answer (b) with *veritate*. The interchangeability which he seeks in synonymy must not merely be such as to assure that true statements remain true, and false ones false, when synonyms are substituted within them; it must assure further that statements go over into statements with which they as wholes are somehow synonymous. (Quine, 1953, p. 57)

This is where the circularity enters into the definition of synonymy. The expressions are synonymous if their substitution leaves their contexts synonymous. So, the definition is dependent on the synonymy of the contexts. Quine welcomes this circularity because it exposes the fact that the starting point for synonymy definition must be the synonymy of “long segments of discourse” rather than short forms. “...[I]t has the virtue of hinting that substitution is not the main point, and that what we need in the first place is some notion

of synonymy for long segments of discourse” (Quine, 1953, p. 57). This position ties in neatly with Quine’s holist thesis in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” or at least the more modest versions of it that he elaborates on in his later work.

4.6 Cognitive Equivalence

The question is, then, how to get a proper definition of the synonymy for long segments of discourse? In choosing his approach, Quine reverts to his formulation of the notion of *cognitive equivalence* that is already mentioned in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”. In “Use and Its Place in Meaning” Quine says:

What is more to the point than the relation of synonymy of words to words and phrases, then, as the central concept for semantics, is the relation of semantical equivalence of whole sentences. Given this concept, we readily define the other: a word is synonymous to a word or a phrase if the substitution of the one for the other in a sentence always yields an equivalent sentence. And when do sentences count as semantically equivalent? A provisional answer from a behaviorist point of view is evident: they are equivalent if their use is the same. Or, trying to put the matter less vaguely, we may say that they are equivalent if their utterance would be prompted by the same stimulatory situations. (Quine, 1976, pp. 47-8)

As Quine points out, it is unfair to demand that the utterances are prompted by exactly the same situations, for something has to account for the reason why a given form was uttered rather than its synonym. But, according to Quine, those reasons are not that relevant, and equally irrelevant are the particular motives of the individual that might come into play in prompting the utterance and, thus, skew the results of the determination. Quine proposes to cut through this by limiting our attention to the *cognitive equivalence* of sentences or the sameness of truth-conditions under relevant circumstances (Quine, 1976, p. 48). This approach is also useful because it allows to

prompt the hearer for 'yes' or 'no' answers while varying the utterances and the circumstances. Relying on Mill's notion of concomitant variation, Quine suggests that the best way to approach the determination of cognitive equivalence of sentences is to concentrate - at least at the beginning - on occasion sentences or sentences with truth values that change from occasion to occasion and that typically contain indexical words. If an individual gives matching verdicts to two sentences regardless of circumstances, then the two sentences are cognitively equivalent for him:

Now if our interrogated informant is disposed to give matching verdicts on two such occasion sentences on each occasion on which we query the two sentences, no matter what the attendant circumstances, then certainly the two sentences are said to be cognitively equivalent for him. One such pair is "He is a bachelor" and "He is an unmarried man". Another such pair, for a particular speaker, may be "There goes John's old tutor" and "There goes Dr. Park". (Quine, 1976, p. 49)

What is interesting is that this first step in the process of determining synonymy relations is limited to a single individual and this limitation is due to a large extent to the fact that cognitive equivalence at this point depends on giving matching verdicts under similar *stimulatory conditions*:

Cognitive equivalence of two occasion sentences for a speaker consists in his being disposed to give matching verdicts when queried in matching stimulatory circumstances. We can easily make this notion of stimulatory circumstances more explicit. It is a question of the external forces that impinge on the interrogated subject at the time, and these only insofar as they impinge on his nervous system by triggering his sensory receptors. (Quine, 1976, p. 50)

Indeed, already in *Word & Object*, Quine gives his reasons for speaking of proximal rather than distal stimuli. To a great extent these reasons seem to be methodological. Quine says:

It is important to think of what prompts the native's assent to 'Gavagai?'

as stimulations and not rabbits. Stimulations can remain the same though the rabbit be supplanted by a counterfeit In experimentally equating the uses of 'Gavagai' and 'Rabbit' it is the stimulations that must be made to match and not animals A visual stimulation is best identified, for present purposes, with the patterns of chromatic irradiation of the eye. (Quine, 1960, p. 31)

In *Word & Object*, Quine calls this type of equivalence the “crude concept of empirical meaning”. He elaborates on it by specifying that the stimulus meaning of a sentence for a particular speaker is the ordered pair of the *affirmative stimulus meaning*, which consists of all the stimulations that would prompt the informant’s assent, and the *negative stimulus meaning*, or all the stimulations that would prompt his dissent. The relation of stimulus meaning presented in *Word & Object* (1960) to the notion of cognitive equivalence presented in “Use and Its Place in Meaning” (1976) is this: two sentences are cognitively equivalent for an individual if their stimulus meanings coincide.

What is immediately obvious is that there is no way of comparing stimulus meanings between any two persons. As Quine reiterates in “Use and Its Place in Meaning”:

The stimulation that he [the speaker] undergoes from moment to moment is the set of receptors triggered at that moment. This makes good sense of sameness or difference of stimulation of that person from moment to moment. It does not make sense of sameness of stimulation of two persons, since two persons do not share the same receptors. They do not even have exactly homologous receptors, if we get down to minutiae. (Quine, 1976, p. 50)

So, in a sense, while we can say that two sentences are cognitively equivalent for a particular individual, because he gives matching verdicts to the queries under all stimulatory circumstances, the same cannot be said if we want to determine whether the sentences are cognitively equivalent for two individuals. We cannot affirm the

equivalence based on sameness of stimulus meaning, because we have no way of determining the identity of stimulatory conditions for two individuals.

Stimulations might diverge radically among people. But does that mean that synonymy relations cannot hold between the utterances of different individuals? Is this the foundation for Quine's scepticism towards meaning? It is not. Stimulus meaning is the starting point for Quine. This starting point allows us to determine the cognitive equivalence for an individual. But, just because stimulations cannot be compared between two individuals, it does not mean that cognitive equivalence cannot extend beyond the individual mind. One must keep in mind that stimulus meaning is a result that can be experimentally obtained from the observation of a person's behaviour. While stimulations cannot be compared between individuals, stimulus meaning can be. This comparison forms the basis of Quine's notion of the social cognitive equivalence of sentences. The notion of social cognitive equivalence derives from the overlap of cognitive equivalence for individuals.

But this is all very well, for I am not having to equate stimulations between persons. The notion of cognitive equivalence of occasion sentences for a single person rests on sameness and difference of stimulations of that person alone, and the subsequent summation over society appeals then to cognitive equivalence for each separate person, with no equation of stimulations between persons. (Quine, 1976, p. 51)

Yet, as Quine insists, there is a class of occasion sentences, which, while they do have cognitive equivalence for individuals, will not have social cognitive equivalence. This discrepancy is blamed on what makes up a part of the collateral information that plays an important role in the individual's acquisition of certain verbal dispositions. Quine brings out this difference in the following two pairs of cognitively equivalent sentences:

- 1) "He is a bachelor" and "He is an unmarried man"
- 2) "There goes John's old tutor" and "There goes Dr. Park"

It is obvious that while the first pair can be considered cognitively equivalent for all the speakers of the language, the second pair cannot be. Quine calls this the "intrusion of collateral information". For instance, in the case of the second pair the relevant collateral information includes the past glimpses of Dr. Park tutoring John or other clues to that effect. Since this information is not shared among the speakers of the language, the second pair will not be cognitively equivalent for all its members, or even a significant number of them. The rich diversity of the personal histories of the individuals speaking the language accounts for the individual character of their beliefs, and one can go only so far in making clear the distinction between language and belief. One can understand Quine's view of the distinction between meaning and collateral information in a similar vein. He says: "I suspect that no systematic experimental sense is to be made of a distinction between usage due to meaning and usage due to the generally shared collateral information" (Quine, 1960, p. 43).

The notion of social cognitive equivalence or cognitive equivalence for a language in "Use and Its Place in Meaning" (1976) has its roots in what Quine called in *Word & Object* (1960) the observation sentences. The sentences that make up the set of sentences cognitively equivalent for a language are the ones that are cognitively equivalent for the speakers regardless of their personal histories. Quine defines observation sentences as sentences that are impervious to collateral information.

Occasion sentences whose stimulus meanings vary none under the influence of collateral information may naturally be called observation sentences, and their stimulus meanings may without fear of contradiction be said to do full justice to their meanings... . For, in behavioral terms, an occasion sentence may be said to be the more observational the more

nearly its stimulus meanings for different speakers tend to coincide.
(Quine, 1960, pp. 42-3)

The second pair of cognitively equivalent sentences introduced above qualifies as a pair of observation sentences, despite the fact - as Quine points out in *Word & Object* - that traditionally the term "observation sentence" referred to sense data. The sentences "He is a bachelor" and "He is an unmarried man" will be equivalent for all speakers of the language, regardless of the fact that due to the lack of shared collateral information there will be no general agreement on who these sentences can be correctly applied to.

There is also another distinction between observational and unobservational sentences that is worth noting. If one recalls Quine's metaphor of a language as a field of forces connected to experience at the periphery, which he presented in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", then one will have little difficulty guessing that the further the sentence is from the periphery and the more its meaning is contingent on connections with other sentences the less observational the sentence will be:

If a sentence is one that (like 'Red' and 'Rabbit') is inculcated mostly by something like direct ostension, the uniformity will lie at the surface and there will be little variation in stimulus meaning; the sentence will be highly observational. If it is one that (like 'Bachelor') is inculcated through connection with other sentences, linking up thus indirectly with past stimulations of other sorts than those that serve directly to prompt present assent to the sentence, then its stimulus meaning will vary with the speakers' pasts, and the sentence will count as very unobservational. The stimulus meaning of a very unobservational occasion sentence for a speaker is a product of two factors, a fairly standard set of sentence-to-sentence connections and a random personal history; hence the largely random character of the stimulus meaning from speaker to speaker.
(Quine, 1960, p. 45)

The fate of the unobservational occasion sentences is of serious concern for Quine. In *Word & Object* he maintains that "[s]timulus synonymy, or sameness of stimulus

meaning, is as good a standard of synonymy for non-observational occasion sentences as for observation sentences as long as we stick to one speaker” (Quine, 1960, p. 46). This means that in the case of unobservational sentences and in the face of the intrusion of collateral information one can fall back onto intrasubjective stimulus synonymy, or stimulus synonymy for a single individual without an attempt to extend the synonymy over speakers. The only other way of tackling this issue is to increase the observability of the sentence in question. According to Quine, “the notion of observability is relative to the modulus of stimulation” (Quine, 1960, p. 43). Therefore, if one experimentally extends the modulus or the duration of the stimulation, one will reveal the collateral information that plays such an important part in the stimulus meaning of unobservational sentences for an individual. This will allow sorting out the idiosyncrasies due to personal histories that make up the discrepancy between cognitive equivalence for an individual and cognitive equivalence for a language.

4.7 Quine’s Priority of Idiolect over Language

It should by now be obvious that the difference between cognitive equivalence for an individual and cognitive equivalence for a language forms for Quine the difference between Idiolect and Language. In “Use and Its Place in Meaning”, while discussing the difference between the aforementioned pairs of equivalent sentences, Quine says:

These two pairs of examples differ significantly from each other, in that the second pair qualifies as cognitively equivalent for a particular speaker, or a few speakers, while the first pair would qualify as cognitively equivalent for each speaker of the language. It is the difference between cognitive equivalence for an individual, or for an idiolect, and cognitive equivalence for a language. (Quine, 1976, p. 49)

To put this in the terms of *Word & Object*, the difference between the language and

idiolect is made up by the intrasubjective cognitive equivalence of the *non-observational occasion sentences* contained in the latter. This, as became obvious from the passages in *Word & Object*, is due to the intrusion of collateral information and the different personal histories that helped to inculcate the stimulus meaning of those sentences in the individual speakers of the language. Whether “There goes John’s old tutor” and “There goes Dr. Park” have the same stimulus meaning for a person, depends heavily on whether that person has access to the information that identifies one as the other. Because such information is not equally accessible to all speakers of the language, there is an inevitable difference between the set of cognitively equivalent sentences that make up one’s idiolect and the set of cognitively equivalent sentences that make up a common language. This point would seem fairly trivial if it were not compounded by Quine’s emphasis on the conceptual priority of the idiolect over the common language, which provoked Dummett’s criticism. Quine says:

Cognitive equivalence for the individual, however, is the prior notion conceptually, that is, in respect of criterion. Two occasion sentences are equivalent for him if he is disposed, on every occasion of query, to give them matching verdicts or, on doubtful occasions, no verdict. The summation over society comes afterward: the sentences are equivalent for the language if equivalent for each speaker taken separately. (Quine, 1976, pp. 49-50)

This passage from “Use and Its Place in Meaning” (1976) contains one of the clearest admissions on the part of Quine, of the priority of cognitive equivalence for individuals over cognitive equivalence for a language. This admission has a strong resonance in Dummett’s criticism as expressed in *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993). One might recall that in that book Dummett proposes something that might qualify as a “patch theory” to explain Quine’s open behaviourism and prioritization of idiolect. He suggests

that Quine's early work, such as "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1953), is characterized by a picture of language as idiolect, and that it was later replaced by a view of language as common language in *Word & Object* (1960). Dummett says:

Subsequently, in *Word & Object*, Quine modified this image to take account of the social character of language. Many of the notions introduced in that book depend essentially upon there being many speakers of the language. For example, among what Quine calls 'occasion sentences', 'observation sentences' (those giving pure reports of observation) are distinguished by the constancy of their stimulus meaning from one speaker to another (the 'stimulus meaning' of a sentence consisting in the propensity of different sensory stimuli to prompt assent to or dissent from it). The variation, from speaker to speaker, in the stimulus meaning of an occasion sentence that is not an observation sentence reflects the difference in background knowledge possessed by individual speakers. (Dummett, 1993, pp. 148-9)

However, as Dummett continues: "After *Word & Object*, however, Quine has tended to revert to the perspective of 'Two Dogmas', according to which the primary notion is that of idiolect" (Dummett, 1993, p. 149).

There are at least two issues that can be raised concerning Dummett's evaluation of Quine. The first issue is that given the evidence so far, there seems to be no discontinuity in Quine's work. In fact, if anything, Quine's work could be represented as a continuous spiral, where each new circle is substantially a reiteration and an elaboration of a preceding one. Furthermore, as it was shown, Quine's reasons for introducing the notion of stimulus meaning as the ground for establishing the synonymy relation were outlined as early as "The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics" (1953), an essay that follows "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *From a Logical Point of View* (1953) and complements it in so far as it reconstitutes the synonymy relation on an empirical basis. In that essay, Quine says: "Synonymy of two forms is supposed vaguely to consist in approximate likeness of the situation which evoke the two forms, and an approximate

likeness in the effect on the hearer” (Quine, 1953, p. 60). It seems obvious that the concentration on the effect on the individual is the empirical foundation of what later will be called *stimulus meaning*. Furthermore, in *Word & Object*, Quine does not in any way abandon this method of pinning down the synonymy relation. In section 8 “Stimulation and Stimulus Meaning”, in *Word & Object*, Quine develops it further, and by wedding it to concomitant variations of stimulations and by taking charge of the questions, he turns it into a behavioural method. Finally, if “Use and Its Place in Meaning” (1976) can be taken as an example of Quine’s later work, it can serve to illustrate that Quine’s prioritization of idiolect stems from his behavioural approach to meaning and, in particular, the synonymy relation, which is substantially the same throughout his work up to this point. Thus, contrary to Dummett’s opinion, there seem to be no fluctuation on this point within the work of Quine.

The second issue that can be raised in relation to Dummett’s criticism is related to the way Dummett interprets Quine’s emphasis on the priority of idiolect over common language. Dummett praises Quine for introducing observation sentences in *Word & Object*, thereby bringing the importance of the common language to the surface, and he also seem to appreciate the notion of ‘background’ or collateral information as something that accounts for differences in observationality of sentences. But this is also Quine’s position in his post-*Word & Object* ‘period’ when he emphasizes idiolect. So it seems that not only there is no substantial difference between Quine’s views, but that the views of *Word & Object* that Dummett praises as giving the priority to the notion of common language are identical to the views in which Quine explicitly gives the priority to idiolect. In other words, the results that Dummett praises as giving the priority to common

language, Quine uses to affirm the priority of idiolect - which suggests that either Dummett misconstrues Quine's understanding of the priority, or he targets something else by his accusation.

When Quine says that cognitive equivalence for an idiolect is prior in respect to criteria and that cognitive equivalence for a language is defined as a 'subsequent summation over society', Dummett could understand him as suggesting that idiolect has priority both epistemologically and analytically - to borrow Davis's definitions.⁴⁰ That is to say, common language can be elucidated analytically in terms of idiolect, but not the other way around, and one can find out epistemologically about common language only by finding out about idiolect. This could have lead Dummett to conclude that for Quine the relation between idiolect and common language is that idiolect figures in the *causal synthetic definition* of common language.⁴¹ In other words, there are common languages in so far as some idiolects overlap.

But does this conclusion follow from what Quine says? When Quine speaks of 'subsequent summation over society' it does seem that he speaks of the definition of common language as something derivative from idiolect. This suggests idiolect has analytic priority over common language. But does this suggest that idiolect is independent of common language - which is the only way it could figure in a causal synthetic definition of common language? Quine's explicit declaration of the priority of idiolect - by itself - does not justify such a conclusion. Throughout his work, Quine is preoccupied with issues of methodology: he is more interested in how one can recognize

⁴⁰ Martin Davis "Philosophy of Language" in *The Blackwell companion to philosophy*, E. James and N. Bunnin (eds.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996) p. 97.

⁴¹ In *Principles of Logic* (1969) Michalos, Alex C. explains the causal synthetic definition in this way: "Casual or genetic definitions are an important species of definition by synthesis. When someone defines a

synonymy relations between sentences and what behavioural criteria one can legitimately employ in affirming their equivalence, than in explaining the synonymy itself and how it came about. Quine's work is primarily driven by epistemological concerns. In this light, the priority of idiolect that Quine affirms in "Use and Its Place in Meaning" (1976) could be justified methodologically. The definition of common language that one could draw from his analysis would be an operational definition of common language: we know what common language is when we know where idiolects overlap.⁴²

This interpretation of the priority of idiolect makes more sense in relation to Quine's position on stimulus meaning and observationality. In *Word & Object* (1960), Quine focuses on the cognitive equivalence of sentences for an individual as opposed to cognitive equivalence for a language because of the ease with which it lends itself to examination. He says: "Altogether the equating of stimulus meanings works out far better intrasubjectively than between subjects; it goes beyond observation sentences, it absorbs shock, and it better accommodates verbal stimulations" (Quine, 1960, p. 48). Yet, at the same time as Quine appreciates the ease of employment of stimulus meaning to determine the cognitive equivalence for individuals, he also depreciates the importance of idiolect in illuminating the semantics of a language. In *Word & Object* (1960), he says:

The stimulus meaning of 'Bachelor' cannot be treated as its 'meaning' by any stretch of the imagination, unless perhaps accompanied by a stretch of the modulus (...) The less susceptible the stimulus meaning of an occasion sentence is to the influence of collateral information, the less absurdity there is in thinking of the stimulus meaning of the sentence as the meaning of the sentence. (Quine, 1960, p. 42)

word by describing the *genesis* or *cause* of the thing designated by the word, he gives a **causal** or **genetic** definition."

⁴² In *Principles of Logic* (1969) Alex Michalos explains operational definition in this way: When someone defines a word by specifying that if certain operations are performed, then the word is applicable to a particular thing if and only if certain results are obtained, he gives an **operational** definition.

Later on Quine adds: "It is for the observation sentences in some such sense that the notion of stimulus meaning constitutes a reasonable notion of meaning" (Quine, 1960, p. 44). Furthermore, in "Use and Its Place in Meaning" (1976), Quine says regarding the difference between cognitive equivalence for the individual and cognitive equivalence for a language: "It is the latter we are interested in when we expound the semantics of a language" (Quine, 1976, p. 49). Indeed, the notion of idiolect, when viewed in this light, becomes important methodologically, but otherwise shows itself to be very trivial. If I am the only person who has the benefit of knowing, from previous experience, that Dr. Park used to tutor John, then the sentences "There goes John's old tutor" and "There goes Dr. Park" will be cognitively equivalent for me, and presumably nobody else, provided John does not know his tutor's name and vice versa. However, it would be useless for someone to use these sentences interchangeably in a conversation, hoping for comprehension in the absence of any ostensive clues as to the equivalence of those sentences. Such cognitive equivalence becomes interesting only insofar as it is accompanied by a 'stretch' of the modulus, which would effectively eliminate the privileged position I found myself in, by exposing the private collateral information that put me there and thereby enabled communication.

In "Use and Its Place in Meaning" (1976), Quine feels that the relation of cognitive equivalence is in good shape. Relying on behavioural methodology, the investigation in what it is to 'mean alike' leads from cognitive equivalence for individuals, which is based on sameness of responses under similar overall stimulations, to cognitive equivalence for a linguistic community, which is defined as an overlap of cognitive equivalences for individuals. Once the cognitive equivalence of occasion

sentences for a linguistic community is laid out, the cognitive equivalence of standing sentences can be reconstructed using the method of interchangeability of words within sentences *salva aequalitate*:

First there is the relation of sameness of overall stimulation of an individual at different times. This is defined, theoretically, by sameness of triggered receptors. Next there is the relation of cognitive equivalence of occasion sentences for the individual. This is defined by his disposition to give matching verdicts when the two sentences are queried under identical overall stimulations. Next there is the relation of cognitive equivalence for the whole linguistic community. This is defined as cognitive equivalence for each individual. Finally there is the relation of a word to a word or phrase. This is defined as interchangeability within sentences *salva aequalitate*. (Quine, 1976, pp. 51-2)

In order to pin down the synonymy relation, Quine does start with the emphasis on the sameness of stimulation, that is to say with what is going on in the individual's brain - a beginning so mistrusted by Dummett. But the need for this emphasis is to make sure that in experimental conditions, the subject responds to queries under the same stimuli, it is almost an ideal condition that stipulates that given the same stimulations, sentences are equivalent if responses are the same. Yet, this is not to equate stimulation and meaning. The nature of the stimulation is irrelevant to meaning itself, what is relevant is the sameness of responses under identical stimulations. This is where Quine's famous elephant metaphor becomes useful in illuminating his point. Indeed, Quine formulated this point already in "The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics" (Quine, 1953, pp. 60-1). There Quine says that the synonymy of two forms consists in the approximate likeness of the situation that evokes the two forms as well as the approximate likeness of the effect of either form on the hearer. Noting that there always will be an inevitable difference at least in form, that is the phonetic difference that appears in virtue of substitution, Quine limits the required likeness to likeness in *relevant respects*.

It is rather interesting that in “Use and Its Place in Meaning” (1976), which mirrors the presentation of the “The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics” (1953) fairly closely up to this point, Quine drops the question of the likeness of the effect on the hearer, which before he seemed to emphasize somewhat more. One of the reasons is that behaviourally, the question of the likeness of the effect on the hearer is useless. If by likeness of the effect on the hearer Quine means to say the likeness of the mental states of the hearer, then these could only be assessed if we have an immediate access to those states, which we obviously lack.⁴³ Quine suggests ‘for simplicity reasons’ to concentrate only on the likeness of the situation that prompts the utterances. Then, Quine discusses what he latter called “the provisional answer from the behavioral point of view” (Quine 1976, p. 47), that is the determination of synonymy by matching the behaviour of the individual with the situations prompting it. Yet, even as early as “The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics”, Quine stresses how oversimplified and plagued with problems this approach is. He says:

Finally, having found fair evidence for correlating a given Kabala sound sequence with a given combination of circumstances, we conjecture synonymy of that sound sequence with another, in English, say, which is correlated with the same circumstances... . Now I want to stress one serious respect in which it is oversimplified: the relevant features of the situation issuing in a given Kabala utterance are in large part concealed in the person of the speaker, where they were implanted by his earlier environment. (Quine, 1953, pp. 60-1)

So, in the end, Quine’s interest in the stimulatory conditions for individuals and his prioritizing of idiolect as a result, could hardly be used as evidence for the conclusion that idiolect is antecedent to common language in the same way as speaker-meaning to

⁴³ It is possible that Quine argues against this approach latter on in the first chapter of *Word & Object* where he articulates his famous metaphor of the bushes cut to the identical shapes of the elephants. There, Quine seems to suggest that the internal states are irrelevant to the question of synonymy or meaning.

conventional meaning. Quine's position on idiolect as expressed in "Use and Its Place in Meaning" (1976) is not sufficient to justify this result. However, there are other reasons to think that Quine is committed to such a view. When Dummett claims that Quine 'lapses' into the idiolect conception of language he brings as evidence the fact that, according to Quine, radical translation must start at home language. In order to understand how this point is supposed to show that Quine is committed to the same kind of priority on idiolect as the ISB theorist it is necessary to examine his thesis of the indeterminacy of translation.

Summary:

This chapter pursued two main goals: first, it aimed to investigate whether there is any evidence for an inconsistency in relation to prioritizing idiolect between intermediate, and early and late periods of Quine's work; second, it aimed to examine whether Dummett's argument could apply to those cases where Quine explicitly acknowledges the priority of idiolect over common language. Both pursuits have brought up negative results. After an examination of Quine's work in relation to meaning and language one has to conclude that there is no inconsistency. Furthermore, the conceptual priority that Quine attributes to idiolect in his work cannot be subject to Dummett's criticism or his argument from communication. The prioritization of idiolect found in Quine's work is merely methodological in character and makes no assumptions about the nature of language and meaning. While it is possible that Dummett's objections could be interpreted to apply to Quine's very methods, such criticism does not cohere well with Dummett's claim that idiolect conception of language implies dependence on inner states. Therefore, in order to

make sense of Dummett's claim one must look elsewhere and address the second reason that Dummett cites as the ground for his charge. This reason follows from the fact that Quine introduces indeterminacy of translation into the home language.

Chapter V: Indeterminacy of Translation and Idiolect

5.1 Indeterminacy of Translation

In Chapter II of *Word & Object*, Quine follows through on the consequences of his choice of stimulus meaning as the means of getting at meaning. The aim is to find out how much sense can be made of language on purely empirical grounds or observational grounds, and how much of it will be left underdetermined. The thesis of indeterminacy of translation is the result of his analysis and has the following initial formulation: “two men could be just alike in all their dispositions to verbal behaviour under all possible sensory stimulations, and yet the meanings and ideas expressed in their identically triggered and identically sounded utterances could diverge radically, for the two men, in a wide range of cases” (Quine, 1960, p. 26). Quine explains that the totality of sentences of any given language speaker can be so mapped onto itself that the totality of verbal dispositions remains the same, and yet the mapping is not a mere correlation of sentences with equivalent sentences. As long as the changes within a language are transmitted to all of the associated sentences and thus are systematically offset, the overall relation of sentence-to-sentence and to non-verbal stimulation will remain the same. To illustrate the point better, Quine switches from the consideration of a single language to a case of radical translation between two unrelated languages. As a result, he restates the thesis of indeterminacy of translation in this manner: “manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another” (Quine, 1960, p. 27).

Quine uses the example of radical translation as a useful device to make sure that

one proceeds to translate the speech of another in adherence to evidence available empirically, just as the field linguist relies on observation and queries in his fieldwork. The notion of stimulus meaning, which is the ordered pair of affirmative and negative stimulus meanings based on assent and dissent to queries in relation to certain stimulations, becomes the entrance into the new language.

At the end of Chapter II of *Word & Object*, Quine summarizes the results that can be obtained using behavioural methods of a field linguist. In the discussion of the indeterminacy thesis in paragraph 15 of Chapter II, Quine states that “(1) [o]bservation sentences can be translated” (Quine, 1960, p. 68). The problems encountered during such translation are merely inductive. By varying his queries and varying the accompanied modulus or the exposure to stimulation, the linguist accumulates a fund of meaningful sentences, while weeding out the intrusion of collateral information when possible. This approach has greater success the more occasional the translated sentences are: thus, the variation of the modulus will assist in the determination of the stimulus meaning of such sentences as “Gavagai” and have little help in the determination of stimulus meaning of a standing sentence such as “God is omnipotent”.

The stimulus meaning of unobservational occasional sentences is a product of a “standard set of sentence-to-sentence connections and a random personal history” (Quine, 1960, p. 45). As a result, the stimulus meaning of such sentences will be different for different speakers. In relation to non-observational occasion sentences such as “Bachelor” where stimulus meaning diverges from speaker to speaker, the success is achieved through intrasubjective stimulus synonymy, since for any one individual the stimulus meaning of “Bachelor” is the same as stimulus meaning of “unmarried man”. One can circumvent the

difficulties of idiosyncratic information by holding out for “virtual constancy over the community”, at which point “the ideal becomes illusory” (Quine, 1960, p. 51). Nevertheless, according to Quine another result is that “(4) Questions of intrasubjective stimulus synonymy of native occasion sentences even of non-observational kind can be settled if raised, but the sentences cannot be translated” (Quine, 1960, p. 68). One problem is that the field linguist must conjecture the ‘trend’ of the stimulus meaning of non-observational sentences; the linguist will need a hint as to which pairs of sentences to compare for stimulus synonymy. A regular field linguist may come up with a hypothesis on how to translate “Bachelor” and “Soltero” guided by his own linguistic habits. The problem is more acute for a Martian translator, since in this case, his linguistic habits might be so utterly different that they will provide no workable analogy. Nevertheless, there remains for the linguist an alternative of becoming bilingual, in which case he can settle the question of stimulus synonymy for non-observational sentences by introspection. In that case, the linguist will be enabled to translate all of the occasional sentences; therefore, the first result of radical translation becomes “(1’) All occasion sentences can be translated. Point (4) drops as superfluous” (Quine, 1960, p. 71).

The translation of occasion sentences is only the first stage in radical translation; it must be followed by the translation of logical connectives, which would allow for further progress in the linguist’s task. At this stage, the success is limited to the translation of truth-functions. This task can be done by reference to the assent and dissent of the native speaker, determining the semantic criteria for negation, and proceeding to define the rest from there. Quine is pointing out that even this simple task is done under the assumption that the native’s language is bound by the law of non-contradiction, and the maxim that even

apparent contradictory sentences are rather a result of hidden differences of language rather than logic. “The common sense behind the maxim is that one’s interlocutor’s silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation - or, in the domestic case, linguistic divergence” (Quine, 1960, p. 59). Nevertheless, truth-functions, as Quine points out, are just the simplest of logical functions and truths. Leaving the issues with translating the truth functions, the linguist faces a greater difficulty translating the categoricals. Difficulties with translating these are much harder to circumvent:

The difficulty is fundamental. The categoricals depend for their truths on the objects, however external and inferential, of which the component terms are true; and what those objects are is not uniquely determined by stimulus meanings. Indeed the categoricals, like plural endings and identity, are part of our own special apparatus of objective reference, whereas stimulus meaning is, to repeat §12, common coin. Of what we think of as logic, the truth-functional part is the only part the recognition of which, in a foreign language, we seem to be able to pin down to behavioral criteria. (Quine, 1960, p. 61)

As it is evident, the reason why the dependence of categoricals on objects is a bad thing, is that while the translation of occasion sentences can be pinned down to behavioural criteria, the translation of terms that make up these sentences cannot. This is why, when the linguist points to a rabbit and receives an assent from the native to his query “Gavagai?”, he has little to go on to determine how to translate the term that in his own language corresponds to “rabbit”. The famous alternatives are: “temporal rabbit stage”, “rabbit fusion”, “rabbithood manifestation” and “undetached rabbit part”. The choice among these alternatives is underdetermined by the behavioural evidence and stimulus meaning:

Nothing, not distinguished in stimulus meaning itself is to be distinguished by pointing, unless the pointing is accompanied by questions of identity and diversity: ‘Is this the same gavagai as that?’, ‘Do we have here one gavagai or two?’. Such questioning requires of the linguist a command of

the native language far beyond anything that we have as yet seen how to account for. (Quine, 1960, p. 53)

The translation of terms depends on what in *Ontological Relativity & Other Essays* Quine calls the individuating apparatus, which consists of various auxiliaries to objective reference, such as articles, pronouns, singular and plural, copula, and identity predicate. According to Quine, “[t]he whole apparatus is interdependent, and the very notion of term is as provincial to our culture as those associated devices” (Quine, 1960, p. 53). Since this interdependent apparatus is underdetermined by observable behavioural evidence, the reference of the term becomes inscrutable, and the formulation of this insight becomes Quine’s famous thesis of the inscrutability of reference. So, in the end, only the truth functions make it into the positive results of radical translation: “(2) Truth functions can be translated” (Quine, 1960, p. 68).

The third major result is that stimulus-analytic and “stimulus-contradictory” sentences can be recognized in the native language. Quine defines stimulus-analytic sentences in this manner: “I call a sentence stimulus-analytic for a subject if he would assent to it, or nothing, after every stimulation (within modulus)” (Quine, 1960, p. 55). As he points out a bit later, neither this definition nor other variants of it can provide a “tighter relation” between synonymous sentences that an intuitive notion of analyticity seem to require. One way of improving on the notion is by socializing it, calling stimulus-analytic only those sentences that are stimulus-analytic for almost everybody (Quine, 1960, p. 66). This, however, will not change the fact that sentences such as “there have been black dogs” and “no bachelor is married” will count as stimulus-analytic. Within the English language, where the categoricals are “somehow settled in advance”, the synonymy of general (‘G’, ‘F’) or singular (‘a’, ‘b’) terms can be derived from the stimulus-analyticity of sentences:

“All Gs are Fs and vice versa” and “ $a=b$ ” (Quine, 1960, p. 55). However, due to the inscrutability of reference and the behaviourally underdetermined translation of categoricals the same cannot be said in the case of radical translation. So, on the basis of behavioural evidence, the most that can be said is that within the native language “...(3) Stimulus-analytic sentences can be recognized. So can the sentences of the opposite type, the “stimulus-contradictory” sentences, which command irreversible dissent” (Quine, 1960, p. 68).

On the basis of these results rooted in behavioural methods, the linguist is expected to continue with the mapping of the native language. But how can the linguist proceed? Quine suggests that the only way to do this is by construction of analytic hypotheses by means of which one is “...catapulting oneself into the jungle language by the momentum of the home language” (Quine, 1960, p. 70). Quine offers several examples. For instance, to get at the terms of the native language, the linguist “...segments heard utterances into conveniently short recurrent parts, and thus compiles the list of native ‘words’. Various of these he hypothetically equates to English words and phrases in such a way as to conform to (1) - (4). Such are his analytical hypotheses, as I call them” (Quine, 1960, p. 68). In this projection, the linguist must be constrained by the achieved results in (1) - (4), or (1') - (3) if becoming bilingual is an option. These results must be respected in the following way:

The sentence translations derivable from the analytical hypotheses are to include those already established under (1); they are to fit the prior translation of truth functions, as of (2); they are to carry sentences that are stimulus-analytic or stimulus-contradictory, according to (3), into English sentences that are likewise stimulus-analytic or stimulus contradictory; and they are to carry sentence pairs that are stimulus-synonymous according to (4), into English sentences that are likewise stimulus-synonymous. (Quine, 1960, p. 68)

The translation must also take into consideration the lack of direct correspondence between

the words and phrases of English and the native languages as well as the lack of positional correspondence within sentences. Therefore, some auxiliary definitions must be introduced to explain the syntactic constructions within the native language. As Quine points out, “Taken together, the analytical hypotheses and auxiliary definitions constitute the linguist’s jungle-to-English dictionary and grammar” (Quine, 1960, p. 70), or what is also known as the jungle-to-English translation manual. In compiling this manual the aim is not a mere translation of words and constructions, but a translation of coherent discourse; single words and constructions come up for attention only as means to that end (Quine, 1960, p. 70).

However, these conditions leave quite a lot to the “translator’s license”. For instance, the standing sentences, where stimulus meaning is scarce, can be systematically interpreted in a variety of mutually incompatible ways, whereby their relation to each other and to occasional sentences would be preserved. Using the metaphor of a ‘force field’ that Quine introduced as early as “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, the network of sentences at the centre of this “linguistic” force field can be changed, yet as long as the changes are reflected in the other sentences and systematically offset, their connections to the periphery would not be affected. The closest thing to an example or an analogy that Quine gives in *Word & Object* is the translation of the identity constructions and their relation to the determination of terms in the native language:

If by analytical hypothesis we take “are the same” as translation of some construction in the jungle language, we may proceed on that basis to question our informant about sameness of gavagais from occasion to occasion and so conclude that gavagais are rabbits and not stages. But if instead we take “are stages of the same animal” as translation of that jungle construction, we will conclude from the same subsequent questioning of our informant that gavagais are rabbit stages. Both analytical hypotheses may be presumed possible. Both could doubtless be accommodated by compensatory variations in the analytical hypotheses concerning other locutions, so as to conform equally to all independently

discoverable translations of whole sentences and indeed all speech dispositions of all speakers concerned. And yet countless native sentences admitting no independent check, not falling under (1') - (3), may be expected to receive radically unlike and incompatible English rendering under the two systems. (Quine, 1960, p. 72)

The sentences that do not fall under (1') - (3) are the standing sentences that include the theoretical sentences within science and which are related to experimental results often indirectly and through association with other sentences. So, Quine's results on the indeterminacy of translation elaborated in *Word & Object* form the basis of his position on the empirical underdetermination of scientific theory and his notion of empirically equivalent and logically incompatible theories. The quotation above is the elaboration of the indeterminacy thesis that Quine stated at the beginning of Chapter II when he said: "sentences without number can diverge drastically from their respective correlates, yet the divergences can systematically so offset one another that the overall pattern of associations of sentences with one another and with non-verbal stimulation is preserved" (Quine, 1960, p. 27).

There are also other ways in which indeterminacy comes to the surface. According to condition (3) the stimulus-analytic and stimulus-contradictory sentences of the native language have to be carried over into the stimulus-analytic and stimulus-contradictory sentences of English. However, this cannot be done since a one-to-one correspondence between the sentences of English and the native language is not to be expected. A stimulus-analytic sentence of the native language, such as "All rabbits are men reincarnate" has no equivalent stimulus-analytic sentence in English. Quine mentions as an example the case of islanders who speak of pelicans as their half-brothers. The islanders' belief system and language do not differentiate between half-brothers and pelicans, and there is no behavioural

evidence, which would bring a distinction out. Quine says: “To translate a stimulus-analytic native sentence thus into an English sentence that is not stimulus-analytic is to invoke translator’s license” (Quine, 1960, p. 69). This example of indeterminacy differs from the previous one, which deals with the inscrutability or indeterminacy (as Quine corrects himself in *Pursuit of Truth*) of reference. Here we have an example of the indeterminacy of translation of a definite concept, which is rooted in an intricate belief system. The differences between these examples will be examined later on. For now, it will suffice to mention that Quine finds it difficult to give a more elucidating example of indeterminacy of translation and its relation to alternative analytical hypotheses. He justifies his position by saying:

There is an obstacle to offering an actual examples of two such rival systems of analytical hypotheses...To devise a contrasting system would require an entire duplicate enterprise of translation, unaided even by the usual hints from interpreters. Yet one has only to reflect on the nature of possible data and methods to appreciate the indeterminacy. Sentences translatable outright, translatable by independent evidence of stimulatory occasions, are sparse and must woefully under-determine the analytical hypotheses on which the translation of all further sentences depends. To project such hypotheses beyond the independently translatable sentences at all is in effect to impute our senses of linguistic analogy unverifiable to the native mind. (Quine, 1960, p. 72)

Quine warns against underestimating the importance of the indeterminacy and points out at least seven reasons for failing to appreciate it. Of these, some particularly stand out. Indeterminacy of translation must not be confused with a more superficial reflection that “uniqueness of grammatical systematization is not to be expected” (Quine, 1960, p. 73). This observation is superficial as far as it assumes that different systematizations will yield the same net output. However, this is precisely the point Quine is trying to make; it is that different systematizations, equally compatible with independent evidence will yield different

net outputs. Indeterminacy of translation is also not to be confused with the platitude that uniqueness of translation is absurd. Quine emphasizes that indeterminacy is more radical and goes far beyond that. The point is rather that depending on the choice of analytical hypotheses, which are equally underdetermined by empirical evidence, resulting translation will be mutually exclusive: “[t]wo such translations might even be patently contrary in truth value...” (Quine, 1960, pp. 73 - 74). Another point that Quine drives home is that one must not persist in a “stubborn feeling” that a true bilingual will surely be able to make the correct correlations between the sentences of his languages. Quine notes that this feeling is fostered by the “uncritical mentalistic theory of ideas”. Even rejecting *ideas*, one could insist that there will be a unique neural condition in the bilingual, which would correspond to the translation and the translated sentence. According to Quine, this would add up to the idea that the bilingual has a “private semantic correlation, or a private implicit system of analytical hypotheses” (Quine, 1960, p. 74). Nevertheless, Quine claims that his point stands: “for my point is then that another bilingual could have a semantic correlation incompatible with the first bilingual’s without deviating from the first bilingual in his speech dispositions within either language, except in his dispositions to translate” (Quine, 1960, p. 74).

5.2 Idiolect and Radical Translation at Home

So where did Quine go wrong according to Dummett? What is the reason for accusing Quine of prioritizing idiolect over common language? Dummett’s problem with Quine is the same as it is with Davidson. The ultimate charge is that Quine’s view of language is premised on certain assumptions about meaning that make the same error the psychologists

made. The language, when viewed merely as the possession of a single individual, cannot be understood in any other way than as a product of some inner “meaning conferring act”. And, according to Dummett, Quine does view language as an idiolect. But as it was shown, there is little evidence to suggest that the manner in which Quine approaches the analysis of language is sufficient to impute to Quine a view of idiolect as Dummett understands the term. As a result, one has to search for the explanation somewhere else. This explanation can be found in a different complaint that Dummett makes against Quine. This time Dummett’s problem is that Quine extends the indeterminacy even to the home language of the speaker. As Quine says:

Now, it should be noted that even for the earlier examples the resort to a remote language was not really essential. On deeper reflection, radical translation begins at home. Must we equate our neighbor’s English words with the same strings of phonemes in our own mouths? Certainly not; for sometimes we do not equate them. (Quine, 1969b, p. 48)

Dummett’s problem is that by introducing radical translation into home language, Quine undermined the communicability of meaning by making meaning relative to the languages of individuals, in other words relative to their idiolects. While indeterminacy of translation between languages did not undermine the view that meaning is intersubjectively determined and hence common, the introduction of indeterminacy to home language suggests that one has no way of telling whether one’s neighbour means ‘rabbit’ or ‘rabbit stage’. If before reference was relative to a language that could have been perceived as the intersubjectively established, common possession of its speakers, now it is relative to the idiolect of the individual and hence cannot be shared with other speakers of the home language. The difference between indeterminacy of translation at home, and indeterminacy of translation as such, is that while the first is compatible with

the view of intersubjectively established meaning, the second one is not.⁴⁴ So, when

⁴⁴ As Quine admits on many occasions the target of the indeterminacy of translation thesis was Frege's notion of a proposition. Quine states in his reply to an essay by Jaakko Hintikka in *Perspectives on Quine*, "I have a thesis of indeterminacy of translation, and its motivation was to undermine Frege's notion of proposition or *Gedanke*" (Quine, 1990, p. 176) But it also could be argued that there is no need to introduce the notion of indeterminacy of translation at home language; Quine would have undermined the notion of proposition simply in virtue of indeterminacy of translation between languages. For, in order to undermine the notion Quine had only to show that meaning cannot be language neutral, and in fact, that is exactly what Quine thinks he achieved in the *Word & Object*. According to Quine, if meaning is not language neutral then differences in languages will imply differences in meaning. Quine brings the point home in his analysis of the meaning as propositions in §42 of *Word & Object*. There he says that, given a standard of synonymy for eternal sentences, one could have a fairly unproblematic notion of proposition. The problem is with giving an account of such a standard that will transcend languages and establish identity between sentences of different languages. Quine considers the notion of structural synonymy as a candidate for establishing the identity of propositions. Drawing on conclusions reached in §12 with respect to stimulus analyticity and stimulus synonymy of general terms, Quine suggests that sentences could be converted into a canonical form of notation whereby sentences would be considered synonymous if one could be transformed into the other by transformation of logic of quantification and truth-functions together with substitution of general terms for stimulus synonymous general terms. According to Quine, this attempt will ultimately fail because, as he says: "[T]he conversions to canonical notation are in general no more mechanical than foreign translation. The objection can be put simply as the objection that we are explaining propositional identity relative only to one language. The objection applies in particular also to the dependence of our concept also on stimulus synonymy of terms; for this latter, unlike stimulus synonymy of sentences, was tied to English from the start." (§12) (Quine 1960, p. 205) Thus, indeterminacy of translation comes to bear strongly on the notion of proposition; there can be no stimulus synonymy of terms because terms depend on the individuating apparatus of a given language. Even more enlightening here is Quine's claim that propositional identity can be explained relative only to one language. The notion of the proposition as a truth vehicle and a translation constant between languages cannot be supported due to the impossibility of giving an adequate standard of stimulus synonymy of terms between languages. And since, according to Quine, we cannot get propositions between languages, then there is no point of having propositions at all. As Quine points out, to put the propositions to the test of interlinguistic sentence synonymy is the only way to take the notion of proposition seriously. In short, propositions are propositions if they transcend particular languages: "For if the posit of propositions is to be taken seriously, eternal sentences of other languages must be supposed to mean propositions too, and each of these must be identical with or distinct from each proposition meant by an eternal sentence of our own, even if we never care which. ... This last point has the germs of an argument not only against our specific plan of a structural-synonymy concept as a standard of propositional identity, but against the whole idea of positing propositions. For, insofar as we take such a posit seriously, we thereby concede meaning, however inscrutable, to a synonymy relation that can be defined in general for eternal sentences of distinct languages as follows: sentences are synonymous that mean the same proposition. We would then have to suppose that among all the alternative systems of analytical hypotheses of translation (§15, §16) which are compatible with the totality of dispositions to verbal behaviour on the part of the speakers of two languages, some are "really" right and others wrong on behaviourally inscrutable grounds of propositional identity." (Quine, 1960, p. 205-6) He concludes by saying that: "The very question of conditions for identity of propositions presents not so much an unsolved problem as a mistaken ideal" (Quine, 1960, p. 206.) But, if the point of indeterminacy of translation was to undermine the notion of proposition, and the notion of proposition was undermined by showing that there can be no interlinguistic sentence synonymy of the desired kind, then what is the point of indeterminacy of translation at home? Furthermore, Quine implies that propositional identity can be explained intralinguistically when he says that the main objection to propositions is that: *we are explaining propositional identity relative only to one language*. Yet, if prepositional identity cannot be explained between languages due to indeterminacy it cannot be explained intralinguistically either. But in this case why does Quine put the objection by saying that the shortcoming is that it is being explained only in relation to one language?

Quine suggests that radical translation starts at home language it means for Dummett that

Quine throws off the last pretence that language is a social institution:

The presumption that the meaning a speaker attaches to his words and intends to convey by them are those that they have in the common language cannot be maintained according to the later Quine: hence you have what is in principle the same problem of interpreting the speech of one who addresses you in your mother-tongue as you do of interpreting utterances in a language of which you are wholly ignorant (...) In Quine's later writings, the notion of an idiolect has assumed the primary role once more: and so radical translation must begin at home. (Dummett, 1996, p. 149)

The "later Quine" is precisely the Quine of indeterminacy of translation at home.

With the radical translation introduced into home language, for Dummett, the problem is that one has to wonder what ontological commitments one's neighbour makes whenever he opens his mouth to comment on passing rabbits. Merely wondering about these commitments would be fine, if one could figure them out; the problem is that one cannot figure them out. In order to understand what underlies this view one has to examine how and to what extent, according to Quine, reference is fixed.

In "Ontological Relativity" (1969b), Quine recognizes that with radical translation at home - that is with the switch from interlinguistic to intralinguistic translation - reference seems to disappear altogether. He considers this to be quandary, so he addresses it in that paper. In Quine's own words:

We seem to be maneuvering ourselves into an absurd position that there is no difference on any terms, interlinguistic or intralinguistic, objective or subjective, between referring to rabbits and rabbit parts or stages; or between referring to formulae and referring to their Gödel numbers. Surely this is absurd, for it would imply that there is no difference between rabbits and each of its parts or stages, and no difference between a formula and its Gödel number. Reference would seem now to become nonsense

not just in radical translation but at home. (Quine, 1969b, pp. 47-8)

Quine mentions the absurdity of such a position as early as the beginning of the famous second chapter in *Word & Object*. In that passage Quine says: “[t]o put the matter thus invites the charge of meaninglessness: one might protest that a distinction of meaning unreflected in the totality of dispositions to verbal behavior is a distinction without a difference” (Quine, 1960, p. 26). Quine does not defend such a position; in “Ontological Relativity” (1969b) it becomes clear that the distinction between “rabbit” and “rabbit parts” is determinate relative to the individuating apparatus of the home language:

Toward resolving our quandary, begin by picturing us at home in our own language, with its predicates and auxiliary devices. This vocabulary includes “rabbit,” “rabbit part,” “rabbit stage,” “formula,” “number,” “ox,” “cattle”; also the two-place predicates of identity and difference, and other logical particles. In these terms we can say in so many words that this is a formula and that a number, this is a rabbit and that a rabbit part, this is the same rabbit, and this and that different parts. *In just those words*. This network of terms and predicates and auxiliary devices is, in relativity jargon, our frame of reference, or coordinate system. Relative to *it* we can and do talk meaningfully and distinctively of rabbits and parts, numbers and formulas. (Quine, 1969b, p. 48)

The point that Quine is making is that it is meaningless to ask whether the terms ‘rabbits’ and ‘rabbit parts’ refer to rabbits in absolute terms. The references and the distinctions are grounded in the background language and the auxiliary devices contained therein. This network of interrelated devices that Quine also calls the *individuating apparatus* of the language is the coordinate system in relation to which the references are fixed. In this sense, the query, “Does ‘rabbit’ really refer to rabbits?” makes sense, but sense relative to the individuating apparatus of the language. Nevertheless, this example illustrates the point that reference of terms is dependent on the individuating apparatus that determines it. As Quine points out “[n]o such indeterminacy obtrudes so long as we think of this

apparatus as given and fixed” (Quine, 1969b, p. 35). Thus, all the questions of reference could be resolved only in relation to this apparatus:

Fair enough; reference *is* nonsense except relative to a coordinate system. In this principle of relativity lies the resolution to our quandary. It is meaningless to ask whether, in general, our terms “rabbit,” “rabbit part,” “number,” etc., really refer respectively to rabbits, rabbit parts, numbers, etc., rather than to some ingeniously permuted denotations. It is meaningless to ask this absolutely; we can meaningfully ask it only relative to a background language (...) The background language gives the query a sense, if only relative sense; sense relative in turn to it, this background language. Querying reference in any more absolute way would be like asking absolute position, absolute velocity, rather than position or velocity relative to a given frame of reference. (Quine, 1969b, pp. 48-9)

In *Word & Object* Quine says that one always has the opportunity of becoming a true bilingual. For a bilingual who has a command of the language similar to the native, there should be no question of whether his terms refer to rabbits or rabbit parts. Provided that the questions are asked from within the native language and relative to the language and the terms contained therein. The problem which arises in interlinguistic translation, is that understanding reference in the native’s language is subject to prior translation of the individuating apparatus of his language. It is here that we have a problem:

We cannot even say what native locutions to count as analogues of terms as we know them, much less equate them with ours term for term, except as we have also decided what native devices to view as doing the work of our own various auxiliaries to objective reference; our articles and pronouns, our singular and plural, our copula, our identity predicate. The whole apparatus is interdependent, and the very notion of term is as provincial to our culture as are those associated devices. The native may achieve the same net effects through linguistic structures so different that any eventual construing of our devices in the native language and vice versa can prove unnatural and largely arbitrary. (Quine, 1960, p. 53)

But if indeterminacy of translation starts at home language the interpretation of one’s neighbour is subject to the very same problem. We could wonder about the different

“linguistic structures” with regards to the native, but ultimately the appeal to these exotic structures is irrelevant because it is neither the bizarreness of the native language nor its possible logical incommensurability with one’s own that is the reason for indeterminacy. The reason for indeterminacy is the compatibility of the native’s behaviour with different translations of his linguistic apparatus, and in particular, his apparatus of reference. This means that in the home language, in order to understand whether one’s own neighbour refers to ‘rabbits’ or ‘rabbit stage’ one must interpret the individuating apparatus of his language, which happens to be one’s own. One could naturally try to settle this curiosity by asking the neighbour directly whether he means “rabbit” or “rabbithood” but as Quine points out we cannot automatically “equate our neighbour’s English words with the same strings of phonemes in our own mouths”. What would be necessary is to ask the neighbour questions such as: “is it the same as” or “does it belong with” etc., in a hope of determining the reference of his terms. These are the same questions that the linguist was formerly required to ask the native in order to determine the reference of his terms. But the translator fares no better with regard to his neighbour, for his interpretation of connectives and auxiliary devices will be based on analytic hypotheses about his neighbour’s language. In other words, if the interpreter is willing to suspend homophonic translation the neighbour can offer no evidence that when he answers he intends to say “the same as” and not “belongs with”.

If there are equivalent and alternative ways of translating the connectives and other elements of the native language, then there are equivalent and alternative ways of translating the apparatus of one’s neighbour. But, just as in the case of the native there was no behavioural evidence to suggest what translation the native puts on the

individuating apparatus of his idiolect, there is equally none in the home language. As Quine says in "Ontological Relativity" (1969b): "When we ask, 'Does 'rabbit' really refer to rabbits?'" someone can counter with the question: "Refer to rabbits in what sense of 'rabbit'?" thus launching a regress...." (Quine, 1969b, pp. 48-9). As one widely recognized interpreter of Quine characterizes his view:

If one workable overall system of analytic hypotheses provides for translating a given Martian expression into 'is the same as', perhaps another workable but systematically different system would translate the same Martian expression, instead, into something like 'belongs with'. Thus when the linguist attempts to ask 'Is this gavagai the same as that?' he could as well unwittingly be asking 'Does that gavagai belong with that?' Therefore, the Martian's assent cannot be used to settle the reference of 'gavagai' absolutely. It is at this stage in translating where analytical hypotheses come clearly to the surface. (Gibson, 1982, p. 72)

The same problem occurs in the home language: the answer to each question could be adjusted to fit with the answers given to a number of other related questions, and ultimately, how these answers are understood will depend on the choice of analytical hypotheses that guides the investigator. The construction of analytical hypotheses is necessary in the case of a field linguist translating the speech of the native, but it is equally necessary in understanding the speech of the other speakers of one's own language if one were to determine the referential apparatus of one's neighbour. The difference is that in the former case the need for it is more conspicuous, whereas in the home language the role of analytic hypotheses is simply overlooked and becomes conspicuous only under suspension of homophonic translation. Yet, the constructions of analytical hypotheses seem inevitable in either case because by means of them one projects beyond available data, and that projection is necessary for the use of language. This is how Abel Gunter comments on this role of analytic hypothesis in his paper

“Indeterminacy and Interpretation” (1984):

The interpreter has to go beyond observation sentences. His strategy is to record the unconstrued sentences, to dissect them and to correlate them with already construed sentences. These constructive activities are what Quine has called ‘analytic hypotheses’ (1960, §15; 1992, §17). They are crucial in radical translation. The most notable thing about them is that they ‘exceed anything implicit in any native’s dispositions to speech behaviour’. (...) The translator has to “guess”, to project ‘conjectural interpretations’, and to go on ‘tinkering’ with his system of translation and understanding for its efficacy (1990, p. 45). But this means that the analytical hypotheses can be conceived of as creative interpretational constructs. This is what the interpretationist view of communication, translation, and understanding emphasizes. (Abel, 1984, p. 406)

If Abel is right, it would follow that these interpretational constructs underlie the linguistic competence of any speaker. But what is the source of analytical hypotheses in home language? After all, neighbours rarely suspend homophonic translation. From the explanations regarding regular indeterminacy of translation it was clear that the interpreter would propel himself into the native language by the impetus of his own. Given that in the case of radical translation at home one is already dealing with the home language, a reasonable suggestion is that the interpreter will translate the responses of the neighbour in accord with the analytical hypothesis that assisted the acquisition of the home language in his childhood. Indeed, in “Naturalized Epistemology” (Quine, 1969c, p. 81). Quine compares the essential tasks of the linguist in translation with those of a child during language acquisition and, as he points out in “Linguistics and Philosophy” (1969d), analytical hypotheses must be formed in order to assist language acquisition in childhood:

Conditioned response does retain a key role in language-learning. It is the entering wedge to any particular lexicon, for it is how we learn observation terms (or better simple observation sentences) by ostension. Learning by ostension is learning by simple induction, and the mechanisms of such learning is conditioning. But this method is

notoriously incapable of carrying us far in language. This is why, on the translational side, we are soon driven to what I have called analytical hypotheses. The as yet unknown structures, additional to mere quality space, that are needed specifically to get the child over this great hump that lies beyond ostension. (Quine, 1969d, pp. 96-7)

However, since a number of analytical hypotheses can accommodate the verbal behaviour, a number of translations, all based on different analytical hypotheses could serve the same purpose. That is why in “Epistemology Naturalized” (1996d) Quine says that when a child is learning his first words: “Internal factors may vary *ad libitum* without prejudice to communication as long as the keying of language is to external stimuli is undisturbed” (Quine, 1996c, p. 81). It is not unreasonable to assume that these internal factors, which Quine mentions in “Epistemology Naturalized” (1969d), are akin to the “unknown structures” at the source of analytical hypotheses that Quine speaks of in his “Linguistics and Philosophy” (Quine, 1996b).

What one must also realize is that these internal structures are inscrutable, and the question whether someone’s understanding of identity and other auxiliary devices within the home language is the same as the understanding of another speaker of the same language cannot be resolved, since all of the relevant behaviour could be accommodated by several different interpretations of this apparatus. In other words, behaviour is insufficient to determine the referential apparatus of the individual and personal testimony is inadmissible. It is inadmissible because of Quine’s naturalistic-behaviouristic standpoint, and the fact that any such testimony relies on the very referential apparatus that is being questioned. In other words, the individuating apparatus that resolves the question of whether a given speaker of the home language refers as ‘rabbit’ or ‘rabbit part’ is itself subject to indeterminacy. All of the identity particles,

plural endings and auxiliary constructions can be reinterpreted in such a way as to preserve the sentence-to-sentence connections, within the discourse they regulate. Quine says:

Here, gratuitously, we can systematically reconstrue our neighbor's apparent references to rabbits as really references to rabbit stages, and his apparent references to formulas as references to Gödel numbers and vice versa. We can reconcile all this with our neighbor's verbal behavior, by cunningly readjusting our translations of his various connecting predicates so as to compensate for the switch of ontology. It is of no avail to check on this fanciful version of our neighbor's meanings by asking him, say, whether he really means at a certain point to refer to formulas or to their Gödel numbers; for our question and his answer - "By all means, the numbers" - have lost their title to homophonic translation. (Quine, 1969b, p. 47)

But even in this passage it seems implied that the actual holistic interconnection of this apparatus of reference is only underdetermined by behavioural evidence. In other words Quine does not reject the view that individuals refer, and as Gibson explains:

Observation terms may eventually become terms in the full-blooded sense (they may "mark out" categories of objects) but only when they are systematically, yet, multifariously, connected with the higher reaches of language, which themselves are not learnable by ostension but require for their learning the devices of analogic synthesis. (Gibson, 1982, p. 43)

As a result, the child eventually acquires the individuating apparatus by drawing the necessary connections that determine the reference. But how could that be if this apparatus is underdetermined by behaviour? For, from the naturalistic-behaviouristic point of view, nothing should be learned which could not be determined on the basis of public evidence. As Gibson explains: "learning the referential apparatus of English is a contextual process that utilizes analogic synthesis. To learn how to refer, a child needs to learn how to use "a cluster of interrelated grammatical particles and constructions: plural endings, pronouns, numerals, the 'is' of identity, and its adaptations 'same' and 'other'"

(Ibid., 1982, p. 57). And what is the analogic synthesis, which according to Gibson “accounts for the learning of the higher reaches and greater portion of language”? (Ibid., 1982, p. 57). He responds by saying: “Unlike the methods of ostension, however, virtually nothing is known about the underlying psychological mechanisms responsible for such learning” (Ibid., 1982, p. 57). To give content to this mechanism Gibson brings up Quine’s explanation of the learning of the apparatus of individuation in *Word & Object*:

“... the contextual learning of these various particles goes on simultaneously, we may suppose, so that they are gradually adjusted to one another and a coherent pattern of usage is evolved matching that of society. The child scrambles up an intellectual chimney, supporting against each side by pressure against the others.” (Quine, 1960, p. 93)

But in the end, a much more telling account of how referential apparatus is learned is visible in the following words of Quine from his paper “The Nature of Natural Knowledge” (1975): “This progress is not a continuous derivation, which followed backward, would enable us to reduce scientific theory to sheer observation. It is a progress rather by short *leaps of analogy*” (Quine, 1975, pp. 77-78). This leads Gibson to say: “We now have Quine’s explanation of why this holistic view is true: scientific (i.e. referential) language is the product of irreducible leaps of analogy; it is, therefore, not reducible to sheer observation” (Gibson, 1982, p. 61). Since the referential apparatus which anchors reference is learned by an individual on the basis of “leaps of analogy” that cannot be reduced to observations, it is inevitable that if this individual were to become a linguist and attempt to translate the language of the native, he will have to face the referential apparatus of the native which is based on similar “irreducible leaps of analogy”. Not being able to reduce it to observation the linguist will have to form

analytical hypotheses which will equate his “cluster of interrelated grammatical particles and constructions governing reference” (Ibid., 1982, p. 71) with the native’s. Yet, these equations can only remain hypothetical and irreducible. In the end one gets the impression that not only the indeterminacy of reference, but Quine’s holism rests on this “speculative account” (Ibid., 1982, p. 57) of analogic synthesis about psychological mechanism of which “virtually nothing is known” (Ibid., 1982, p. 41).

As was explained during the discussion of Dummett’s criticism of Davidson, it is essential for Dummett that difference in understanding should be detectable if one is to avoid making meaning ineffable. Given two individuals engaged in a conversation it is necessary that any misunderstanding could come to light: “it is essential that it could come to light, and indeed that it would do so if we pursued the topic of discussion sufficiently far” (Dummett, 1993, p. 155). Just as in Davidson’s case Dummett expects a promissory note from Quine. Quine cannot issue such a note, for he says that “two men can be just alike in all their dispositions to verbal behaviour under all possible sensory stimulations, and yet the meanings of ideas expressed in their identically triggered and sounded utterances could diverge radically” (Quine, 1960, p. 26). The implication of the notion of radical translation at home can be traced out in the following way: speakers of the same language may refer differently using the same phonetic strings, but they would be unable to discover the difference because their mutual questions and responses could be understood differently by each, yet without behavioural leftovers to betray the difference. This, therefore, constitutes the real problem for Dummett. The applicability of indeterminacy of translation to home language makes meaning or - in the light of previous discussion - reference relative to the individual. This understanding of indeterminacy suggests that given two individuals

engaged in a conversation the “meaning of ideas expressed”, or rather, the content they intend to express would be underdetermined by public evidence. Indeterminacy of translation at home establishes that meaning lags behind public evidence. This is why, in “Language and Communication”, Dummett wonders why those who accept the thesis of indeterminacy of translation and admit that meaning is underdetermined by use would not admit that communication is not verifiable: “Then why not simply conclude that for them, communication does rest on faith, or else, is only to a limited degree possible?” (Dummett, 1989, p. 179). A more interesting question is why Dummett is so convinced that Quine does not make such an admission. What is Quine’s position on this issue? When Quine considered the infinite regression of questions he suggests that in practice “...we end the regress of background languages, in discussion of reference, by acquiescing in our mother tongue, and taking its words at face value” (Quine, 1969b, p. 49). As Gibson comments on this passage:

Taking the words of our mother tongue at face value is to revert to homophonic translation except when communication seems to demand occasional departure. (This solution to the regress makes sense when it is recalled that what differentiated the inscrutability in the home language from that in the context of radical translation was the *willfulness* of the suspension of homophonic translation in the former.) (Gibson, 1982, p. 76)

So to answer Dummett’s question with a question one might ask: How else is one supposed to understand the phrase “willfulness of the suspension of homophonic translation” (Ibid., 1982, p. 76) “acquiescing in our mother tongue” if not as saying that interpreting of the speech of one’s neighbour is based on faith? However, in “Language and Communication” Dummett seems to contemplate a different answer, one that he sees as being given by the Quinians: they refuse to admit that communication is based on faith “[p]recisely because they further contend that to the extent that use leaves meaning undetermined, there is no fact

of the matter concerning what someone means: there would therefore be no substance to a faith conceived as underlying communication” (Dummett, 1989, p. 179).

However, how is this claim to be taken? Gibson suggests that “Whatever meanings there are, they are learned by behavioural criteria and, so, must be explicable, if at all, by behavioural descriptions. The “meanings” that are not thus characterizable are just not meanings at all for Quine” (Gibson, 1982, p. 32).. But in that case it is impossible for Quinians to answer that question in any other way than with a rejection of the idea that meaning is underdetermined by use: it simply follows from their definition of meaning. Gibson further points out that: “Thus it is not possible on behavioural grounds (and Quine’s naturalistic-behaviouristic thesis asserts that there are no other grounds) to settle absolutely the meaning, or reference of Martian terms” (Ibid., 1982, p.72). However, who ever claimed that analytical hypotheses underlying language acquisition and translation of the apparatus of individuation are subject to behavioural verification? The point that Quine is making is that they are not, and as a result the translation of connectives and the rest of the apparatus - that has been made contingent on these hypothetical structures - becomes indeterminate on behavioural grounds. For Dummett, this should present a perfect case of prioritization of idiolect, because understanding, or if you will, translation, of meaningful terms is made contingent on unverifiable internal processes. One could object by saying that there is no fact of the matter whether the utterance by a given speaker refers to “rabbits” or “rabbit parts”, but the thesis that there is no fact of the matter follows from the indeterminacy thesis and does not ground it. Therefore, one could only legitimately claim that there are no facts on behavioural grounds, which is in line with Gibson’s characterization that naturalistic-behaviouristic approach allows no other.

5.3 The Status of Analytical Hypotheses

However, it seems that Dummett's criticism of Quine is premised on the same assumptions as his criticism of Davidson, and his criticism of Davidson was based on a dubious assumption. The fact that he discusses both of them when he formulates his objections to prioritizing idiolects also supports this contention. Just as in the case of Davidson, Dummett frames his objections to Quine in terms of miscommunications or differences in intended meanings that cannot come to light. Just as in the case of Davidson, in this case the objection could only make sense if Quine's analytical hypotheses or his account of language acquisition are perceived as descriptions of real cognitive processes that not only determine how one interprets the speech of another from the position of the hearer, but also inform the speech of the individual as a speaker. In other words, the criticism of radical translation on the basis of the argument from failure to explain communication rests on the assumption that not only are there "intended messages", but that the internalized referential apparatus is instrumental in constituting them. Thus in learning the language, a child actually forms an understanding of the individuating apparatus of the language on the basis of an analogic synthesis, this, in turn, determines his understanding of reference and therefore the terms of the language relative to this apparatus. That is to say - in the words of Quine - that in considering the possible learning steps a child might take "We approximate to the essentials of the real psychogenesis of reference while avoiding inessential complications" (Quine, 1973, p. 100). If one sees the analytical hypotheses as playing the same role in Dummett's criticism of Quine as truth theories play in his criticism of Davidson, then one can recognize the point about failure to communicate.

Indeed, a good deal of what Quine says about analytical hypothesis and radical translation seems compatible with this interpretation. For instance, when Quine formulates the indeterminacy thesis for the first time, at the beginning of Chapter II of *Word & Object*, he does speak of different “meanings of ideas expressed” in identical utterances of two given speakers - a formulation that presupposes no interpreter, but only two speakers. One gets the impression that these ideas and meanings that express them are “owned” by the speakers and not simply read into them as “interpretations”.

Yet, at the same time Quine points out that the formulation in terms of ideas is an initial and uncritical formulation. When Quine discusses indeterminacy of translation he does not say that the field linguist cannot get it right, he says that there is no one right way to get it. The difference is crucial because it turns a thesis of epistemological scepticism into a thesis of constitutive scepticism. As Alexander Miller points out, one must keep in mind that the intended upshot of Quine’s argument is “*meaning skepticism* or *constitutive skepticism* as opposed to *epistemological skepticism*”. In other words, it is scepticism about the existence of certain facts and not about our access to those facts (Miller, 1998, p. 132). In *Philosophy of Language* (Miller, 1998) Miller characterizes meaning scepticism that he attributes to Quine in the following way:

...[w]e saw that these arguments, were, inter alia, arguments against the very notion of meaning. They were arguments for meaning skepticism: there is simply no fact of the matter as to whether a given sentence is analytic or synthetic, no fact of the matter as to what it means (...) The conclusion that it is not an objective factual matter whether a given translation manual for a language is correct or not is supposed to point to the conclusion that there is no objective fact of the matter as to what the sentences of that language mean (...) this entails that there are no facts of the matter about meaning at all. (Miller, 1998, pp. 128-9)

Meaning scepticism implies that when we speak of the *indeterminacy of translation* we are

really talking about the *indeterminacy of meaning*. Alexander Miller is not alone in approaching the indeterminacy of translation thesis as indeterminacy of meaning. In his article “Skepticism about Semantic Facts”, Dirk Koppelberg seems to take a similar position: “[F]or Quine, on the contrary, even all the facts about a linguistic community, and indeed the totality of the facts about the whole world, cannot determine what anyone meant by a sentence....” (Koppelberg, 1995, p. 340). Both Miller and Koppelberg emphasize that indeterminacy of translation is not simply a matter of a lack of behavioural or public evidence for the correct translation, there is simply no “objective fact” in the “whole world” that would settle the issue. If Quine’s thesis implied epistemological scepticism, one might argue that communication simply failed because behavioural evidence fell short of the task. However, if it were, in fact, constitutive scepticism, then even God would not get the right translation, because in this case there has never been a point even in the mind of the individual.

This approach to indeterminacy suggests that it cannot be viewed in terms of the difference in the “meanings of ideas expressed” and that the first, “uncritical” formulation is wrong and highly misleading. Furthermore, Quine explicitly rejects mentalism as something stemming from the misplaced belief that “man’s semantics is somehow determined in his mind beyond what might be implicit in his dispositions to overt behavior”. This would suggest that an individual does not “intend” to communicate what cannot be discriminated on the basis of behavioural evidence, and consequently there is no principled disagreement between Quine and Dummett.

The question of the status of analytical hypotheses and the learning of the referential apparatus should not be underestimated; assumptions regarding the nature of its role fuel a

large part of criticism directed at the indeterminacy thesis. If analytical hypotheses are cognitively represented and their actual purpose is to equate one's personal grasp of all those elements making up the "cluster of interrelated grammatical particles and constructions governing reference" (Gibson, 1982, p. 71) with the ones attributable to the native or even one's own neighbour, then there are grounds for saying that Quine's scepticism is not constitutive, but, in fact, epistemological in nature. In such a case, the right translation for an utterance made by a given speaker would be the translation relative to his grasp of this apparatus, an interpretation of the apparatus that he - on analogy with Davidson's passing theories - would want the translator to employ in understanding his speech. So, in this case the "man's semantics" would be determined in his mind beyond what might be implicit in dispositions to his behaviour.

In his *Reflections on Language* (1975), Noam Chomsky says: "I think that Quine's position on this matter is not only unargued but also of doubtful consistency" (Chomsky, 1975, p. 187). Not unlike Dummett, Chomsky also distinguishes periods in Quine's work, saying: "Quine's later views seem to me an almost complete abandonment of behaviorism and all of its trappings...." (Chomsky, 1975, p. 200). However, according to Chomsky, the vacillation in Quine's work seems to leave unresolved tensions. In particular, Chomsky has problems reconciling Quine's insistence, on the one hand, that learning a language requires forming analytical hypotheses, which, as Quine puts it, derive from the "yet unknown innate structures", and, on the other, his claim that there is no right or wrong about the choice of analytical hypotheses.⁴⁵ So, naturally, Chomsky says:

⁴⁵ In *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (1976b) Quine says the following: "Learning by ostension is learning by simple induction, and the mechanism of such learning is conditioning. But this method is notoriously incapable of carrying us far in language. This is why, on the translation side, we are soon driven to what I have called analytical hypotheses. The yet unknown innate structures, additional to mere quality space,

Consider the “as yet unknown innate structures” mentioned in this passage. Since they are “as yet unknown”, presumably they are “knowable”, or to put it more properly, hypotheses concerning these innate structures have exactly the status of propositions of natural science, and in fact are simply a part of biology (...) Recall, however, that where indeterminacy of translation applies there is no real question of right choice; there is no fact of the matter (...) Apparently then, the hypotheses H1 and H2 have nothing to be right or wrong about and cannot be selected, confirmed, refined, or rejected in the manner of the natural sciences, although they are, as we have seen, perfectly ordinary hypotheses of human biology dealing with “as yet unknown” (hence knowable) innate biological structures and the restrictions and scope they entail with regards to what is learned... . It is difficult to see how one might reconcile all these various contentions. (Chomsky, 1975, pp. 187-9)

Chomsky sees no way of reconciling Quine’s earlier and latter views. As he points out, if conditioning is not sufficient to explain language learning, then language is not a fabric of sentences and stimuli associated by conditioned response, and there is no reason to insist on behaviourism. If the analytical hypotheses that are needed to overcome the insufficiency of evidence in language learning are constrained by the “yet unknown innate structures”, then the analytical hypotheses are tied down to ordinary hypotheses about human biology. But what is particularly important in this criticism is that it puts into focus the nature of indeterminacy of translation by zeroing in on the role of analytical hypotheses in language acquisition. Chomsky is suggesting that there are no reasons to jump to the conclusion that there is “no fact of the matter” simply because there is a lack of sufficient behavioural evidence. If analytic hypotheses represent some cognitively real mechanisms or are products of such mechanisms, as Quine’s account of language acquisition seems to imply, then there is a fact as to what constitutes the right interpretation. As Stephen Neale points out in his

that are needed in language-learning, are needed specifically to get the child over this great hump that lies beyond ostension, or induction. If Chomsky’s antiempiricism or antibehaviorism says merely that conditioning is insufficient to explain learning, then the doctrine is of a piece with my doctrine of indeterminacy of translation.” (1976b, p. 57)

article “Meaning, Grammar, and Indeterminacy” (1987) this argument aims to show that indeterminacy of translation is just another case of underdetermination of theory by evidence, which does not preclude a realist position with regards to meaning and translation.⁴⁶ As a result, Chomsky refuses to accept that Quine has demonstrated conclusively that there is no fact of the matter in the case of indeterminacy of translation.

In the chapter entitled “The Defense” of his book Gibson undertakes to defend Quine’s position from the charge of inconsistency, but the ultimate defence amounts to the claim that Quine’s behaviourist story was simply incomplete. Therefore, when Chomsky accuses Quine of abandoning his behaviourism by endorsing innate cognitive mechanisms in the form of analytical hypotheses to explain learning, Gibson argues that there is no inconsistency and that Quine never held a naive behaviourist view anyway. The previous story was only partial. As he claims:

Indeed if it were the complete story, he could have omitted from *Word & Object* any consideration of indeterminacy of translation and analytical hypotheses, for then all of language would have been learnable solely on the basis of induction. Quine himself has pointed out that the recognition that conditioning is insufficient to explain language learning is of a piece with his doctrine of indeterminacy of translation. (Gibson, 1982, p. 193)

So, in the end, Quine is not inconsistent because, according to Gibson there is a difference between “saying that conditioning is a necessary mechanism of all language learning and saying that it is a sufficient mechanism of all language learning” as a result “Denying the latter does not deny the former, and it is on the basis of the former that Quine-I claims that a language is a fabric of sentences variously associated to one another and non-verbal stimuli by the mechanism of conditioned response” (1982, p. 192-3). However, the

⁴⁶ Neale develops an argument to show that Chomsky should have distinguished between syntactic and semantic in such a way as to allow Quine genuine indeterminacy and skepticism in relation to meaning and translation, but underdetermination and realism in relation to cognitive mental structures and grammar.

salient feature of this defence of Quine given by Gibson was the fact that he did not address Chomsky's charge that there is a fact of the matter as to the correct translation tied to analytic hypotheses.

In "Indeterminacy of Translation Again" (1987), Quine laments the fact that his thesis is continuously misunderstood, although he admits that his attempts at correction have been rather sporadic. In his response to critics he starts by reiterating his behaviourist commitments:

"...I hold further, that the behaviorist approach is mandatory. In psychology one may or may not be a behaviorist, but in linguistics one has no choice. Each of us learns his language by observing other people's verbal behavior and having his own faltering verbal behavior observed and reinforced or corrected by others (...) As long as our command of our language fits all external checkpoints, where our utterance or our reactions to someone's utterance can be appraised in the light of some shared situation, so long all is well. Our mental life between checkpoints is indifferent to our rating as a master of the language. (Quine, 1987, p. 5)

The fact that Quine draws the distinction between linguistics and psychology, between public checkpoints and mental life suggests that as far as semantics go, mental entities and cognitive mechanisms can play no role in setting what it is to be the "right interpretation".⁴⁷ But this distinction also gives the impression that the reason why mental entities and cognitive mechanisms are rejected as criteria is not because they are not there, but rather because they are not public enough, and therefore cannot serve as such checkpoints. As Quine says in "Facts of the Matter" (Quine, 1979):

Since translators do not supplement their behavioral criteria with neurological criteria, much less with telepathy, what excuse could there be for supposing that the one manual conformed to any distribution of elementary physical states better than the other manual? What excuse, in short, for supposing there to be a fact of the matter? (Quine, 1979, p. 167)

⁴⁷ It is as if after discovering that public evidence cannot account for certain semantic distinctions, Quine is being faced with a choice between declaring some meaning private or disqualifying it from being meaning, decides to disqualify it out of commitment to public nature of meaning and language.

As both, Neale and Føllesdal reiterate, for Quine indeterminacy of translation follows from the public nature of language, or as the latter points out: public evidence sets the boundary conditions on interpretation. But one hardly needs to appeal to Føllesdal's interpretation to appreciate this point; at the end of Chapter II of *Words & Object* Quine clearly states that even if it were true that there were within the mind of an individual a "private semantic correlation, or a private implicit system of analytical hypotheses" indeterminacy of translation would be unaffected: "for my point is then that another bilingual could have a semantic correlation incompatible with the first bilingual's without deviating from the first bilingual in his speech dispositions within either language, except in his dispositions to translate" (Quine, 1960, p. 74). Therefore, although, Quine does not seem to reject the possibility of private semantic correlations or implicit analytical hypothesis, he rules them out as a standard for correct translation. In other words, no mental states, or cognitive mechanisms, or different analytical hypotheses could stand as the guarantors of what one means if they make no difference in terms of observable empirical consequences. The shared, public nature of language makes all of these criteria irrelevant to semantics.

Consequently, one could conclude that Stephen Neale correct when he claims in his paper "Meaning Grammar and Indeterminacy" (1987) that the disagreement between Quine and Chomsky is based on a misunderstanding of scope between them: one talks about indeterminacy of semantics, the other, about determinacy of syntax:

Once certain assumptions are made concerning the nature of evidence it is clear why the indeterminacy rather than the empirical underdetermination infects theories of translation and meaning. Further, it seems that even without these assumptions a convincing case can be made for an empirical version of the thesis by emphasizing the shared nature of language, and this, I take, is part of what Quine's original "Gavagai" example was about (...) But no convincing argument for indeterminacy in theories in

cognitive structure seems to emerge from the epistemological or social considerations that lead to indeterminacy in translation and meaning. From the later perspective, indeterminacy is just an empirical matter, and the dispute between Quine and Chomsky reduces to the scope misunderstanding.... (Neale, 1987, p. 318)

Chomsky argued that there is a criterion for a correct translation, and it could be grounded in the innate structures, which, according to Quine, constrain the analytical hypotheses. It seems evident that he sees Quine's analytical hypotheses as playing the role of real cognitive mechanisms. Dummett's argument about communication is premised on similar assumptions. However, a different interpretation, which would make Quine's position comparable to Davidson's, is also possible.

On reflection, one would recognize that in formulating the thesis Quine did not have to appeal to the case of actual translations to illustrate it. He could have simply set it up as an elaborate thought experiment in a manner comparable to Kripke's sceptic who for every given translation provides a version of his own, prompting for a good explanation why this translation is wrong. In fact, Quine does something like that when he says in *Word & Object* at the beginning of Chapter II that someone could reinterpret his behaviour as a practical joke. This approach would be appropriate since Kripke himself considers his presentation of the sceptical paradox as akin to Quine's indeterminacy thesis. In this light, setting the indeterminacy thesis as a case of translation invites ambiguity, and a less precarious way would have been to present it as a case of mapping of various interpretations on a given set of behaviour. Furthermore, such an approach would emphasize the fact that Quine's project is not concerned with "intended meaning", not because he does not believe in them, but because that is not the nature of the project. His project, just like Davidson's project, would amount to the claim that a number of theories of interpretation could be attributable to an

individual on the basis of his behaviour alone. As Quine put it in a conversation with Føllesdal: "...that there is nothing to be right or wrong about, means that several different translation manuals fit the same states and distributions of elementary particles" (Quine, 1973b, p. 295). But as he also points out in his "Methodological reflections on linguistic theory": "Fitting is a matter of true description; guiding is a matter of cause and effect. Behavior fits a rule whenever it conforms to it; whenever the rule truly describes the behavior. But the behavior is not guided by the rule, unless the behavior knows the rule and can state it. This behavior observes the rule" (Quine, 1972, p. 442). Perhaps, then, Quine makes no claims that would imply that in radical translation any actual manuals of translations would be formed, or that a speaker has anything resembling a grasp of the reference apparatus that would in fact guide her behaviour rather than merely fit it.

Davidson, in fact, seems to think so. He says:

Perhaps someone (not Quine) will be tempted to say, 'But at least the speaker knows what he referring to.' One should stand firm against this thought... . What cannot be figured out from the totality of the relevant evidence cannot be part of meaning... . he cannot even intend to use his words with a unique reference for he knows that there is no way for his words to convey the reference to another. (Davidson, 1984, p. 235)

If this were so there would be no genuine disagreement between Quine and Dummett, and any debate between them could be deflated, in the manner similar to the deflation of the argument between Dummett and Davidson. This deflation would be necessary because Dummett's argument is based on the verifiability of communication of meaningful content, in part, because of his belief that meaning, knowledge, and understanding are parts of the same nexus. In *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, he says: "There appears to be a connection between meaning and knowledge, expressible by saying that the meaning of an expression is the content of that knowledge possessed by the speakers, which constitutes

their understanding of it....” (Dummett, 1991, p. 83). Therefore, for Dummett, the task of the theory of meaning is “to describe without making any presuppositions, what it is that we learn when we learn to speak” (Dummett, 1991, p. 91). So it is natural, that for Dummett, the priority is on the test to see whether a given theory of meaning would allow the communication and verification of what one knows, that is to say the content of one’s understanding of the meaning of a given utterance. That is why in “Language and Communication”, Dummett explains his idea of successful communication in this manner: “In order for the speaker successfully to communicate with the hearer, the hearer must understand him as he intended to be understood....” (Dummett, 1989, p. 176); and later: “Successful communication takes place when the hearer understands the speaker as the speaker intended” (Ibid., p. 180). Indeterminacy of translation applied to the home language suggests, according to Dummett, that for Davidson and Quine an utterance has “not a speaker and a hearer, but a speaker and an interpreter” (Dummett, 1993, p. 150). Given the possibility of several interpretations and lack of public evidence as to the correct translation how can one be sure the communication was “successful”, or rather, that the message was interpreted as it was intended? Ultimately, the point of his argument was that communication could not be verified if the meaning of the speaker’s utterances as they were intended were to be explained by some theory of meaning that the speaker is supposed to have internalized. However, this argument can score no points against a theory of meaning at the other extreme, that is to say, one that does not pretend to the status of some explanatory cognitive mechanism. Dummett recognizes the difference between these two approaches in “Language and Communication”:

In order for the speaker successfully to communicate with the hearer, the hearer must understand him as he intended to be understood. The

explication that is proposed for the notion of the way the speaker intends to be understood is that his idiolect can be correctly characterized by a certain theory of meaning: the hearer will then understand him as he intended if the hearer's idiolect - or at least the idiolect attributed by the hearer to the speaker - is characterized by the same theory of meaning. The status of such theory remains open to dispute. At one extreme it might be taken as merely a theory propounded from the outside, playing no actual role in the mechanisms that govern either speaker's or hearer's linguistic behavior. At the other extreme, that represented by Chomsky, the speaker's knowledge of his language is identified with his knowledge of such a theory. (Dummett, 1989, pp. 176-7)

So, in the end, Dummett's argument against Quine could be seen as a misfire, to the same extent as it is a misfire with Davidson on the condition that Davidson's characterization of Quine's view is correct.

However, how much credence can be given to such a view? The analytical hypotheses have substance only in so far as they translate the interrelated cluster of grammatical particles of the native by equating them with translator's own apparatus, and therefore they presuppose that translator not only has this apparatus but also has a sufficient grasp of its content to use it as a ground for this kind of equation. Even if one dismisses this argument on the ground that it is a thought experiment one has to reconcile this view with Quine's account of language acquisition. Roger Gibson says:

One might suspect that the problem of indeterminacy is peculiar to the context of radical translation and is, therefore, insignificant. But this would be a mistake, for it overlooks the analogous behavioral parameters of radical translation and ordinary language learning (and with ordinary translation for that matter). Both the linguist and the child learning a first language must begin with observation sentences, both must master the assent/dissent language game, and both must utilize, consciously or unconsciously, analytical hypotheses to eke out the language. True, the situations are not completely analogous, since the linguist already has prior linguistic habits to facilitate his acquisition of Martianese while the Martian child does not, but this difference is insufficient to prohibit indeterminacy from infecting the domestic scene. (Gibson, 1982, p. 73)

If the translator uses analytical hypotheses to construct an interpretation of the referential apparatus of the native by equating its various elements with his own, then the child uses the analytical hypotheses and analogic synthesis to acquire the referential apparatus, which would determine his reference. This is even more apparent if one reflects that if the child did not acquire the apparatus in which the cluster of interrelated elements did not play concrete reference determining role, then there would be nothing to serve as the foundation for the interpretation of the native's apparatus in radical translation. One must also keep in mind that Quine's account of language acquisition is not merely an idealization, but - according to Gibson - is supposed to be a factual account; and this account suggests that the child internalizes the referential apparatus of his language by irreducible leaps of analogy. In this regard Gibson's commentary is quite illuminating:

Carnap was contented to come up with *any* adequate reconstruction of our theory of the world (viz. science), whereas Quine, disdainful of "all this make-believe," opted instead for a "factual account" of the matter. But it now would appear, in the light of the revelation that Quine intends to settle for an idealized account of how a child might acquire the idiom of quantification, that Quine's commitment to the goal of providing a factual account of how our theory of the world, i.e., of how (theoretical) language is acquired, seems to be waning. This is an important matter, for to relinquish the goal of a factual account is virtually a relinquishing of enlightened empiricism itself... This apparent conflict in Quine's thought between a factual account and idealized account is only a mirage. (...) [I]maginative constructions can afford hints of actual psychological processes. (Gibson, 1982, p. 58)

There is a good amount of evidence to suggest that Gunter Abel is right when he says that although Quine's starting point is empirical, it does not commit him to a reductionist empiricism, and that as a result, the 'higher reaches of language' are based on interpretational constructs:

Critics of Quine frequently fail to see that it was Quine himself who has shown that the empirical and behavioral evidence (concerning language

comprehension, meaning, and reference) can only lead us as far as the stimulus meaning reaches (which is limited to observation sentences). All that goes beyond this limit requires interpretational constructs. (1984, p. 404)

If the child's acquisition of the apparatus of reference and his use of analytical hypotheses constitute such an interpretational construct in relation to which his use of the reference and his understanding of the use of the reference in the expressions of others is fixed, then the child does intend in communication what cannot be gleaned from it on the basis of public evidence. So, in the end, whether the disagreement between Quine and Dummett can be deflated is far from clear.

5.4 The First Person Perspective: Separating Language and Mental States

Dummett was not the only one to understand the indeterminacy of translation thesis as making at least partial claims about what it is for an individual to know the meaning of an utterance. In his paper "Indeterminacy of Translation, Empiricism, and the First Person" (1987) John R. Searle raises the question about the status of the distinctions between "rabbit" and "rabbit stage" from the personal perspective. Searle's challenge is to explain how it is that I can not only detect a difference between "rabbit" and "rabbit part" when I scrutinize the consequences of adopting a different translation manual, but that I can also confirm that in a given case I intended to communicate one rather than another. The attempt by some philosophers who support the indeterminacy of translation thesis to answer these criticisms turns on a postulate of independent of language and social conditioning of mental states, which makes Dummett's argument quite relevant.

Not unlike Dummett, Searle picks up on the consequences of Quine's claim that indeterminacy of translation begins at home. What he sees as following from this is that if

there can be no empirical grounds for distinguishing between “rabbit” and “rabbit stage”, and consequently no semantic distinction between these terms, then a given speaker should not be able to know or even recognize any difference between them. He says:

Quine recognizes something that many of his critics have missed, and that is the real absurdity of the indeterminacy argument once you follow out its logical consequences: followed to its conclusion, the argument has nothing essentially to do with translating from one language to another or even understanding another speaker of one’s own language. If the argument is valid, then it must have the result that there isn’t any difference for me, between meaning rabbit or rabbit stage, and that has the further result that there isn’t any difference for me between referring to a rabbit and referring to a rabbit stage, and there isn’t any difference for me between something’s being a rabbit and its being a rabbit stage. And all of this is a consequence of the behaviorist assumption that there isn’t any meaning beyond behaviorist meaning. (Searle, 1987, p. 130)

When the indeterminacy thesis is viewed in this light it becomes clear that the very articulation of the thesis requires the kind of semantic distinctions that it is meant to undermine. In a footnote, Searle credits Kirk Ludwig with pointing this out, he says: “...this seems to lead to a pragmatic paradox, since it looks as if, in order to state the thesis, we have to specify distinctions that, the thesis says, cannot be specified” (Searle, 1987, footnote, p. 140). Thus, the distinctions that are present in Quine’s premises - when he claims that mapped sentences are not equivalent in any sense - seem to be denied in the conclusion - when he suggests that there is no fact of the matter what constitutes the correct translation. The question is how one can even know that the translations of a particular expression differ if not through some publicly observable manifestations of these semantic differences? Something like circularity, a closed curve in space as Quine puts it, seems to be lurking here.

These problems lead Searle to say that: “[I]f the indeterminacy thesis were really true, we would not even be able to understand its formulation; for when we were told there was no “fact of the matter” about the correctness of the translation between rabbit and rabbit

stage, we would not have been able to hear any (objectively real) difference between the two English expressions to start with" (Searle, 1987, p. 131). However, as Searle insists: "recall that the whole argument about "Gavagai" was understood by me or you only because we know the difference for our own case between meaning rabbit, rabbit stage, rabbit part, etc." (Ibid., 131). In other words, according to Searle even if Quine does not want to make any suggestions as to the content of an utterance as it is "intended" by a given speaker or "understood" by a given hearer, the very formulation of the thesis requires that an individual makes these distinctions. If no sense can be made of certain conceptual distinctions on the strength of public evidence, then no distinctions should be present in the mind of the individual either. But, as Searle points out, we know independently that we do make such distinctions. Searle and Ludwig are not the only ones to have some reservations about this. Apart from Dummett, Jerrold Katz mentions this problem in his "Refutation of Indeterminacy" (1988). He says:

Quinians have always had trouble explaining in what respect allegedly competing analytical hypotheses compete. It is easy, from a common-sense standpoint, to appreciate the respect in which 'rabbit', 'rabbit stage' and 'undetached rabbit part' represent rival translations, but what from the standpoint of indeterminacy, is supposed to [be] the semantic difference? Quine's indeterminacy thesis is predicated on the existence of a conceptual distinction of some sort among such translations, yet the nature of the choice within a radical translation situation seems to preclude the possibility of any difference upon which the distinction might rest. (Katz, 1990, p. 194)

In a brief attempt to deal with this issue, Katz suggests that Quine has some intuitive conception of meaning in mind. Therefore he says: "The sense of a distinction without a difference comes from the fact that these differences cannot exist in radical translation, so they recede into the background when radical translation is identified with the extreme case of actual translation" (Katz, 1990, p. 194).

This approach, however, does not circumvent the problem. Quine does not put *divergent translations* or *incompatible translations* into inverted commas. He does it neither literally nor figuratively. In fact, he says that, “the mapping is no mere correlation of sentences with equivalent sentences, in any plausible sense of equivalence however loose” (Quine, 1960, p. 27). Furthermore, in section 16 “On failure to perceive the indeterminacy”, when expounding on the second cause of failure, he states that he is talking about the difference in *net outputs* resulting from different translation manuals, while in explaining the third cause of failure he speaks of results that are “utterly disparate translations” and translations “each of which would be excluded by the other system....”. He goes as far as to say that “[t]wo such translations might even be patently contrary in truth value...” (Quine, 1960, pp. 73-4). How could *intuitive semantic distinctions* explain this? An appeal to an unexplained notion of intuitive distinction threatens to become a black hole into which the problematic features of the theory conveniently disappear.

Searle suggests that Quine does not believe that for the speaker there is no real difference between alternative translations, and in support quotes from Quine’s treatment of the apparatus of individuation in “Ontological Relativity”: “[n]o such indeterminacy obtrudes so long as we think of this apparatus as given and fixed” (Quine, 1969b, p. 35). But, Searle is not sure why the relativity of the reference to the individuating apparatus is supposed to be an argument against a determined translation. He says: “Of course, a word means what it does only relative to a language of which it is a part, but the very relativity of the possession of meaning presupposes the non-relativity of the meaning possessed” (Searle, 1987, p. 135). In other words, if the individual’s first person understanding of reference is determined by his understanding of his background language and its individuating

apparatus, why is this supposed to make “his” reference inscrutable?

In order to respond to these criticisms, Dagfinn Føllesdal proposes in his paper “Indeterminacy and Mental States” to endorse the separation between mental states and language. He suggests that the different senses or “intuitive” meanings that underlie the distinctions between “rabbit” and “rabbit part” stem from the different mental states that have been associated with these expressions during the language learning process. During the intersubjective and public process of language acquisition the child learns to associate different pre-verbal mental states with linguistic expressions, but the process is characterized by a certain arbitrariness because the public evidence does not force a unique correlation on the child:

When we acquire a language, we learn to associate certain linguistic expressions with certain of our mental states. The states, or aspects of them, thereby become verbally expressible. Of course we also get many further mental states, especially as we go along acquiring and using language. However, it is to some extent arbitrary how we come to pick up language and associate expressions with our various mental states. We learn language through publicly accessible evidence and this evidence does not force upon us one unique correlation between our mental states and the expressions of our language. The whole set of associations between mental states and expressions has to fit in with the publicly accessible evidence, but this restriction still leaves us with several ways of associating linguistic expressions with mental states. (Føllesdal, 1990, p. 108)

Føllesdal is aware that introducing mental states is usually done in an effort to undermine the indeterminacy thesis. But he is also aware that the indeterminacy thesis is perfectly compatible with the theory of mental states, for, unlike other thinkers, Føllesdal remembers that for Quine two individuals might have private semantic correlations, or implicit analytical hypotheses, and still not differ in their dispositions to behave. As a result, the sense that the individual attaches to a given term, or the mental states that he

associates with it, could differ from the mental state or sense attached to it by another, and still the respective individuals would not differ in their behavioural dispositions. This, then, is the response to Searle, which explains why from the first person perspective one gets the impression that one refers to “rabbit” rather than “rabbit stage” without a difference in behavioural consequence. The explanation turns on the idea that one gets the sense of a distinction without a difference because a person could attach different mental states to the same term without affecting his dispositions to behave:

After the correlations have been made, the two sentences ‘There is a rabbit there’ and ‘There is a rabbit stage here’ express different mental states, and we do certainly not regard the sentences as synonymous, there are lots of differences between rabbits and rabbit stages. However, the question which of the two expressions is correctly translated into French *lapin* makes sense only relative to a translation manual. To ask which translation is the absolutely right one, makes no sense. (Ibid., p. 108)

The process of association is somewhat arbitrary, constrained only by the boundary conditions set by the public evidence. If one were to reflect on the nature of this association one would realize that one could have associated a completely different set of mental states to the language that would preserve all sentence-to-sentence connections and behavioural dispositions. This picture coheres well with Quine’s view of language and its public nature as well as with his general tenet that people of the same language are like shrubs cut to the shapes of identical elephants, the same on the surface but different in terms of the “anatomical details” of branches and twigs. Twigs can be readjusted, but the outward form will remain the same. So, Føllesdal says:

We are not aware of this arbitrariness, for when we learn language we begin with some tentative associations between our mental states and the expressions we hear, and we make the necessary adjustments as we go along. Only when we start reflecting philosophically do we notice that we could have begun differently and/or made the adjustments differently and have arrived at a different correlation between linguistic expressions and

our mental states. (Ibid., p. 108)

As Føllesdal points out, from a philosophical point of view we understand that we could have begun differently. But, the same philosophical insight should suggest that others probably did begin differently. One can hope for no insight into how others did begin, precisely because that would require an immediate access to those mental states without the mediation of language, which cannot pick out a unique correspondence. Dispositions to behave are the common coin, but the “twigs and branches” of mental states are not. This explanation also seems to cohere well with Quine’s insight in “Ontological Relativity” (1969b) that to ask whether one’s neighbor means ‘rabbit’ or ‘rabbit part’ when homophonic translation is suspended is very much like asking whether our neighbor may not systematically see everything upside down forever undetectably (Quine, 1969b, p. 50). Føllesdal sees no reason to feel a sense of loss simply because the reference is reduced to a status similar to colour. Indeed, why bother, if all that really matters to meaning is what could be communicated? His attitude reflects one of Quine’s, who continues to say in “Ontological Relativity”(1969b) that “the riddle about seeing things upside down, or in complementary colors, should be taken seriously and its moral applied widely....” (Quine, 1969b, p. 50).

Føllesdal’s attempt to deal with Searle’s criticism turns on the idea of pre-verbal mental states, which he describes to be “not as proposition-like atoms, but rather as comprehensive, field-like wholes” (Føllesdal, 1990, p. 107). Language does not determine what these states are - it is rather that through the matching of states with language the states become verbally expressible. One could see how separating language and mental states, and in particular, giving up on the causal role of language in constituting the content of mental

states could explain why it is that meaning - played here by the mental states - could be underdetermined by use. If language determined mental contents, and was learned under public circumstances and under the pressure of accessible evidence, then language, evidence, and mental contents should present a determined causal chain. But then one would have to explain how it is that an individual could have a mental content which could not be uniquely determined by the public evidence, in this case a distinction between “rabbit” and “rabbit stage”. However, by separating language and mental states, one gains explanatory shoulder-room: if language does not determine mental states but rather relates to it by a loosely constrained association, then there could be a variety of mental contents all of which are underdetermined by public evidence. In this manner, one could explain the difference we all understand when we think of “rabbit” and “rabbit stage” while at the same time keeping the thesis that this difference is underdetermined by public evidence. However, one would also have to admit that this picture implies that language is simply a code for thought or, as Dummett would put it, a code for the mental content.

It is interesting that Quine does not reject Føllesdal’s defence of the indeterminacy of translation. As he points out in “Comment on Føllesdal”, mental states are usually brought up to undermine the thesis of indeterminacy. He also mentions that a theory of mental states dissociated from language represents an interesting angle, and he looks forward to the elaboration of this view.

5.5 Dummett’s Second Case Against Quine

In *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993) Dummett argued against prioritizing an idiolect conception of language that is language as the possession of a single individual. He

maintains that such a view is in error because it takes priority over the common language view, which stresses that language is a social institution, a common possession of its users. The difference between these views is in their consequences for the theory of meaning. If language determines meaning, then the view of language as a common possession of its users - an institution determined through their interaction and agreement on its rules - ensures the transparency and communicability of meaning. In Dummett's opinion, the common language view is the way to ensure the objectivity of thought through the intersubjective institution of language. Language, and consequently meaning, must be viewed, first, as a common institution, and only then as a possession of a single individual.

The prioritization of idiolect, on the contrary, implies that language is primarily the possession of an individual, and the common language is a product of an overlap of idiolects. The view of language as an idiolect implies that the significance of an utterance is not the product of a social agreement on the rules of linguistic use, but a result of an internal meaning-conferring act, whereby some psychological content or a mental state is attached to the terms of the languages lending them their significance. According to Dummett, this view of language is in error because it cannot ensure the communicability of meaning. If the meaning of an utterance lies in the mental content associated with it, then the question whether the hearer understood the speaker as the speaker intended cannot be verified without immediate access to the state of his consciousness. Ultimately, this view is based on a code conception of language.

Dummett charges that Quine's views on radical translation at home imply an idiolect conception of language. The source of this claim is that Quine just as Davidson, introduces translation into the home language, and, as a result, paints a picture of language that

involves not speakers and hearers but interpreters. For Dummett, the significance of this introduction lies in the fact that the meaning of a speaker's given utterance is determined by a theory of meaning that guides him in his speech, and the ideal understanding of this meaning would depend on the grasp by the interpreter of the theory internalized by the speaker. Dummett sees the role of an internalized theory as being analogous to the role of mental events: communication cannot be verified because querying as to the nature of the theory would only make sense if the answers were understood as they were intended and this would presuppose the correct grasp of that very theory.

According to Dummett, any theory of meaning based on this model could avoid taking the turn towards psychologism only if it gave a "promissory note" that would explain how the theory is related to use. The "promissory note" would demonstrate how misunderstandings could come to light. However, given the thesis of indeterminacy of translation, all the behavioural evidence is compatible with a number of possible interpretations, or manuals of translation. As Dummett points out: "To this it might be said that those... who accept the thesis of indeterminacy of translation would not maintain the possibility of any such demonstration: use, for them, does not uniquely determine meaning" (Dummett, 1989, p. 179). Therefore, the resulting picture, as Dummett sees it, is that meaning becomes ineffable: a theory, an analytical hypothesis, or a particular grasp of the apparatus of individuation formed during language acquisition determines how the individual interprets or understands the utterances of his home language, but neither anything that he could say or do would allow to determine the precise form of this theory. This follows from the fact that indeterminacy infects the home language, and as a result the neighbor's behaviour cannot settle the question of how he refers, while his linguistic

testimony about the rules he might be using is itself subject to indeterminacy and cannot resolve it. Every testimony, and every act could be interpreted as accommodating a number of different theories attributing quite different views to the individual.

Immediately, it becomes evident that Dummett's argument makes at least two assumptions: first, a theory of meaning must address meaning, knowledge, and understanding as part of the same nexus, that is, it must give an account of the content of one's thoughts, and second, Quine's account of analytical hypothesis and acquisition of the referential apparatus could be used to give such account. In other words, the argument assumes that indeterminacy is a matter of underdetermination by public evidence, and that reference is fixed for the individual in virtue of his own grasp of the apparatus of reference.

If Dummett's second assumption is false, and analytical hypotheses do not represent an internalized theory of any form, then the charge that meaning becomes ineffable or incommunicable does not apply to Quine. If an individual's personal history of the acquisition of the apparatus of reference, by irreducible leaps of analogy, does not result in a unique reference in his use of language, then in speaking he does not uniquely refer and there is nothing left uncommunicated. In this case, Dummett's argument has no application. In "Language and Communication" Dummett admits that "When the theory of meaning for a speaker's idiolect is not conceived as internalized by him or as the content of a piece of knowledge of any kind that he possesses, the matter stands differently" (Dummett, 1989, p. 181).

However, if Chomsky is right to criticise Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation as being an ordinary case of underdetermination, and thus that there is a unique way in which a speaker refers, then Dummett's argument applies. Since reference is fixed

only if the apparatus of reference is fixed, referring would require acquisition of the apparatus of reference and a particular grasp of the “cluster of interrelated grammatical particles and constructions governing reference” (Gibson, 1982, p. 71). However, if the reference in one’s use of language is determined by the acquired apparatus of reference, then reference is ineffable because given the suspension of homophonic translation and the holistic character of the apparatus, all verbal and non-verbal activity of the speaker would be compatible with a number of distinct interpretations of it. This would lead to the conclusion that, contrary to Davidson’s view, for Quine an individual might intend to use his words with a unique reference, although there is no way for his words to convey the reference to another. If this interpretation is correct, then Quine’s conception of language qualifies as prioritizing idiolect over common language and violates Dummett’s Manifestability of Meaning thesis. In particular, the manifestability thesis is violated since an individual might associate with an expression or formula some mental content, which nevertheless cannot be manifested through the use of the expression or formula, and as a result the audience would be unaware and have no means of becoming aware of the association.

This argument, which shows that Quine has an idiolect conception of meaning, is further supported by the interpretation of Føllesdal and his separation of language and mental states. According to Føllesdal the choice of the association between linguistic expressions and mental states is largely arbitrary, and only loosely constrained by the boundary conditions set by the need for communication. This interpretation coheres well with Quine’s bushes in elephant form simile and represents an example of an idiolect conception of language. In this example it seems clear that the character of the mental content associated with an expression is private to the individual and cannot be expressed by

means of language, for it is underdetermined by public evidence and any personal testimony could be interpreted to express any number of mental states.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a problem with Dummett's argument against Quine. Dummett's argument claims that Quine's idiolect conception of language is flawed because it cannot ensure communication, but the unique character of Quine's argument implies that the idiolect conception of language is acceptable, because anything that cannot be communicated also cannot be relevant to communication and meaning. That is to say that even if the above interpretation of Quine is right and reference is ineffable then Quine's answer is that determined reference is simply irrelevant. This is evidenced by the fact that at the end of *Word & Object* Quine objects to an argument against indeterminacy of translation made on the basis of mental states. There, Quine says that a mentalist approach cannot succeed not because it is based on the idea of a "private implicit system of analytical hypotheses" but rather because even if it were so "my point is then that another bilingual could have a semantic correlation incompatible with the first bilingual's without deviating from the first in his speech dispositions within either language, except in his dispositions to translate" (Quine, 1960, p. 74). This statement suggests that, given that there are private semantic correlations, the argument from communication would not defeat this position and Dummett would have to live with the incommunicability of certain contents.

Dummett would have to live with it because his argument against idiolect was based on the notion that incommunicability of thought contents is absurd. The basic idea was that either idiolect allows for perfect communication, or else, it is absurd and must be rejected. But, if one reflects on the hermeneutic elements implicit in Quine's account of the process of translation, one realizes that even if the linguistic community consisted of individuals

who had internalized different analytical hypotheses or internalized the referential apparatus in a different way there would still be no public evidence that would exhibit the difference. That is to say that even if Quine's indeterminacy thesis did not imply constitutive scepticism but only epistemological scepticism, it would still make little difference to the success of Dummett's argument against him.

The argument against idiolect was based on the assumption that to deny the possibility of communication of thought content as it is "intended" is absurd, but this conclusion is not argued, it is assumed. In a sense, the error is in the approach. The argument offered by Dummett takes the very possibility of idiolect for granted, but rejects it as implausible because no communication between idiolects would be possible or verifiable. This approach seems to allow, at least hypothetically, that there can be such a thing as an implicit private semantic correlation, and then rejects this notion because communication stops being verifiable. However, Quine also rejects the communication of such contents, so if reference is ineffable from the standpoint of public evidence then so much the worse for reference. A better argument would have been one that puts the very possibility of private semantic correlations into doubt. Such an argument could put into question the idea that anything like a determinate semantic content could be learned whereby its significance would exceed the evidence on the basis of which it is acquired. This argument would emphasize the *learning constraint* of Dummett's Manifestability of Meaning argument rather than the *manifestability constraint* that he uses in his argument from failure of communication. In other words, if an argument against the idiolect conception is to have any effect against a theory which would accept the consequence that transmission of meaning as it was "intended" is impossible, it must argue against the idiolect conception of

language directly and not derivatively through failures in communication.

A good candidate for such an argument is Kripke's sceptical paradox presented in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982). In applying the paradox to the current task, the argument will be based on the premise that the rule-following on which language is based is necessarily and fundamentally a social practice that leaves no room for a private interpretation of a rule. Since Kripke's sceptical solution to the paradox rejects the very notion of a private interpretation of a rule and substitutes for it a socially based attribution of a rule, given that the argument is correct, there can be no substance to the idea that an individual might have a private interpretation of a rule which is underdetermined by his personal application of it. Because the argument for the indeterminacy of translation at home turns on the idea that, due to the holistic character of language and the referential apparatus, rules attributable to a speaker of the language could be reinterpreted in a number of ways without affecting the sentence-to-sentence connections or the speaker's dispositions to behave, the sceptical solution would leave such attribution entirely without ground. In other words, if there can be no private rule-following, then there can be no private interpretation of the rules comprising the "cluster of interrelated grammatical particles and constructions governing reference" (Gibson, 1982, p. 71), and in this case there can be no substance to the idea of indeterminacy of translation at home language. Specifically, no substance can be given to the idea that one's neighbour might be referring to rabbit stages rather than rabbits relative to his own grasp of the individuating apparatus. Therefore, acquiescing in the home language and taking its words at face value is not a decision one ends up with, but rather a 'decision' one begins with, and as a consequence the thesis of indeterminacy of translation at home can only serve to show that the internal organization of the language could have

been different, but not that it can *actually* be diverse.

There are good reasons to think that Dummett would endorse this argument as an appropriate way to deal with the conception of language as idiolect. His concluding remarks in Chapter 4 of *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* suggest that he draws the relation among society, rules, and meaning, and the implications for the idiolect conception of meaning. There he says: "...the individual stands to be judged only by his peers, the general accord of the society from which he originally learned to handle words and symbols. If we isolate him in thought from this society, there ceases to be any right or wrong in his use of his personal language: and consequently all meaning evaporates from it" (Dummett, 1991, p. 106).

Summary:

This chapter was concerned with an elaboration and analysis of the grounds for Dummett's second attribution of the idiolect conception of language to Quine. This attribution was based on the claim that with the introduction of radical translation into home language Quine jeopardizes verifiability of communication. Focusing on inscrutability of reference in the home language it was suggested that such attribution could find ground only if the reference of a given speaker was determinate relative to the speaker's internalized apparatus of reference but neither his behaviour nor his own verbal testimony could allow the hearer to determine the speaker's grasp of this apparatus. Since Dummett's explanation of successful communication is based on the idea that the hearer should be able to verify that he understands the speaker as the speaker "intended" to be understood, given the above understanding of the indeterminacy of translation at home, no such verification is possible. However, if Davidson's interpretation of Quine's

indeterminacy of translation is correct, and the speaker does not “intend” to communicate anything that cannot be figured out on the basis of public evidence, then Dummett’s argument against Quine is simply baseless. In this case, the disagreement between Dummett and Quine is more apparent than real and should be substantially deflated.

However, it was also argued that if the above reading of the indeterminacy of translation at home is correct, Dummett’s argument cannot undermine it. Dummett’s argument claims that because mental states cannot be communicated meaning must be public, but Quine would agree with him on both counts. When the chips are down the real question is where the reference falls. It was suggested that a better argument would be one that undermines the very possibility of idiolect as based on the idea of individual interpretation of the rules of the referential apparatus.

Chapter VI: Rule-Following and Idiolect

6.1 The Sceptical Paradox

At the end of the preceding chapter a problem with the idiolect conception of language came to be viewed in a different light. The new challenge is to address a possible retort of a theorist who would accept the idiolect conception of language and refuse to give guarantees that speakers of a language share their understanding of it, motivating this refusal by the insight that as long as the communication is unhindered, their personal grasp of the language is irrelevant. In other words, given that two speakers are guided in their speech by two different internalized theories, which externally result in flawless communication, what is the point of demanding that the differences in these theories be exhibited? In Dummett's case the reason is clear: the analysis of language paves the way to the analysis of thought, as a result, the transparency of the "intended" communication is the logical completion of the Linguistic Turn.

Being pre-empted in an appeal to communication, someone like Dummett could have one other possible recourse, and that is to question the view whether language and meaning can be explained by the appeal to speaker's personal grasp of the rules. While there is evidence that Dummett would endorse such a route, he gives no explicit account of such an argument. However, in his book *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982), Saul Kripke does just that in the context of his interpretation of Wittgenstein's sceptical paradox. His conclusions are crucial to undermining the idiolect view and ultimately making the case for the priority of common language. As Alexander Miller puts it in the introduction to *Rule-Following and Meaning* (2002), "A corollary of KW's

neutralization of the sceptical paradox is thus that there can be no such thing as ‘solitary’ language” (Miller & Wright, 2002, p. 1).⁴⁸

Kripke’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s private language argument and the sceptical paradox upon which it is based has come under numerous criticisms since its publication. A significant number of these criticisms aimed at how faithful Kripke is to Wittgenstein’s text, and whether Kripke’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s notion of rule-following is warranted. This question is not important in the context of this investigation, as a result, the argument presented by Kripke in his work will be considered on its own grounds, not as a presentation of Wittgenstein, but rather Kripkenstein, as it has come to be known in literature. Kripke points out, in the preface to the 1995 edition of his book, “...the present paper should be thought of as expounding neither ‘Wittgenstein’s’ argument nor ‘Kripke’s’: rather Wittgenstein’s argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him” (Kripke, 1982, p. 5).

According to Kripke, the foundation of Wittgenstein’s paradox can be expressed by his claim that no action can be determined by a rule because every course of action can be made out to accord with a rule. While concentrating on mathematical examples to illustrate the paradox, Kripke is careful to point out that the paradox underlies all meaningful use of language, and, therefore, must be considered with all seriousness in its application to a general theory of meaning. The presentation of the paradox takes the form of a search to rebut the sceptic who doubts that there is any fact about a given individual that would show that his course of action accords with one rule as opposed to another. In his approach, the sceptic exploits the idea that any rule is instantiated only by

⁴⁸ KW is an abbreviation for Kripkenstein, which seem to be a reference to the fact that Kripke’s exposition is a presentation of Wittgenstein’s argument as it struck Kripke.

a finite number of examples, yet the rule is supposed to determine indefinitely many future applications of the rule. However, the sceptic asks, what external or internal fact about the individual, who has supposedly 'grasped' the rule, determines this application? Given a rule for addition and a problem previously not encountered - by supposition '57+68' - the sceptic asks: what fact about the individual determines that the answer that should be given is 125 and not 5?

Now suppose I encounter a bizarre skeptic (...) Perhaps, he suggests, as I used the term 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for '57+68' should have been '5'! ... But of course the idea is that, in this new instance, I should apply the very same function or rule that I applied so many times in the past, but who is to say what function this was? In the past I gave myself only a finite number of examples instantiating this function. All, we have supposed, involved numbers smaller than 57. So perhaps in the past I used 'plus' and '+' to denote a function, which I will call 'quus' and symbolize as 'Ø'. It is defined by:

$x \text{ Ø } y = x + y$, if $x, y < 57$
 $= 5$ otherwise.

Who is to say this is not the function I previously meant by '+'? (Kripke, 1982, pp. 8-9)

According to Kripke, the position of the sceptic, while admittedly bizarre, is not a priori inadmissible. The sceptic puts in question whether there are any facts about past usage of the rule or past intentions that will show that the present use of the function is in fact in accord with past use. What if my using the function now as 'plus', thinking that it is in accord with the past usage of the function, is in fact induced by LSD? What fact about the past can show that this supposition is unwarranted? If this supposition is false, there must be some fact about the past usage that can be cited to refute it. It is of no use to say that one should continue to compute 'in the same way' as exhibited by past instances of the applied rule, since there is nothing about the past instances that guarantee that that rule is

in fact 'plus' and not 'quus'. Kripke continues to stipulate two conditions that any response to the sceptic must satisfy:

In the discussion below the challenge posed by the skeptic takes two forms. First, he questions whether there is any *fact* that I meant plus, not quus, that will refute the skeptical challenge. Second, he questions whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer '125' rather than '5'. The two forms of the challenge are related... . An answer to the skeptic must satisfy two conditions. First, it must give an account of what fact it is (about my mental state) that constitutes my meaning plus, not quus. But further, there is a condition that any putative candidate for such a fact should satisfy. It must, in some sense, show how I am justified in giving the answer '125' to '68+57'. The 'directions' mentioned in the previous paragraph, that determine what I should do in each instance, must somehow be 'contained' in any candidate for the fact as to what I meant. Otherwise, the skeptic has not been answered when he holds that my present response is arbitrary. (Kripke, 1982, p. 11)

No amount of 'directions' that can be given in the formulation of a rule can determine how to follow the rule in the future, since there is no finite limit on the application of the rule or on conditions that can be applied to it. Kripke continues on to say that someone might question whether directions or finite examples have anything to do with how the rules are supposed to be applied. The rule is not a matter of a finite number of examples from which the future application is to be extrapolated; the rule is not a list of applications. According to this objection, to 'grasp' a rule is to internalize a set of directions for the *rule*; to internalize an algorithm, which determines how addition is to be continued. But what was that internalized rule? One example of adding x and y could be given by the following directions: take a number of marbles; count x marbles into one heap; count y marbles into another; join the heaps and count the union thus formed. According to Kripke, this fails to circumvent the problem since the problem can resurface itself at a more basic level:

Despite the initial plausibility of this objection, the skeptic's response is

all too obvious. True, if 'count', as I used the word in the past, referred to the act of counting (and my other past words are correctly interpreted in the standard way), then 'plus' must have stood for addition. But I applied 'count', like 'plus', to only finitely many past cases. Thus the skeptic can question my present interpretation of my past usage of 'count' as he did with 'plus'. In particular, he can claim that by 'count' I formerly meant *quount*, where to 'quount' a heap is to count it in the ordinary sense, unless the heap was formed as the union of two heaps, one of which has 57 or more items, in which case one must automatically give the answer '5'. (Kripke, 1982, p. 16)

Kripke points out that it is tempting to answer scepticism towards a rule by an appeal to another rule. However, any such appeal misses the point, since it is the very notion of a rule that is under attack. The problem resurfaces itself at the level of the auxiliary rule. A rule for interpreting a rule simply defers the problem. That is why stipulating that the individual means addition by "plus" if he holds certain beliefs among which is the belief that the "sum of two numbers is always equal to or greater then either one of them"⁴⁹ makes no progress. As Kripke points out, the sceptical move can be repeated at the more basic level and "eventually the process must stop - 'justifications come to an end somewhere' - and I am left with a rule which is completely unreduced to any other" (Kripke, 1982, p. 17). Dismissal of Kripke's paradox frequently stems from an unwillingness to reflect on this point. But ultimately such reflection would lead to the question: what would be the justification for the claim that I am following the rule correctly? According to Kripke, it would seem that "I apply the rule blindly" (Kripke, 1982, p. 17).

Kripke suggests that for Wittgenstein the fundamental problems in philosophy of mathematics and sensation language - the target of the "private language argument" - are at root identical and stem from the same sceptical paradox. Whatever the actual position

of Wittgenstein is on the issue, Kripke maintains that the sceptical paradox is not confined to mathematical rules. Meaning is rule-based, and all rules can be brought under the scope of the paradox. The application of everyday concepts, such as the use of the term 'table' is as much in question as the rule of addition; the role of perception in these cases changes nothing:⁵⁰

I think that I have learned the term 'table' in such a way that it will indefinitely apply to many future items. So I can apply the term to a new situation, say when I enter the Eiffel Tower for the first time and see a table at the base. Can I answer a skeptic who supposes that by table in the past I meant *tabair*, where 'tabair' is anything that is a table not found at the base of Eiffel Tower, or a chair found there? Did I think explicitly of the Eiffel Tower when I first 'grasped the concept of' a table, gave myself directions for what I meant by 'table'? And even if I did think of the Tower, cannot any directions I gave myself mentioning it be reinterpreted compatibly with the skeptic's hypothesis? (Kripke, 1982, p. 19)

Furthermore, there is no need for the situation to be dissimilar in a significant way to anything previously encountered. Every situation is different from the proceeding ones just by virtue of being numerically distinct, and this in itself is already sufficient to be exploited by the sceptic as a condition that has not been explicitly anticipated in stating the rule. If I have been to the Eiffel Tower a dozen times in the past and identified the item at the base as a table, who is to say that the item is to be regarded as a 'table' for the duration of twelve visits and on the thirteenth visit it should be regarded as a 'tabair'? Citing past use, in cases when it is possible, is useless since there is nothing about that past use that can justify or disqualify any particular form of the application at present:

⁴⁹ Schiffer (1987, p. 84) brings up this point in his brief discussion of Kripke's paradox.

⁵⁰ Donald Davidson has criticized Kripke for dwelling too much on mathematical examples and not significantly extending his argument to objects of perception. While the point seems fair it is not obvious that the argument lacks an application to objects of perception as a result of such focus. As Jose L. Zalabardo characterizes the sceptical argument in his "Kripke's Normative Argument" the argument targets a specific kind of meaning facts, namely "the facts that are supposed to determine which objects satisfy a predicate, as meant by a speaker at a time" (1997, p. 275).

This, then, is the skeptical paradox. When I respond in one way rather than another to such a problem as '68+57', I can have no justification for one response rather than another. Since the skeptic who supposes that I meant quus cannot be answered, there is no fact *about me*, that distinguishes between my meaning plus and my meaning quus. Indeed, there is no fact *about me* that distinguishes between my meaning a definite function by 'plus' (which determines my responses in new cases) and my meaning nothing at all. (Kripke, 1982, p. 21) (My Italics.)

In anticipation of Kripkenstein's sceptical solution to the paradox, Kripke is careful to point out that the thrust of the challenge is to show some fact, whether internal or external, about the individual, that would justify or disqualify a particular application of a rule. His conclusion is that none can be offered. Anything that can be presented as a candidate for such a justification, whether in the form of behavioural patterns, mental states, or neural connections, could be made compatible with alternative applications. As a result, Kripke says that the problem presented by the sceptic is not epistemological in nature:

Given, however, that everything about my mental history is compatible with both the conclusion that I meant plus and with the conclusion that I meant quus, it is clear that the skeptical challenge is not really an epistemological one. It purports to show that nothing in my mental history of past behavior - not even an omniscient God would know - could establish whether I meant plus or quus. (Kripke, 1982, p. 21)

The problem is indeed a general problem of meaning. If there was no fact as to what was meant by 'plus' in the past, there can be no fact as to what is meant by 'plus' now. Kripke says that in the formulation of the paradox he did perforce use language, taking present meaning for granted. However, as he points out, "this provisional concession was fictive... [t]he ladder must be kicked away" (Kripke, 1982, p. 21).

6.2 Challenges to The Sceptical Paradox

In *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language*, Kripke considers at least three attempts to solve the sceptical paradox by undermining the sceptic's position. The three approaches that Kripke considers are based, respectively, on considerations of dispositions, primitive mental states, and simplicity considerations. All of these attempts aim to defeat the sceptic by giving a straight solution to the paradox by pointing out that there is something about the individual in virtue of which she means 'plus' rather than 'quus'.

It should be added that Kripke's acuity is exposed by the fact that in outlining the avenues of response to his argument, he predicted the general lines along which the criticism were constructed after the work was published. However, to review this extensive work in its entirety would require writing volumes. Therefore, the examination of the responses to and criticisms of the sceptical paradox and its solution will be limited to some of the more relevant and known positions.

6.3 Dispositions and the Like

One of the main attempts to give a straight response to the sceptic is the dispositional account. As Kripke points out, the dispositionalist questions the way in which the problem is formulated. In particular, he questions the assumption that the fact whether one means 'plus' or 'quus' should be an *occurrent* mental state. As a result, it is open to the dispositionalist to claim that the fact whether one meant *quus* or *plus* is determined by the *dispositions* of the speaker to respond to the problem. In consequence, the response to the challenge of the sceptic will turn on the fact that given the problem '68+57', the

individual meant 'plus' in the past if he had a disposition to respond to the problem with '125'. This, obviously, can be also brought to bear on new situations, since the question whether one 'goes on in the same way' can be resolved by pointing to the past dispositions. To go in the same way now is to go on as one would have gone in the past:

To mean addition by '+' is to be disposed, when asked for any sum ' $x+y$ ' to give the sum of x and y as the answer (in particular, to say '125' when queried about '68+57'); to mean *quus* is to be disposed when queried about any arguments, to respond with their *quum* (in particular to answer '5' when queried about '68+57'). True, my actual thoughts and responses in the past did not differentiate between the plus and the *quus* hypotheses: but, even in the past, there were dispositional facts about me that did make such a differentiation. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 22-23)

Kripke's immediate response is one that questions the utility of the dispositions in deciding whether one meant *quus* or *plus*, in face of the fact that none of us carries around a neural map of a sort with the record of all our dispositions. Kripke questions the strategy of justifying a particular application of a rule with a *hypothesis* about one's past dispositions. In "Kripke's Normativity Argument", Jose Zalabardo exploits Kripke's reference to the lack of neural maps of dispositions in an attempt to develop an alternative to the Normativity Argument. He calls his interpretation the *Justification Argument*, and it is based on interpreting Kripke as claiming that in justifying following a rule, not only does one not have access to neural maps of past dispositions, but such a search is not even attempted as a matter of fact – "I immediately and unhesitatingly calculate '68+57' as I do, and the meaning I assign to '+' is supposed to justify the procedure. I do not form tentative hypothesis...." (Zalabardo, 1997, p. 285). As a result, Zalabardo suggests that for Kripke, facts that justify following a rule should involve *immediate access* and *conscious engagement*. Zalabardo suggests that it is the *Justification Argument* that is the main argument against dispositionalism and not the

Normativity Argument as understood by the majority of those who attempt the dispositional responses to the paradox.

But what is this allegedly supporting Normativity Argument? Kripke's first argument claims that the dispositionalist's reply to the sceptic is misdirected. The sceptic 'created the air of puzzlement' as to the *justification* of responding with '125' as opposed to '5'. The dispositionalist might point out that once we know what the past dispositions were, we will know how to 'go in the same way', if, of course, 'going in the same way' is the goal. However, according to Kripke, the problem is that this account conflates performance and correctness, for it would follow that any miscalculation is justified by the requisite disposition to miscalculate. However, this cannot do justice to the normative aspect of rule-following one is looking for. As Kripke points out: "[a] candidate for what constitutes the state of my meaning one function, rather than another, by a given function sign, ought to be such that, whatever in fact I (am disposed to) do, there is a unique thing that I should do" (Kripke, 1982, p. 24). However, the dispositional account cannot satisfy this condition. Most people, even under normal conditions, have dispositions to make mistakes, some are disposed not to carry over when adding, others persist in making the same spelling mistakes, or reverse the order of words in a sentence (as in the case of dyslexia). Under the influence of alcohol or drugs, these mistakes are multiplied many times over. If the dispositions were in fact what determines what one meant, then in all these cases one meant the rules that one carried out. What is missing from this account is the notion of miscalculation or miscarriage of a rule, in other words, no response given on the basis of a disposition could be deemed 'right' or 'wrong':

So it does seem that the dispositional account misconceives the skeptic's problem - to find a past fact that justifies my present response. As a

candidate for a 'fact' that determines what I mean, it fails to satisfy the basic condition on such a candidate... that it should tell me what I ought to do in each new instance. (Kripke, 1982, p. 24)

For the dispositionalist, to follow a rule is to accord with previous personal dispositions to carry it out in a particular way. Kripke points out that because dispositions stand in for the fact of the rule which the individual means, the function that one means must be *read off* from the dispositions, it cannot be presupposed in advance. Therefore, in the case of deviant calculations, a dispositionalist cannot say that the individual has made a mistake; he is forced to say that the individual is following a non-standard rule. In order to avoid such conclusions, this account must qualify some of the dispositions as erroneous, but this it can do only by reference to the meant function. Kripke concludes: "a disposition to make a mistake is simply a disposition to give an answer other than the one that accords with the function I meant. To presuppose this concept in the present discussion is of course viciously circular" (Kripke, 1982, p. 30).

However, according to Zalabardo, the problem with this *Standard Normativity Argument* is that it is based on a Straw Man fallacy. A sophisticated dispositionalism would claim that correct dispositions could be distinguished from erroneous dispositions on the basis of "ideal conditions" that accompany correct dispositions. Responses along these lines have been advanced by a considerable number of philosophers, among them Fodor in *Theory of Content and Other Essays*, Graeme Forbes in "Skepticism and Semantic Knowledge", Philip Pettit in "Reality of Rule-Following", Warren Goldfarb in "Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules". However, all of these responses ultimately face a similar problem: they must specify the ideal conditions or the *ceteris paribus* clauses in non-semantic and non-circular terms.

In “Skepticism and Semantic Knowledge”, Graeme Forbes suggests that Kripke’s criticism of dispositions based on interferences can be avoided by the *ceteris paribus* clause. However, it is essential to his argument that what the sceptic questions is not the identity of the conceptual content at a time, but the transtemporal identity of the conceptual content. Forbes’ approach suggests that if we can determine the identity of the conceptual content at a time, we can determine *ceteris paribus* whether the present rule is the same as the one previously followed. However, he admits that, for instance, Wright’s take on Wittgenstein, which undermines the identity of the conceptual content at a time, is different and more difficult to answer. Already it should be apparent that it is difficult to characterize this account as dispositional, it is no longer based on the rejection of meaning as an *occurrent* mental state. Kripke’s reference to Wittgenstein’s position that alludes to the logical impossibility of the mental content containing infinite applications of a rule suggests that Kripke targets the identity of the conceptual content at a time. Thus, the fundamental premise of Forbes’ program, which he shares with a number of thinkers who accept this approach, is false.

However, there is a different problem with this approach as well. Even if the identity of the conceptual content at a time was not in question, there still remains the fundamental Humean problem of going from an “is” to an “ought”. As Zalabardo points out, “the basic thought behind the Standard Normativity Argument is perfectly expressed by the famous passage in the Treatise” (Zalabardo, 1997, p. 377).

Using an analogy of dispositions with the solubility of salt, Forbes suggests that the underlying physical states might be of help in determining the content of the *ceteris paribus* clause. Warren Goldfarb suggests a similar foundation for the *ceteris paribus*

clause. As he points out, “If we do find physical states that can, on internal grounds, be distinguished as competency states, as well as other states that are interfering mechanisms, then clearly that will be enough to ground the notion of how the person would ideally respond....” (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 98). But, again, as Zalabardo correctly pointed out, the sceptic’s retort would be along the Humean lines that dispositional facts are descriptive facts, and no descriptive fact can license normative or evaluative claims.

The sophisticated dispositionalist might respond by saying that rules do not prescribe action in a vacuum, but rather as a condition that the individual should respond 125 to $68+57$ only if the individual wants to be in accord with the rule as used previously. If such a response were found legitimate, then the lack of neural maps for checking what one meant before, would be the only serious impediment to the sophisticated dispositionalist account.⁵¹ Goldfarb admits this when he says that the lack of transparency for immediate justification remains a problem (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 98). However, already one can see that the sceptical paradox ceases to be a constitutive problem and becomes an epistemological one. Therefore, the *Justification Argument* developed by Zalabardo in an effort to respond to the sophisticated dispositionalist is a step away from the main point of Kripke’s exegesis: this account is based on an epistemological and not a constitutive problem.

The issues with the lack of neural maps and transparency, which would allow us to determine the correct dispositions, could be circumvented on the basis of a proposal made by Philip Pettit in “The Reality of Rule Following” (1990). In this work, Pettit basically endorses a form of the dispositionalist account under the guise of ‘inclinations to respond’. He suggests that the only way to make sure that the inclination is subject to

an independent standard of correction, that is that it corresponds to a rule rather than legitimizes the rule, is to make it subject to interpersonal and transtemporal interaction. As he points out, “Without such interaction there cannot be a relationship between the inclination and the rule other than one of exact fit: specifically there cannot be a suitable relationship of fit under favorable conditions. This means that the isolated doppelganger of a rule-follower at any time t , the doppelganger without history or company cannot itself follow a rule” (Pettit, 1990, p. 204).

Pettit’s account is somewhat ambivalent between treating the paradox as revealing a constitutive or an epistemological problem. On the one hand, it could be suggested that interpersonal interaction constitutes the ultimate ground for determining the ‘correct’ inclination: this approach has the essential elements of the sceptical solution. On the other hand, Pettit considers that intrapersonal interaction, interaction between temporal selves, is sufficient. However, if the latter is true, then it is not clear what help such interaction can be in sorting the inclinations from interferences. In other words, some physical fact of the kind brought up by Forbes and Goldfarb has to provide the ultimate ground for such a criterion. If this is so, then, in Forbes’ terms, there is identity of conceptual content at a time, and contrary to Pettit’s ultimate conclusion, there can be an *isolated doppelganger of a rule-follower at any time t* . In the end one must conclude that if Pettit’s notion of interaction is to be a genuine alternative to neural maps, it must be interpersonal. Ultimately, Pettit fails to make transtemporal interaction a necessary condition of following a rule.

In “The Rule Following Considerations” (Boghossian, 1989), Paul Boghossian puts a finger on what drives the responses along dispositional lines - it is the fundamental

misunderstanding of the normativity constraint. He considers the McGinn's 'capacity' based version of the dispositional response as put forward in *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (1984). The misunderstanding is based on the fundamental premise that the point of the scepticism is - as Forbes put it - transtemporal identity of conceptual content. As McGinn emphasizes, "The notion of normativeness Kripke wants captured is a transtemporal notion... . We have an account of this normativeness when we have two things: a) an account of what it is to mean something at a given time and b) an account of what it is to mean something at different times..." (McGinn, 1984, p. 147). With the problem framed in this manner, the solution is presented in the form of inclinations, capacities, physical structural states, or expressions in mentalese. They serve to determine what one means at one time, and then to satisfy the normativity constraint by providing the identity of conceptual content over time by specifying some set of ideal or optimal conditions. But as Boghossian points out:

Any theory of meaning that provided an account of what speakers mean by their expressions at arbitrary times - however crazy that theory may otherwise be - would satisfy McGinn's constraint. In particular, the main theory alleged by Kripke to founder on the normativity requirement would easily pass it on McGinn's reading: since there are perfectly determinate facts about what dispositions are associated with a given expression at a given time - or, rather, since it is no part of Kripke's intent to deny that there are - it is always possible to ask whether an expression has the same or a different meaning on a dispositional theory, thus satisfying McGinn's requirement. How to explain, then, Kripke's claim that a dispositional theory founders precisely on the normativity requirement? (Boghossian, 1989, p. 147)

In "Critical Notice of McGinn's *Wittgenstein on Meaning*", Crispin Wright joins his voice with Boghossian in asserting that capacities do not differ from dispositions, and that these type of solutions are based on a misunderstanding. "What is the normativity constraint that McGinn apparently misunderstands?" (Wright, 1989 p. 110). The

explanation is that the framing of the problem is incorrect. Meaning something determinate at a time t is itself in question, because in meaning something at a time t the future use is - to paraphrase Wittgenstein - already *somehow present*. As Boghossian says, “it ought to be possible to read-off from any alleged meaning-constituting property of a word what is the correct use of that word” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 148).⁵² While Kripke’s paradox is set up in a way that questions the causal nexus with the past use of the rule, it really questions the causal nexus to the future use.

Kripke’s second argument against the dispositionalist account emphasizes this *causal nexus*, and it turns on the fact that in giving his account the dispositionalist ignores that the totality of his dispositions is finite and it cannot be stretched out to cover the potentially infinite applications of a rule. The sceptic, therefore, can exploit this finitude and reinterpret the function on that basis:

It is not true, for example, that if queried about the sum of any two numbers, no matter how large, I will reply with their actual sum, for some pair of numbers are simply too large for my mind - or my brain - to grasp. (...) Let ‘quaddition’ be redefined so as to be a function which agrees with addition for all pairs of numbers small enough for me to have any dispositions to add them, and let it diverge from addition thereafter (say, it is 5). Then, just as the skeptic previously proposed the hypothesis that I meant quaddition in the old sense, now he proposes the hypothesis that I meant quaddition in the new sense. A dispositional account will be impotent to refute him. (Kripke, 1982, p. 27)

Kripke points out that there are at least two standard ways to argue against this position.

The first is to say that given the ability to grasp the problem - given extra brain powers -

⁵² Boghossian also develops an argument against sophisticated dispositionalism, which shows that ideal conditions cannot be specified without circularity. Boghossian’s position is based on the premise that interpretation of the speaker’s beliefs is a holistic matter and takes place against the background of an infinite network of other beliefs. As a result, the specification of ideal conditions for having a particular belief would depend on specification of a cluster of other beliefs, and as a result would be viciously circular. Another argument, as put forward in *Naturalizing Content*, was developed against ultra-sophisticated dispositionalism represented by David Lewis’s reductive analysis. It turns on the idea that

one would have the disposition to respond with the right sum. Forbes seems to suggest something like this when he claims that if a given individual means addition by “+” then we can be pretty sure how he would respond if he were in a position to grasp the addition problem. The problem is that *ex hypothesis*, the way to respond must be read off the actual disposition to respond, and this simply cannot be done in the absence of an actual disposition. If one starts reading correct answers off the hypothesis about dispositions, one must realize that dispositions no longer play the constitutive role they were meant to play at the start. At this point, dispositions seem to be regarded as predictable symptoms of the presently grasped rule, and that puts the cart before the horse.

A way to modify the dispositionalist account in the face of a lacking disposition is to say that even though the disposition is lacking the intention might be present. Consequently, given the means to carry out the intentions, one would solve the problem by following the rule for addition and not quaddition. This approach suggests that intention could be the way to deflate the significance of rule-following. In “The Rule Following Considerations”, Paul Boghossian develops an argument that puts in question the significance of Kripke’s sceptical paradox. In this article he says: “...the ordinary concept of following a rule is the concept of an act among whose causal antecedents lie contentful mental states; consequently, it is a concept that presupposes the idea of a correctness condition, not one that can, in full generality, explain it” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 152). However, this approach suggests an artificial division between rule following and intention. As Alexander Miller points out, the argument does not hold because “...[T]he notion of intending to follow a rule is in a certain way analogous to meaning

even if non-semantic specification could have been carried out, it would require an infinite number of reductions due to the infinite number of background beliefs.

something by a linguistic expression” (Miller, 2002, p. 15). This response is completely in line with the one given by Kripke. As he points out, one cannot appeal to intentions without circularity, since it is the intention that is precisely what is in question:

Such a counterfactual condition is true enough, but it is of no help against the skeptic. It presupposes a prior notion of my having an intention to mean one function rather than another by ‘+’. It is in virtue of a fact of this kind about me that the conditional is true. But of course the skeptic is challenging the existence of just such a fact; his challenge must be met by specifying its nature. Granted that I mean addition by ‘+’, then of course if I were to act in accordance with my intentions, I would respond, given any pair of numbers to be combined by ‘+’, with their sum; but equally, granted that I mean quaddition, if I were to act in accordance with my intentions, I would respond with the quum. One cannot favor one conditional over rather than another without circularity. (Kripke, 1982, p. 28)

Thus, any attempt of the dispositionalist to defend against the sceptic’s argument by appeal to intuitions or hypothetical situations is guilty of circularity just as the attempted defence against the sceptic’s challenge to provide a standard of correctness. No appeal to a hypothesis about possible dispositions, nor, indeed, about any future behaviour whether it is based on ability or a skill, can be made without circularity. All of these candidates are in the same boat, restricted by the finitude of their actual instantiations that the sceptic is quick to exploit. Kripke says, “[i]f he tries to appeal to my responses under idealized conditions that overcome this finiteness, he will succeed only if the idealization includes a specification that I will still respond, under these idealized conditions, according to the infinite table of the function I actually meant. But then, the circularity of the procedure is evident” (Kripke, 1982, p. 28).

6.4 Simplicity Considerations

Another attempted response to the sceptic is one that suggests that simplicity

considerations should play the fundamental role in deciding whether the speaker meant plus or quus. The sceptic is accused of being needlessly perverse in his presentation of the problem. Given the two hypotheses as to what the speaker meant, the simpler one should be selected as the more probable one.

According to Kripke, this response misconstrues the nature of the problem. The issue is not epistemological in nature, the question is not how we can find out whether the speaker meant one function rather than another. The sceptic questions whether there is a fact that would count as definitive of the speaker having meant one function rather than another. In the light of this Kripke's response is simple: given two hypotheses, the simplicity considerations might help in deciding between them, however, simplicity considerations are useless when we do not know what the hypotheses are in the first place. "If we don't understand what two hypotheses state, what does it mean to say that one is 'more probable' because it is simpler?" (Kripke, 1982, p. 38).

Kripke emphasizes that the sceptical paradox is not based on the limitations of our knowledge. The sceptic is quite willing to say that even an omniscient being, with access to all facts, still would not be able to find a fact that differentiates between plus and quus hypotheses. What is in question is rather that given the perfect knowledge of all facts, what facts would count towards claiming that an individual meant quus rather than plus:

Now Wittgenstein's skeptic argues that he knows of no fact about an individual that could constitute his state of meaning plus rather than quus. Against *this* claim simplicity considerations are irrelevant. Simplicity considerations would have been relevant against a skeptic who argued that the indirectness of our access to the facts of meaning and intention *prevents us ever from knowing* whether we mean plus or quus. But such merely epistemological skepticism is *not* in question. (Kripke, 1982, p. 39)

Kripke concludes that the simplicity considerations are of no use, for while they may

assist in deciding between competing hypotheses, they cannot tell what the hypotheses are.

In his “Kripke’s account of the Argument Against Private Language” (1984), Crispin Wright suggests that Kripke’s argument begs the question by assuming non-factualism about meaning in the process of proving this thesis. However, as Alexander Miller reasonably suggests in *Rule-Following and Meaning* (2002), Kripke’s sceptic does not need to assume non-factualism about meaning-ascription, it is sufficient to claim that there is no satisfactory account of what the fact of such ascription can consist. In this case question begging is avoided.

6.5 Primitive Mental States

Kripke considers two further candidates for the fact as to what is meant, in the form of *unique qualitative and introspectible mental states* and *primitive mental states*. For the first of these two, the response to the sceptic is supposed to consist in the claim that meaning a determinate function is a unique introspectible mental state, on a par with a feeling or a mental image. Kripke elaborates on this view by saying, “[w]hy not argue that “meaning addition by ‘plus’” denotes an irreducible experience, with its own special quale known directly to each of us by introspection? (Headaches, tickles, nausea are examples of inner states with such qualia)” (Kripke, 1982, p. 41). Indeed, each of us, as Kripke points out, knows with certainty that he has a headache, when he does, by attending to its unique introspectible and irreducible qualitative character. Why not say that meaning addition by ‘plus’ is just like that feeling? Kripke offers at least two arguments to show why it should not.

The first argument is based on the presumption that such an irreducible quale could be identified. What in the nature of this quale could rebuke the sceptic? Kripke identifies this position as the cornerstone of classical empiricism, saying that while the cornerstone it may be, it is nevertheless unclear how the alleged introspectible quale could be relevant to the problem at hand. Kripke borrows an example from Wittgenstein of a mental picture of a cube that is supposed to give substance to the application of the word 'cube'. The question is how can a particular use of the word fit or fail to fit this picture? If one claims that the word fits cubes but does not fit triangular prisms, one would be wrong, since, as Kripke points out, depending on the method of projection the word cube may equally well fit the mental image of a triangular prism. Nothing about the mental image by itself seems to suggest a certain use. Furthermore, if such use were, in fact, suggested, there seems nothing about the image that can rebuke the sceptic who claims that the image should be used in a non-standard way. Perhaps, on the other hand, the image is accompanied by a method of projection: a schema of a sort, that determines its present and future use? But now it seems we are back to square one:

Can't I now imagine different applications of this schema too? Once again, a rule for interpreting a rule. No internal impression, with a quale, could possibly tell me in itself how it is to be applied in future cases. Nor can any pile up of such impressions, thought as rules for interpreting rules, do the job. The answer to the skeptic's problem, "What tells me how I am to apply a given rule in a new case?", must come from something outside any images or 'qualitative' mental states. (Kripke, 1982, p. 43)

Ani ntrospectible quale may seem an admissible candidate for the rule meant in relation to cubes and tables, but it seems quite unsuitable in relation to rules of addition and the like. As Kripke points out, an image or some representation of the infinite table of the 'plus' function may have, at least 'surface plausibility' as a device for determining

how to apply the function, but no one has such an image, nor are there any reasons to believe that such an image could be imagined even in principle.

The other argument against the candidacy of unique qualitative introspectible states comes from Wittgenstein, and it questions the very existence of such states. The argument is based on the idea that whatever introspectible state there is that accompanies the following of a particular rule, it is neither unique, nor qualitatively distinct. Wittgenstein considers the case of reading. His claim is that there need be no qualitative difference between the introspectible mental states of an expert reader and those of a novice who pretends to read by calling out memorized words. If there need be no qualitative difference between the introspectible mental states of a person who is known to be following the rule and one who is not, then, obviously, these states cannot serve as the foundation for this distinction. One might imagine cases where people under the influence of LSD have a feeling that they are reading, only to realize, when the effects wear off, that they were uttering words at random. Furthermore, if there were a feeling identified that accompanies the application of the function of addition, how would that feeling differ from one that is supposed to accompany quaddition? In the end, Kripke suggests that a unique introspectible mental state that could serve as the guarantor of meaning plus rather than quus, were it to exist, would be recognizable immediately by everyone:

If there really were an introspectible state, like a headache, of meaning addition by 'plus' (and if it really could have justificatory role such a state ought to have), it would have stared one in the face and would have robbed the skeptic's challenge of any appeal. But given the force of this challenge, the need philosophers have felt to posit such a state and the loss we incur when we are robbed of it should be apparent. (Kripke, 1982, p. 51)

However, one might object that to assimilate the notion of a meant function to a feeling that is akin to a headache is still to attempt to reduce it. The mental state that corresponds to meaning one function rather than another, the objection would go, is not to be assimilated to any other feeling; meanings are *primitive mental states*. As Kripke points out, “Perhaps, it is simply a primitive state, not to be assimilated to sensations or headaches or any ‘qualitative’ states, not to be assimilated to dispositions, but a state of a unique kind of its own” (Kripke, 1982, p. 51). In his article “Wittgenstein, Kripke & Non-reductionism About Meaning” (1984), Colin McGinn says that Kripke seems to be “mistaking irreducibility for non-factualism” (McGinn, 1984, p. 82). In McGinn’s opinion, the sceptic must defend the conclusion that semantic discourse cannot be regarded as irreducible, because “...the lack of a theory of phenomenon is not in itself a good reason to doubt the existence of the phenomenon. I therefore see no mystery mongering in the claim that there are primitive non-experiential mental states, which display a distinctive first-person epistemology” (McGinn, 1984, p. 89). However, while contending that rejection of irreducible mental states is the weakest part of Kripke’s position⁵³, Crispin Wright claims that..

This is about as flagrant an instance of philosophical stone kicking as one could wish for... How is it possible to be, for the most part, effortlessly and reliably authoritative about, say, one’s intentions if the identity of an intention is fugitive when sought in occurrent consciousness, as McGinn

⁵³ In “Meaning and Intention as Judgement Dependent” (1989) Crispin Wright develops his own attempt to respond to the sceptic on the basis of irreducible *sui generis* mental states. This response undertakes to ground the authoritative first person epistemology about intentions by claiming that these intentions are judgement dependent. That is to say, given a non-circular specification of certain ideal conditions (among them not lying), first person judgements about, let’s say, the application of colour predicates, are extension-determining, rather than extension-reflecting. There are reasons to wonder whether extension-determining judgements about intentions really constitute a straight solution to the sceptical paradox. However, even if judgement-dependent intentions and meaning did constitute a straight solution, there are reasons to think that it is circular. As Paul Boghossian pointed out, the left part of the conditional that specifies the ideal conditions for the extension determining judgements makes assumptions about mental contents. One might wonder in what way one can stipulate the “not lying” condition in a way that does not prejudice conceptual content.

grants that Kripke's Skeptic has shown, and the having an intention is thought of as disposition-like state? (Wright, 1989, p. 113)

Kripke's sceptic exploits the fact that the "first person epistemology" purports to reveal, not only the identity of conceptual content, but also justify its application. Since this is precisely what is still lacking, it is unclear what problem the reference to irreducible mental states is supposed to solve.

Kripke's own response contains two arguments. The first argument suggests that the claim of irreducibility is a bit desperate:

But it seems desperate: it leaves the nature of this postulated primitive state - the primitive state of meaning addition by "plus" - completely mysterious. It is not supposed to be an introspectible state, yet we are supposed to be aware of this state with some degree of certainty whenever it occurs. For how else can each of us be confident that he *does*, at present, mean addition by "plus"? (Kripke, 1982, p. 51)

Although, McGinn is familiar with this response and attempted to answer the "desperation" charge, ultimately, his argument does not offer anything to mitigate Kripke's concerns.

Kripke's second attempt to address the irreducibility issue is one that is derived from Wittgenstein. The argument turns on the idea that there is a logical difficulty, or even impossibility, of a finite mental state containing a rule that extends its application over indefinitely many cases of additions:

Such a state would have to be a finite object, contained in our finite minds. It does not consist in my explicit thinking of each case of the addition table, nor even of my encoding each separate case in the brain, we lack the capacity for that. Yet, 'in a queer way' each such case is already 'in some sense present'... What can this sense be? Can we conceive of a finite state which *could* not be interpreted in a quus-like way?... [i]t remains mysterious exactly how an existence of *any* finite past state of my mind could entail that, if I wish to accord with it, and remember the state, and not miscalculate, I must give a determinate answer to an arbitrarily large

addition problem. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 51-2)

McGinn dismisses this charge by saying: “This later problem is a specific problem about representing infinity; it is not a general problem about the notion of meaning” (McGinn, 1984, p. 90). McGinn suggests that there is no more logical difficulty with infinite consequences of a rule than in solubility being a property manifested on ‘indefinitely many occasions’.⁵⁴ Yet, this analogy exhibits the same old misunderstanding of the normative constraint: the problem is that the present grasp of the rule ‘entails’ the infinite consequences, which are ‘in some sense present’, and not that it will produce these consequences if the problem arises again. What is mysterious is the explanation of how the grasp of the rule is supposed to fix the infinite application of the rule “in a queer way”.

6.6 The Sceptical Solution

There are no facts about the individual that can be said to constitute his following a rule. One cannot claim “if the individual ‘grasped’ the rule for addition he will respond ‘125’ to the problem ‘68+57’”, because there is no internal or external fact about the individual in virtue of which he can be said to have ‘grasped’ the rule. Therefore, such conditionals are out of order. These are the sceptical results of Wittgenstein’s⁵⁵ investigation *à la*

⁵⁴ A similar objection to the argument based on the infinity of applications is made by Simon Blackburn in “The Individual Strikes Back” (1984). Blackburn compares dispositions to the brittleness of a glass, saying that glass will remain brittle on Alpha Centauri even if it will never get there. While Blackburn deals with a different argument than McGinn, nevertheless he also misses Kripke’s point, which is that the way to follow a rule must be read off an actual disposition.

⁵⁵ In his paper “Wittgenstein on Following a Rule” (1984), John McDowell puts in doubt the fact that Wittgenstein accepts the sceptical paradox. Among other things McDowell claims, that in *Philosophical Investigations* § 201, to which Kripke refers, Wittgenstein continues on to make a point which makes no room for sceptical conclusion. On this view, Wittgenstein insists on a distinction between the rule and multiple interpretations of the rule: The right response to the paradox, Wittgenstein in effect tells us, is not to accept it but to correct the misunderstanding on which it depends; that is to realize “that there is a way of

Kripke.⁵⁶

However, this is not the final resting point of the investigations. According to Kripke, Wittgenstein agrees with the sceptic that no ‘straight solution’ can be given to the paradox, however, a ‘sceptical solution’ can be given. Kripke defines the distinction between ‘sceptical’ and ‘straight’ solutions in these terms:

Call the proposed solution to a skeptical philosophical point a straight solution if it shows that on closer examination the skepticism proves to be unwarranted; an elusive or complex argument proves the thesis the skeptic doubted... . A skeptical solution of a skeptical philosophical point begins on the contrary by conceding that the skeptic’s negative assertions are unanswerable. Nevertheless our ordinary practice or belief is justified because - contrary appearances notwithstanding - it need not require the justification that the skeptic has shown to be untenable. (Kripke, 1982, p. 66)

One must concede to the sceptic that there is no internal or external fact about the individual that can constitute his having grasped a rule. No matter how long one searches through his brain, no such state of affairs would be found. The ultimate failure to provide a final justification in a form of a grasped rule suggests that in the end the individual acts “blindly”, following his own brute inclinations. If this is indeed so, then there can be no rule-following, no meaning, for private or public language.⁵⁷ As Kripke points out, the

grasping the rule which is not an interpretation” (McDowell, 1984, p. 52). Yet, it seems that the fact that the meaning of the rule is exhibited in the actual use of the rule, that is in *obeying the rule* or *going against it* suggests that there is really no rift between Wittgenstein and Kripke’s sceptical solution. McDowell quotes Wittgenstein from the *Blue Book* where he insists that meaning is final and not a matter of interpretation in support of his position, but the sceptical paradox does not endorse the opposite view. However, even if Kripke did not get Wittgenstein right, as many commentators claim, his version deserves independent consideration.

⁵⁶ In “Kripke on Wittgenstein on Normativity” (1994), George M. Wilson argues that even Kripke does not accept the radical skeptical solution, but rather uses it as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* to argue against the classical realist conception of meaning, which stipulates that there are a set of properties that govern a correct application of a term for a speaker. In “Rule-Following and Meaning” (Miller, 2002, p. 14), Alexander Miller comments that while this reading is interesting, it suggests that Kripke provides a straight solution to the skeptical paradox, which contradicts what he explicitly says in his book.

⁵⁷ Indeed, Kripke sees Wittgenstein’s skeptical paradox not simply as the argument against ‘private language’, viewed as a language which is logically impossible for another to understand, but as a paradox that shows “all language, all concept formation, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible” (Kripke, 1982, p.

sceptical paradox "...does not allow us to speak of a single individual, considered by himself and in isolation, as ever meaning anything"(Kripke, 1982, pp. 68-9) and:

The important thing about this case is that, if we confine ourselves to looking at one person alone, his psychological states and external behavior, this is as far as we can go. (...) As long as we regard him as following a rule 'privately', so that we pay attention to *his* justification conditions alone, all we can say is that he is licensed to follow the rule as it strikes him. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 88-9)

Taken by himself, the subject cannot be said to be following a rule, because there are no circumstances under which he could be said to have broken a rule. Quine's dispositional view failed to address the normative element in rule-following, because it failed to provide for an independent standard of correctness. The problem is that Quine's approach is too narrow; it focuses on the individual, his behaviour, and inevitably his psychological states, and as Kripke insists, there is nothing about the individual *considered in isolation* that could explain rule-following as a normative practice. Nothing in the individual considered in isolation can provide for a standard in virtue of which the individual can be said to follow or violate a rule. The only way to allow for such a judgment, according to Kripke, is to consider the individual as interacting within a community:

The situation is very different if we widen our gaze from consideration of the rule follower alone and allow ourselves to consider him as interacting with a wider community. Others will then have justification conditions for attributing correct or incorrect rule following to the subject, and these will *not* be simply that the subject's own authority is unconditionally to be accepted. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 88-9)

It is only by reference to a community and the communal practice that a judgment that an individual is following a rule correctly or incorrectly can be made. However,

62). In his view, the impossibility of the "private language" is not the ultimate goal of that analysis, but rather the consequence of Wittgenstein's skeptical solution to his skeptical problem. As Kripke points out, "the impossibility of private language emerges as a corollary of his skeptical solution to his own paradox"

consideration of individual action in the context of a community is not simply a switch in framework, as in switching from idiolect to dialect. The community makes attribution of rule-following possible by providing for an independent standard of correctness. Conformity to the social practice and practical consideration related to the participation in, and admission to the community are the only senses in which the speaker ‘should’ respond with ‘125’ rather than ‘5’. It is the communal practice, or the *form of life*, that contains the facts necessary for attributing the rule following to the subject and provides the standard of correctness by which to judge whether the individual qualifies as a competent member. This makes the community a necessary condition of rule-following ascriptions and therefore a necessary condition of meaning. According to Kripke, “The solution turns on the idea that each person who claims to be following a rule can be checked by others. Others in the community can check whether the putative rule follower is or is not giving particular responses that they endorse, that agree with their own” (Kripke, 1982, p. 101).

Kripke recognizes that his take on the rule-following places a different emphasis in the private language argument. Instead of the emphasis on the question of whether someone could have a private rule that cannot be understood by others, the emphasis is placed on the very possibility of a rule held privately. The argument against private language is transformed into an argument against solitary language:

First, following §243, a “private language” is usually defined as the language that is logically impossible for anyone else to understand. (...) This conception is not in error, but it seems to me that the concept is somewhat misplaced. What is really denied is what might be called a ‘private model’ of rule-following, that the notion of a person following a given rule is to be analyzed simply in terms of facts about the rule follower and the rule follower alone, without the reference to his

(Kripke 1982, p. 68).

membership in a wider community. (Kripke, 1982, p. 109)

One can appreciate the importance of the proposed shift in thinking about meaning by considering what Kripke calls the *inversed form of the conditional*. Kripke compares the revolution in Wittgenstein's thinking in relation to rule following to Hume's reassessment of the notion of causation. Both, he claims, question a certain nexus from past to future.⁵⁸ Hume puts under question the causal nexus whereby a past event necessitates another future event, while Wittgenstein questions the nexus between past 'intentions' or 'meanings' and current practice. If there are no facts about the individual in virtue of which he can be said to violate his previous intentions then the idea of a rule or intention as something that binds future choices can have no substantive content.

For Humeans, the conditional 'if events of type *A* cause events of type *B*, and if an event *e*, of type *A* occurs, then an event *e'*, of type *B* must follow' is out of order. As Kripke points out, such a form of conditional commits us to a belief in a causal nexus: given the causal nexus between event types, event *e* necessitates event *e'* in virtue of the logical form of the syllogism. Instead, Humeans, who reject the causal nexus, accept the contrapositive form of the conditional, namely: whenever we know that an event *e* of type *A* occurs and is not followed by an event of type *B*, we must deny that there is a causal relation between the two event types. This formulation does not commit one to the view that regularities are caused by causal relations, but instead makes the attribution of a

⁵⁸ Hume's analysis of causation claims that to say that two events *a* and *b* are causally related is to place these two events under two types *A* and *B*, which we expect to be constantly conjoined in the future as they were in the past. Causal relation is fictive. As Kripke points out, "even if God were to look at the events he would discern nothing relating them other than that one succeeds the other...When the events *a* and *b* are considered by themselves alone, no causal notions are applicable" (Kripke, 1982, pp. 67-8). Similarly, no individual considered by himself can be said to be following a rule, and since this is not an epistemological issue for Kripke, not even omniscient God would be able to see anything in the individual that would justify his actions as bound by a rule. Individual rule following is fictive.

causal relation conditional on regularity. As Kripke emphasizes:

Instead of seeing causal connections as primary, from which observed regularities 'flow', the Humean instead sees the regularity as primary, and - looking at the matter contrapositively - observes that we withdraw a causal hypothesis when the corresponding regularity has a definite counter-instance. (Kripke, 1982, p. 94)

Kripke points out that although the conditional is equivalent to its contraposed form, the concentration on the contrapositive reverses the priorities. The causal nexus is not taken for granted, but asserted based on the regularities: one attributes the causal relation based on the regularity and not vice versa. For Kripke, the contraposed form of the conditional is a key to the assertability conditions for rule following. Instead of saying 'if John means addition by '+', then, if he is asked for '68+57', he will reply '125'' we inverse the conditional: 'if John does not reply '125' when asked '68+57' then he cannot be said to mean addition by '+'. The contrapositive form of the conditional does not commit us to a belief in mental states that somehow embody the rules:

As in the causal case, the conditional as stated makes it appear that some mental state obtains in John that guarantees his performance of particular additions such as '68+57' - just what the skeptical argument denies. Wittgenstein's picture of the true situation concentrates on the contrapositive, and on justification conditions. If John does *not* come out with '125' when asked about '68+57', we cannot assert that he means addition by '+'. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 94-95)

For Kripke, the responses of the individual constitute the assertability conditions for attributing to him rule-following. While he is careful to note that such attributions do not pick out any special state of mind in the individual, they nevertheless serve an important practical role in the interaction of the community: "[w]e take them provisionally into the community as long as further deviant behavior does not exclude them" (Kripke, 1982, p. 95).

This reversal of priorities is quite fundamental to the theory of meaning. Given that there is no internal or external fact of the matter whether an individual considered in isolation follows a particular rule, “we cannot say that we all respond as we do to ‘68+57’ because we all grasp the concept of addition in the same way, that we all share common responses because we share a common concept of addition” (Kripke, 1982, p. 97). Even though such an explanation is natural and, as Kripke points out, Frege would readily endorse it, it would be unwarranted. It is an assumption that does not stand the test of the sceptical paradox.

It is easy to see that the consequences of this inversed form of conditional are far reaching.⁵⁹ As Kripke points out, Wittgenstein’s requirement for public criteria of meaning is often misunderstood and taken to be an unjustified assumption. Of course, if the private language argument is taken to endorse the view that there is a fact about the individual in virtue of which he can be said to mean something, then one can question the need to postulate public criteria. As Fodor has pointed out in his *Language of Thought*, in this case the problem is purely an epistemological one. If there were a fact about an individual in virtue of which he could be said to follow a rule (Fodor as well as McGinn

⁵⁹ According to Kripke this argument becomes a key element in understanding Wittgenstein’s break with the *Tractatus*. As he points out, the *Tractatus* is based on an unwarranted assumption of isomorphism between mental entities and facts in the world: a representational picture of meaning, where there are, indeed, facts about the individual in virtue of which he can be said to be following a rule. It presupposes that there are facts about the mind of the speaker that constitute him grasping a certain meaning, or having a particular intention. Hence the focus of *Tractatus* on declarative sentences. It is precisely the skeptical paradox that subjects this view to a devastating critique. With the view of the isomorphism undermined, one can no longer assume that mental states mirror the states in the world. As a result, the picture of meaning based on the truth values of declarative sentences gives place to a theory of meaning based on assertability conditions for utterances. The latter no longer concerns itself with what is going on in the head of the speaker but calls attention to the roles and the context of the use of these utterances. As Kripke paraphrases Wittgenstein on numerical assertions: “Don’t look for ‘entities’ and ‘facts’ corresponding to numerical assertions, but look at the circumstances under which utterances involving numerals are made, and the utility of making them under these circumstances” (Kripke, 1982, p. 77). In the end Kripke agrees with Dummett: “the paradox developed in the second part, antecedently to its solution, drives an important final nail (perhaps a crucial one) into the coffin of the representational picture”. (Kripke 1982, p. 85).

suggest that it is a formulation in Mentalese) then nothing else would be required to determine what the individual means. Public criteria would be required merely as a means by which communication between individuals could be established, a way of determining that they are following the same rule, and not as constitutive of rule following. To the extent to which Dummett's argument against idiolect is based on the need for public criteria as a means to know what others mean, he implicitly accepts the premise that the speaker can mean something independently of shared communal practice. The weakness of this position is evident. It concedes that a speaker might mean something privately and argues that, if it is so, one might never be sure that the speaker is understood as he intended. While Dummett finds this conclusion unacceptable, some might accept it as a sad but inevitable fact of life. However, if public criteria are constitutive of meaning attribution then there can be no private language. As Kripke points out: "It should be then clear that the demand for 'outward criteria' is no verificationist or behaviourist premise that Wittgenstein takes for granted in his 'private language argument'. If anything it is deduced, in the sense of deduction akin to Kant's" (Kripke, 1982, p. 100). Thus, Kripke's argument against 'private rule-following' goes to the heart of the matter and undermines the very idea that an individual can mean something in private. The sceptical challenge *à la* Wittgenstein proves to be superior to the communicability of thoughts argument *à la* Frege.

6.7 Challenges: Communal Consensus and Truth

A number of criticisms have been made of the sceptical solution. Perhaps the most obvious one is that consensus among the members of a community cannot be the

determinant of truth or meaning. Boghossian indicates that.. “a number of critics have complained against communitarianism that communal consensus is simply not the same property as truth, that there is no incoherence in the suggestion that all the members of a community have gone collectively, but non-collusively, off-track in the application of a given predicate” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 172). Indeed, in “The Individual Strikes Back”, Simon Blackburn suggests that:

If my community all suddenly started saying that $57+68=5$, this fact does not make me wrong when I continue to assert that it is 125. I am correct today in saying that the sun is shining and daffodils are yellow, regardless of what the rest of the world says.” (Blackburn, 1984, p. 39)

However, Kripke is clear that he does not suggest that Wittgenstein endorsed communitarianism of this sort. He warns that such a conception would be fundamentally confused, because it would be still based on a theory of truth conditions of assertions such as: by “plus” we mean such and such. He points out that:

Wittgenstein’s theory should not be confused with a theory that, for any m and n , the value of function we mean by “plus”, is (by definition) the value that (nearly) all the linguistic community would give as the answer... .Thus the theory would be a social, or community-wide, version of the dispositional theory, and would be open to at least some of the criticisms as the original form... . What follows from these assertability conditions is not that the answer everyone gives to an addition problem is, by definition, the correct one, but rather the platitude that, if everyone agrees upon a certain answer, then no one will feel justified in calling the answer wrong. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 111-2)

One might wonder, whether this answers the criticism. It seems that Simon Blackburn questions whether this answer is indeed based on a platitude as Kripke maintains. However, unless Blackburn wants to engage in “stone kicking” he would be hard pressed to take the opportunity given by the sceptic and provide the source of the justification for asserting his correctness in spite of what the “rest of the world” says. Perhaps, given that

there is a fact as to what a rule is, the world could be considered as having gone wrong, but in the absence of such a fact this judgement is out of place. As Paul Boghossian admits, “the communitarianism is not best read as offering an analysis of the ordinary notion of truth, but a displacement of it” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 172).

Blackburn also wonders whether the introduction of a community makes any difference as to the success of a response to the sceptic. Why should the community make a difference? He points out: “it is equally true that there is no distinction between a community being thoroughly Goodmanned but seeming to itself as having a unified practice, and its actually having a unified practice” (Blackburn, 1984, p. 40). However, this argument is based on a misunderstanding similar to the one already discussed. It is true that if there were rule following facts as the sceptic assumes in the formulation of his paradox, then introduction of a community would make no difference. However, once this assumption is rejected, the sceptical solution turns on the idea that there is nothing to unified practice beyond agreement in use. In other words, there is no “head space” for being Goodmanned. What Blackburn seems to forget is that switching to the community is also accompanied by abandoning factualism about rules.

6.8 Circularity: Agreement Presupposes Rules

An interesting point was made by Paul Hoffman in “Kripke on Private Language” (1985). The argument aims to undermine the sceptical solution by pointing out that agreement in use presupposes sameness of response, and the recognition of response as “the same” presupposes continuation of a series. However, since continuation of a series, in its turn, presupposes rule following, the sceptical solution is circular. Thus, agreement

presupposes rule following and cannot ground it. Warren Goldfarb in “Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules” (1985) supports this argument, and formulates it in this way:

The notion of agreement rests on the notion of sameness of response. To say that two utterances or signs are the same response to a question (of the sum of two numbers, for example) is to say that the utterances or signs are tokens of the same type. We cannot identify or differentiate responses except by invoking the relation of token to type. But the relation of token to type is a case of a relation between continuation of a series and the rule governing the series. To apply a condition that invokes sameness of response, thus requires knowledge of the correct continuation according to a rule, and so would be ruled out by the restriction above. (Goldfarb, 1985, p. 103)

In “The Rule-Following Considerations” (1989), Paul Boghossian claims that a closer look reveals that “Kripke’s communitarian conditions are parasitic on the solitary conditions and not the other way around”. The problem is that the agreement that is supposed to ground the rule can come about only as a result of an evaluation of the answers of a purported rule-follower as “the same” as one’s own. In a similar vein, Donald Davidson raises a problem in his lecture on externalism. Citing Warren Goldfarb, he says: “if the question is, when is someone going on in a relevantly similar way, how can it constitute an informative answer to say, he has gone on in a relevantly similar way when someone else would have gone on in a similar way? The concept of relevant sameness is exactly what was to be explained” (*Lectures*, unpublished manuscript, p. 14). Davidson’s own answer is that evolution had something to do with what we find relevantly similar or salient.

Davidson has to be right in claiming that recognition, as a vital condition of survival, has something to do with evolution. It is a fact that mice, even under conditions of total social isolation from behavioural psychologists or other mice, would get through the maze, exhibiting something like recognition. But one might wonder whether the

recognition of similarity in that sense is what Kripke puts into doubt. In particular, one might doubt that this similarity has anything to do with something like language, or that the agreement Wittgenstein is talking about is a matter of recognizing some pre-existing identities. In *Language, Thought, and Logic* John Ellis, just like Davidson, emphasizes that every situation differs from others in some respects. He sees the essential role of language to lie, not in naming or labeling but in categorization and abstraction. As he points out:

To say that words are categories is to stress the fact that they assign a very large number of cases to a much smaller number of groups. To say that they are abstractions stresses their role in analyzing experience and drawing out patterns in it. To say that they are simplifications is to draw attention to the way in which they reduce limitless complexity to an ordered and thus manageable state... . Before communicating facts about the world, a language must first have established what facts are to be... . Linguistic categorization therefore means in one sense a reduction of the variety of experience: situations that are not quite the same may be assigned to the same category and thus will count as “the same”. (Ellis, 1993, p. 29)

Ellis suggests that there are two ways in which one can think of categorization: one way is to think that categories arise as a reflection of similarities in things, another way is that categories represent something of “a decision to treat a particular range of things as if they were the same, and then treat everything that falls outside that range as different” (Ellis, 1993, p. 30). Ellis’ position seems to be influenced by Wittgenstein’s position in which he described the rule-governed responses as informed not by an intuition of the requirement of the rule but as a form of a decision.⁶⁰

Goldfarb’s argument ignores the idea that agreement could be a communal decision to treat something as the same, rather than agreement that is driven by things

⁶⁰ Ellis goes on to argue that while the view of categorization as a decision can account for all types of

being the same. In this assumption Goldfarb's argument resembles another one leveled against conventions. This argument states that language cannot be based on conventions because agreeing on conventions presupposes language. David Lewis responds to this argument in his book *Conventions* (1969), and at the same time provides a framework for a response to Goldfarb's problem.

Lewis proposes that the conventions of language are responses to coordination problems, which derive their value from the utility they have in serving common interests of the parties involved:⁶¹

Coordination problems... are situations of interdependent decision by two or more agents in which coincidence of interest predominates and in which there are two or more proper equilibria. We could also say - though less informatively than one might think - that they are situations in which, relative to some classification of actions, the agents have a common interest in all doing the same one of several alternative actions. (Lewis, 1969, p. 24)

Lewis draws on Hume's example of agents in spontaneous coordination that allows them to row their boat evenly. This is an instance of a coordination problem, where the agents gain from coordination with the others based on their expectations of each other's actions. Coordination, of course, does not imply uniformity or identity of actions, it merely implies that the actions of the agents are in a *coordination equilibrium*, which is defined as a combination in which no one would have been better off had *any one* agent

categories, including the ones based on "real similarities", the other model can account for a very limited number of categories.

⁶¹ Lewis' analysis, as put forward in his *Convention* (1969), could be seen as grounded in a psycholinguistic approach that views language function from an evolutionary perspective as an information-exchange operation meant to regulate and integrate biological activity. According to Richard Chase, an adherent of this approach, the key to understanding the biological origins of communication is to appreciate that all categories of biological activity generate specific information requirements, and that communication systems evolve to provide specialized capabilities to meet these needs, that is to receive, process, and transmit biologically essential information. Shared needs and common objectives are not a rarity for any given species. As Chase points out, the "heterogeneity of circumstance generates heterogeneity of needs, and it is to be expected that these heterogeneous needs are to be met by heterogeneous communication

alone acted otherwise (Lewis, 1969, p. 14). As Lewis stresses, “What is important about the uniform combinations we are interested in is not that they are - under some description - uniform, but that they are equilibria” (Lewis, 1969, p. 12).

The advantages of this treatment of conventions are that the requirements of the situation and the shared goals of the agents involved dictate the general form of the solution - the coordinated equilibrium. Concordant mutual expectations can be formed on the basis of *precedent* coordination equilibriums, whether accidental or not, and/or *salient* features of the situation, which stand out to both parties.⁶² “We can explain the force of precedent just as we explained the force of salience. Indeed, precedent is merely the source of one important kind of salience: conspicuous uniqueness of an equilibrium because we reached it last time” (Lewis, 1969, p. 36). However, one of the most important things in this treatment is that achieving the coordinated equilibrium, which forms the basis of convention according to Lewis, does not require an explicit agreement on the part of the agents involved, and therefore, defeats the argument that charges the idea of linguistic convention with circularity. No *linguistic* agreement is required to form a linguistic convention, and in general, no semantic content is required to form concordant mutual expectations. This treatment of conventions has an obvious relevance to the criticism of agreement. Just like convention could arise as a solution to reaching an equilibrium to a coordinate problem, agreement on what is *the same* could come not as a result of an assessment of actual similarities, but as a decision on what should *count as*

strategies” (Chase, 1966, p. 255).

⁶² David Lewis supports his position with experimental evidence. According to Lewis, Schelling has experimented with coordination problems in which the agents could not communicate... “It turns out that sophisticated subjects in an experimental setting can often do very well - much better than chance - at solving novel coordination problems without communicating. They try for a coordination equilibrium that is somehow salient: one that stands out from the rest by its uniqueness in some conspicuous respects” (Lewis, 1969, p. 35).

the same for the purposes of some practical problem. As Ellis points out:

...linguistic categories are primarily the reflection of collective purposes of the speakers of a language rather than direct reflections of the structure of the world. In other words, the equivalence created by categories of language is a functional one: those things included in a category can be and are treated as equivalent for the purposes of the category though they are not identical. (Ellis, 1993, p. 34)

This formulation of agreement does not presuppose the prior possession of the concept of what is ‘the same’, and it fits with Wittgenstein’s emphasis on the ‘form of life’ and the pragmatic foundation of ‘language games’. Kripke’s emphasis on “admission into the community”, and his emphasis on “competency” at the shop counter, suggests that this is also a response that he would give to the critic.

6.9 Normativity and Conformity

In his *Lectures* (unpublished manuscript) Davidson makes a criticism of Kripke’s normativity requirement. He questions whether the obligation to agree or conform can account for the normativity constraint that Kripke insists on. He says:

What is missing is something to satisfy what Kripke calls the “basic requirement” for a rule, namely that the rule should *tell* the speaker what he ought to do in each new instance.... Or, more strongly still: “The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*” [Kripke p.37] ...is it clear that Kripke solves his own problem? (...) Simply adding further creatures (or plants!) with identical dispositions cannot turn disposition into rule following.... They can punish me if I fail to toe the line, but fear of punishment can’t, in itself, give me the idea that there is anything more wrong with my action than that others don’t like it. (*Lectures*, p. 19)

How could the obligation to conform solve this problem? Davidson does not reject the idea that meaning is normative, he merely dismisses the notion that *conformity* as embodied in the principle “do as I do” can explain correctness. The criticism of the

explanation of normativity as conformity, goes hand in hand with Davidson's criticism of the notion of agreement.

However, just as the criticism of agreement can be answered with the notion of a 'form of life' so can be the criticism of normativity. While Davidson has good reasons for questioning whether obligation to conform can explain correctness, the argument is not entirely fair to Kripke. In Kripke's work, 'agreement' was only one concept that was a key to the sceptical solution; the others included 'form of life' and 'criteria' (Kripke, 1982, pp. 96-8). What is important in the present context is the notion of the 'form of life'. In Kripke's example an individual is admitted into the community and its 'form of life' as a competent adder not because he conforms to the action of others but because he is successful at interacting with others in the community. The important element here is that the communication and understanding is achieved, which allows for smooth and uninhibited interaction. It is this practical utility of the standard of correctness that is the driving force behind rule-following that can also explain the obligation to follow the rule in a certain 'right' way. Kripke illustrates this concept:

Suppose I go to the grocer with a slip marked 'five red apples', and he hands over the apples, reciting by heart the numerals up to five and handing over each apple as each numeral is intoned. It is under circumstances such as these that we are licensed to make utterances using numerals; the role and utility of such a license is obvious. (Kripke, 1982, pp. 75-76)

One must conclude therefore, that the obligation to follow the rule in a certain way derives not from sanctions and punishment but from the practical utility gained in this manner. The obligation to follow the rules in one way or another is driven not by a *freestanding obligation* to conform, but rather by the need to achieve certain common goals. The interesting thing is that Davidson says as much in his response to Dummett

regarding normative aspect of language:

Nothing can be more obvious, we want to be understood and others have an interest in understanding us; ease of communication is vastly promoted by such sharing... . [B]ut in general our general tolerance of strongly deviant idiolects is limited by clear practical considerations, none of this creates a free-standing obligation, however. Any obligation we owe to conformity is contingent on the desire to be understood. If we can make ourselves understood while deviating from the social norm, any other obligation has nothing to do with meaning or successful communication. (Davidson, 1994, p. 9)

If human beings were always aware when they deviate from the rules, and if they never misunderstood or misapplied linguistic terms, this normative notion would have no *raison d'être*. However, since this is not the case, the normative aspect of linguistic use has a regulatory function in virtue of the desire by the participants to be 'understood' or, in the words of Lewis, their desire to achieve a coordinated equilibrium.

Lewis points out that, although the definition of convention does not need to contain normative terms, nevertheless, he considers conventions to be a species of norms, or "regularities to which we believe we ought to conform". Lewis continues to say: "There are certain probable consequences implied by the fact that an action would conform to a convention (whatever the action and whatever the convention) which are presumptive reasons, according to our common opinions, why that action ought to be done" (Lewis, 1969, p. 97). Convention is a coordinated equilibrium, which depends on *everyone doing their part*. Thus, interacting agents, who share a common goal, have good reasons to act in a way that would satisfy the expectations of others about their actions. To illustrate the transition from coordinated equilibrium to convention to a rule Lewis brings in Shwayder's analysis from his book *Stratification of Behavior* (1965). He explains:

On his first version, I know that the others are entitled to their expectation about my behavior by “the existence of a rule.” On his second version, I know that the others are entitled to their expectations about my behavior by deriving it from their knowledge that I know they expect me so to behave, together with their knowledge that I will try to do what is expected from me... . By this change, Shwayder has succeeded in analyzing out his residual mention of the rule. Now that his definition of conformative behavior in the fundamental case is satisfactory, he is free to go on, without circularity, to define rules as those mutual expectations about behavior, which figure in conformative behavior as reasons for acting. (Lewis, 1969, p. 111)

David Lewis largely agrees with Shwayder’s analysis of rules and says that it closely resembles his own analysis of convention. He supports the view of community rules as a system of expectations, whereby an agent conforms to the rule if he acts for the reason that members of the community are entitled to expect him so to act. This analysis has definite similarities to Kripke’s treatment of justification of a rule in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. However, since Shwayder’s and Lewis’s treatment of normative constraint lay it out as a problem of coordination in a situation where coincidence of interests predominates over conflict, in the end, they bypass Davidson’s objections. Given the predominance of self-interest in reaching the coordinated equilibrium over conflict, the violation of expectation set by precedent can be legitimately viewed not only as going contrary to the expectations and preferences of others but also as going against one’s own preferences. However, since, according to Lewis, what matters is not uniformity of action but equilibrium in coordination, the resulting normative aspect of conventions coheres well with Davidson’s claim that conformity is subject to the desire to be understood and that tolerance of strongly deviant idiolects is subject to practical considerations. As Davidson himself emphasized in the *Social Aspect of Language* (1994): when failure to communicate enters into the picture,

obligation to conform leaves it.

6.10 Idiolect and Objectivity: The Constitutive Problem

Crispin Wright's consideration of rule-following, in "Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics" (1980), makes clear its relevance to the question of idiolect. In that book, Wright sees Wittgenstein as rejecting the common presumption that "each of us has some sort of privileged access to the character of his own understanding of an expression; each of us knows of an idiolectic pattern of use, for which there is a strong presumption, when sufficient evidence has accumulated, that it is shared communally" (Wright, 1980, p. 217).⁶³ As John McDowell claims in "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule":

According to Wright, then, Wittgenstein's reflections are directed, in the first instance, against the idea that a determinate practice can be dictated by a personal understanding - something that owes no allegiance to a communal way of going on.... there is a point of contact here with Saul Kripke's influential reading of the remarks on rule-following. (McDowell, 1982, p. 49)

As early as 1980, two years prior to the appearance of *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language* (1982) Wright stresses the essential passages in Wittgenstein that reveal the constitutive problem related to the notion of a private rule. The emphasis within the private language argument is shifted from claiming that private rules are acceptable as long as others are capable of learning them, to a stronger version, which asserts that there can be no private or solitary rule regardless of whether it is learnable by others or not. The difference is between private language and solitary language. Drawing from Wittgenstein's observation that "no course of action can be determined by a rule, because

⁶³ As John McDowell further points out, Wright takes his cue from Wittgenstein's passage in *Philosophical Investigations* in which Wittgenstein asks: "But do you really explain what you yourself understand? Don't you get him to guess the essential thing? You give him examples, but he has to guess their drift, to guess

every course of action can be made out to accord with a rule”, this position draws its strength from the constitutive rather than epistemological concerns. For Wright, this spells a problem for any idea of a privately followed rule, or, as he puts it, idiolectic pattern. In his words, “There is no scope for a distinction here between the fact of an application’s seeming to me to conform with the way in which I understand it and the fact of its really doing so” (Wright, 1980, p. 216). Wright’s concerns are similar to Davidson’s, who suggests that relying on social interaction in the solution to this problem will also determine the necessary conditions for the objectivity of thought. As he points out: “the idea that anything resembling a rule, convention or practice demands a social setting.... This “solution” is, in my opinion, essentially correct. But if it is to answer my question, what is the basis of objectivity, it needs supplementation and modification” (*Lectures*, p. 12).

Davidson maintains that following a rule depends on the possibility of following it correctly, in other words, on the existence of criteria independent of the agent on the basis of which the rule’s fulfillment can be judged. As Davidson explains, “the way to see this is to realize that because the way of acting is in accord with some rule (actually, endless rules), nothing can count as having failed; no space has been cleared for the application of the concept of error” (*Lectures*, p. 13). Jonathan Bennett makes a similar point in his book *Rationality* (1964).⁶⁴ As Bennett puts it, “[f]or a creature to be correctly said to have a rule, it is necessary that it should be able to break the rule” (Bennett, 1964,

your intention.” (PI § 210)

⁶⁴ In this book, Bennett examines animal behavior, in particular the complex communicative behavior of apian bees, in order to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions for the attribution of rationality. One of the essential steps in this endeavour was to determine the conditions on which merely regular behavior can be differentiated from rule-guided behavior. Bennett stipulates that a rule differs from mere regularity, *inter alia*, by specifiable conditions which count as violation of the rule, and the animal’s awareness of these conditions.

p. 17).

Like Kripke and Wittgenstein, Davidson asks on what ground one could claim that a given individual has violated a rule. His response is that the criteria for following a rule and therefore the conditions for failing to do so can be fixed by the interaction of agents with *independent wills*. Therefore, for Davidson, the independence of the criteria for following a rule only come with social interaction. It is only when there can be a miscarriage of a rule, or error, that the space for objectivity and truth is cleared. Thus, Davidson takes Kripke's version of social externalism as providing a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the origins of objectivity and ultimately of the concept of truth:

We realize that any answer to the question: what is the difference between following a rule and thinking you are following a rule, or the question "what is it to go on in the same 'right' way", will be nothing less than an account of the source of objectivity. (*Lectures*, p. 13)

Davidson draws the relation between error and truth by saying that to judge or believe is "to know the truth conditions of what one judges or believes, and therefore to know that those conditions may or may not be satisfied... . For a judgment or belief can be mistaken and it is not a judgment or belief if not accompanied by an awareness of this" (*Lectures*, p. 14). Therefore, the emergence of the truth conditions, which plays the most vital role in Davidson's formal theory, requires a social setting.

One must, however, take note of the fact that, while the kind of interaction Davidson describes is a necessary condition for the objectivity of thought, it is not sufficient by far. As Davidson points out, "room has been made for error, but error itself has not been explained" (*Lectures*, p. 20). After all, "dumb brutes, even plants, behave in accord with some rules", yet the notion of following a rule cannot be applied to them. An easy way to zero in on this insufficiency is to consider the behaviour of apian bees as

analyzed by Jonathan Bennett. In his analysis Bennett comes to the conclusion that, while the linguistic skills of apian bees are marked by regularity, they cannot be said to be rule governed.⁶⁵ What grounds the essential difference between rule-governed and regular behaviour is that first, the rule-governing behaviour must not have the status of causal law, and second, a bee must be aware of a change in regularity as a violation of a rule:

For a creature to be correctly said to have a rule, it is necessary that it should be able to break the rule; but although it is necessary, it is not sufficient. (...) We cannot say that apian bees have rules unless they somehow manifest an awareness of their rules as rules. It is not easy to say what could count as their doing this, but we can at least begin to see how they might manifest an awareness of breaches of the rules as breaches of the rules. A necessary condition of this is that there should be a recognizable kind of performance, which a bee goes through if and only if it just has observed a dance, or a post-dance foraging flight, which it knows to be in breach of the rules. (Bennett, 1964, pp. 17-8)

Because it is impossible for the bees to break their rules, or become aware of irregularities as breaches in the rules, apian bees fail to meet these conditions - their behaviour is dispositional but not rule-guided. They cannot become aware of their mistakes as mistakes, therefore they cannot be said to follow the rules. It seems obvious that what matters here is not the mere presence of social interaction, but that this interaction translates into awareness of error when it takes place. This position is reflected in Davidson.⁶⁶

As we have just noticed, mere crowd behavior in itself cannot explain conceptualization, it cannot even explain error. What it can do, however, is make room for something that can be called error: room for error is created by cases in which one individual deviates from a course of action when the crowd does not. For example, when a fake cow is introduced among the real cows, the crowd ceases to mutter "Cow" while the deviant

⁶⁵ These skills include comparatively complex methods of communication, which can cover distance, direction, and even quantity.

⁶⁶ In "Rational Animals" in Ernest Le Pore and Brian McLaughlin (eds), *Action and Events* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) Davidson suggests that an essential characteristic of a cogitative system, as opposed to a merely intentional one, is having beliefs about contents and not just having beliefs with contents.

individual persists in saying “Cow”. This is not enough, as we remarked, just now, to justify an attribution of error, we can still say there simply are two dispositions at work (...) It should be obvious at this point is that at least part of what must be added in order to give an account of error is recognition or awareness, on the part of those who share reactions, of each other’s reactions (...) Of course, *we* can say, by looking on with our conceptual advantage, that one of the creatures has “gone wrong”. The problem is to put the creatures in a position to think this. (*Lectures*, p. 20)

Davidson modifies Kripkenstein’s argument by saying that the notion of a rule depends on the possibility of error, and error depends on the recognition of a deviation from some independent standard of correctness. It is necessary that this standard of correctness be recognized and that those who deviate from this standard can become aware of the deviation. In order to fulfill these conditions it is necessary that the interacting agents be aware of each other’s reactions and of the common cause of these reactions. This can be brought about in a situation that contains a minimum of three elements: two creatures and a world of objects. This basic configuration is an irreducible triad, which is necessary but not sufficient (as the case of the apian bees proves) for the concept of error to emerge. Davidson calls the process in which the creatures can become aware of an error the processes of *triangulation*:

Let us assume two creatures, A and B, which can often observe one another when both can observe cows. Let us suppose that creature A responds to cows by uttering the sound “Cow”; creature B then associates cows with the utterances of the A. Creature B similarly associates cows with A’s utterances of “Vache”. A and B are now in position to notice occasions on which their responses differ (perhaps on occasion one is badly placed for seeing a cow; or one has better eyesight or a keener sense of smell) (*Lectures*, p. 20)

According to Davidson, triangulation can account for the content of perceptual beliefs; that is to say it can locate the relevant cause as the distal and not the proximal stimuli in virtue of introducing the second creature. This fundamental step towards objectifying the

contents of beliefs can hardly be underestimated.⁶⁷ Furthermore, triangulation works against the background of normal interactions. This allows room for judgment on whether the creature deviates from the pattern of its past reactions or “goes on as before”. Thus, an error could be attributed to the creature on the basis of a diversion from the creature’s own past reactions irrespective of the question of agreement with the second creature. Davidson says that the triangulation arrangement is necessary in order to clear the room for the notion of error, and consequently objectivity of thought:

Here is my thesis: this interconnected triangle constitutes a necessary condition for the existence of conceptualization, thought, and language. It makes possible objective belief and the other propositional attitudes (...) It clearly incorporates the essential element in Kripke’s “solution” to the problem, which requires that we distinguish between a mere disposition and rule following. That element is provided by the second creature, who stands for society.... I insisted that it is not enough that a third party be able to observe or describe these two cases; I claimed it was necessary that the existence of the contrast be available to the creatures themselves. This essential element enters the triangle when the creatures observe each other’s reactions to the very phenomena they are both observing. (*Lectures*, p. 21)

Since triangulation is a necessary condition for the emergence of error, it is by default a necessary condition for the emergence of an independent standard of correctness, and, therefore, of rule-following. This means that there can be no solitary rule-following, and no solitary language; ultimately, it means that language cannot be based on idiolect.

If, indeed, rule-following could have been explained on the basis of private patterns alone, then the foundation of meaning would need nothing else. Solitary language would be possible, and although one might still claim that language is social, or conventional, that it is *learned* under intersubjective circumstances, or that it could not

⁶⁷ That is why, it seems, both Davidson and Føllesdal suggest that Quine gives up on externalism when he endorses the proximal view of stimuli.

reach its level of sophistication without interacting agents, it would still remain true that meaning is not *necessarily* social. Most importantly, there would be nothing absurd about the claim that communication rests on faith. It would remain true that ultimately, whatever the subject does or says is only a symptom of that private pattern, a symptom that represents that pattern only imperfectly. Given the fact that we lack telepathic abilities to read these patterns directly, our communication would rest on faith.

The reversal of priorities by Kripke has transformed the linguistic use and behaviour from a symptom of internalized rules to the only ground for attribution of “rules” to speakers. Furthermore, agreement on the use within the community and checkability become the necessary conditions for any substantive notion of a rule, since whether the speaker follows the rule correctly is checked against the communal practice and not against some internal mental rule. As Kripke emphasizes, the important thing to understand is that there can be no content to a rule without an independent standard of correctness that can be introduced only within a community “where distinct individuals have distinct and independent wills” (Kripke, 1982, p. 112). As he points out:

Wittgenstein’s skeptical solution to his problem depends on agreement, and on checkability - on one person’s ability to test whether another uses the term as he does. (Ibid., p. 99)

Further, the presentation of the argument in the present essay argues that for each rule I follow there must be a criterion - other than simply what I say - by which another will judge that I am following the rule correctly (...) Thus for each rule there must be an “external check” on whether I am following it in a given instance. (Ibid., pp. 102-3)

It is, therefore, illegitimate to say that while a speaker agrees with the community in the use of terms, he is nevertheless following a different rule. When the reference to internal rules is outlawed, agreement on use is the only test for the agreement on the rules.

In his discussion of Quine, Kripke says that Quine's position is quite congenial to Wittgenstein's views (Ibid., pp. 14-5). However, the major difference, according to Kripke, is Quine's lack of interest in speculative introspective experiments that target the realm of the mental. According to Kripke, Quine, being a behaviourist, is not interested in the inner mental workings of the speaker, his concern is only with the behaviour. Quine's methodology focuses on the 'outside', leaving the 'inside' out of the discussion:

This feature of Wittgenstein contrasts, for example, with Quine's discussion of "indeterminacy of translation" (...) Quine, however, is more than content to assume that only behavioral evidence is to be admitted into his discussion. Wittgenstein, by contrast, undertakes an extensive introspective investigation, and the results of the investigation, as we shall see, form a key feature of his argument. Further, the way the skeptical doubt is presented is not behavioristic. It is presented from 'inside'. Whereas Quine presents the problem about meaning in terms of a linguist, trying to guess what someone *else* means by his words on the basis of his behavior. (Ibid., pp.14-5)

Unlike Quine, Wittgenstein takes nothing for granted, and does not leave the "inner" outside of his critical review. His scepticism towards the 'inner' makes it impossible to say that meaning is underdetermined by behaviour. Kripke's exposition shows that unlike Quine, Wittgenstein admits only elephantine forms and rejects any notion of anatomical details as underlying behaviour, if by anatomical details we mean anything that resembles private rules.

Since Quine is not as thoroughgoing in his sceptical approach as Wittgenstein, his analysis leaves it open for him to say that, while speakers agree in their external behaviour, they might, nevertheless, be following different rules. As Quine emphasizes, "the speakers of the same language have perforce come to resemble one another" (Quine, 1968, pp. 5-8), this formulation leaves them open to differ in how they internalized the rules as long as they agree in their dispositions to behave. On Kripke's reading of

Wittgenstein, this position is untenable. There is simply nothing to meaning or rule-following beyond the public evidence.

The same narrow focus on behavioural evidence which stems from Quine's naturalistic approach to epistemology, is not only responsible for the failure of the dispositionalist analysis to account for the normative element in rule following, but also for its failure to address issues related to mental states, in particular, the first person perspective. The famous critique of behaviourism delivered by Chomsky in his "Review of 'Verbal Behavior' by B. F. Skinner" (Chomsky, 1959) focuses on the general failure of this methodology, claiming that its narrow focus on stimuli and reactions views the human being as a lifeless automaton. While Kripke agrees that Quine brings community into his discussion of language and *observation sentences*, he says that nevertheless "agreement seems to have a more crucial role in Wittgenstein's philosophy than in Quine's" (Kripke, 1982, p. 56). This is not surprising since, as Kripke mentions, Quine's approach focuses on dispositions of the individual to respond to stimuli and therefore considers him largely in isolation from the community. This is to say that, for Quine, community and participation in it are not shown to be necessary conditions of following a rule, and therefore do not constitute a necessary condition for having a language. Although Kripke does not pursue this topic much further, nevertheless, his criticisms of the failures of the dispositionalist account constitute a criticism equivalent to Dummett's accusation of Quine as having an idiolect conception of language. However, since Kripke's criticism argues against, and ultimately disqualifies, any substantive notion of rule-following as considered in isolation from the standards provided by the community the force of this criticism is, from the outset, much more direct.

At the same time, it is Kripke's argument, rather than Dummett's own, that provides the proper context for Dummett's insistence that an adequate description of linguistic practice must include the descriptions of the standards of translation between languages. If the attribution of rule following is itself a matter of social agreement, then the correctness of translation between languages or idiolects is also a matter of the accepted standard. As Dummett points out, it is not a hypothesis, it is a principle that cannot be called into question because it is constitutive of the significance attaching to utterances (Dummett, 1993, p. 153). Could different translation manuals account for the same behavioral outputs? That certainly might be true. But it seems equally certain that nothing in the behavior of the individual or his mental life would rebut the skeptic who says that he is following a 'quus' rather than a 'plus' function. The claim that a number of translations are equally correct would overlook that the correctness of translation does not depend on matching it against behaviour but rather on the communal acceptance of a standard of translation:

When Quine introduced the notion of radical translation in *Word & Object*, he hit on an important point of which he later lost sight in his retreat to the idiolect: namely that the existence of accepted standard translations between languages is itself a feature of linguistic practice of which account would have to be taken in any complete description of the practice (...) Hence the true unit of for a fully adequate description of linguistic practice would not even be a single language, on the ordinary understanding of the word "language". It would be a maximal set of languages connected by the existence of standard translations between them (that is, of a large fragment of one language into one of the others). (Dummett, 1993, pp. 152-3)

This position of Dummett's suggests that he accepts the fundamental tenet of the sceptical solution. However, as was shown at the end of the previous chapter, the major impact of Dummett's argument was that an idiolect conception of language would imply

that communication would ultimately be a matter of faith. The major weakness of this position is that it is open to someone who supports the view of language as idiolect to say that *perhaps* it is so. Kripke rules out the possibility of such an approach from the outset by arguing that it fails to give an adequate account of rule following. Thus, Kripke effectively closes the option of brushing his objections aside to the adherents of the idiolect conception of language.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

The present study concerns with question of priority between common language and the idiolect conception of language. In particular, the I have assessed the nature and the strength of Dummett's argument against the priority of the idiolect conception of language as applied to Quine's work. Based on the assessment of shortcomings of Dummett's criticism, an alternative argument against the idiolect conception of meaning was proposed.

The first chapter examined the nature and the implications of Dummett's argument against the priority of idiolect, and dealt substantially with the relation between the priority of idiolect and the priority of thought over language. It was argued that Dummett's understanding of idiolect is best viewed in terms of the distinction between the view of language as means of communication and view of language as vehicle of thought. It was suggested that Karen Green's interpretation of Dummett's argument and subsequent criticism of it are superficial, and based on a fundamental misunderstanding. The argument should be understood as claiming that, given the priority of thought over language, there is no non-circular way of specifying semantic content. It was shown that this argument is a particular version of Frege's argument against psychologism.

The second chapter dealt with the relevance of the question of priority of idiolect conception of language to Intention-Based Semantics. I argued that, to the extent that the IBS position fails to give an account of semantic content, it implies that the significance of utterances is a result of a meaning-conferring act and therefore becomes open to the charge of prioritizing idiolect over common language. It was also suggested that given a

certain reading of Strawson's idea of alternating development of language the implication of the meaning-conferring act could be avoided, and Dummett's criticism of the IBS position could be deflated.

The third chapter addressed the debate on the question of relative priority of idiolect over language between Dummett and Davidson. It was shown that there is no genuine disagreement between Dummett and Davidson, and that both regard language as necessarily social. I argued that the basis for Dummett's charge against Davidson was based on a conflation of his truth-theoretic approach to language theory and the account of communication given in his article "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1996). It was also suggested that the debate between Dummett and Davidson should be deflated.

The fourth chapter aimed to address the fairness of the first of Dummett's criticism of Quine as prioritizing idiolect, and his identification of distinct periods in Quine's work where the alleged priority shifts between idiolect and common language. The chapter examined the genesis of Quine's approach to meaning and language. While Quine gives the priority to idiolect over common language, this priority is methodological rather than constitutive in character and cannot fall under the scope of Dummett's argument. It was also argued that there is no evidence of distinct periods in Quine's work that are characterized by different attribution of priorities.

The fifth chapter aimed to examine Dummett's second reason for attributing an idiolect conception of language to Quine. This chapter investigated the relation between priority of idiolect conception of language and Quine's controversial thesis of indeterminacy of translation. While indeterminacy of translation is usually applied to undermine the determined translation between distinct languages, its primary import is to

undermine determinacy of translation within the home language. It was shown that the case for the indeterminacy of translation at home language rests on a possible attribution of distinct translations to a given phonetic string. One of the implications examined in this chapter was that if during language acquisition an individual acquires a grasp of the apparatus of reference, then his reference will be determinate relative to that apparatus. However, given the suspension of homophonic translation it will be impossible on a behavioural basis to determine either the apparatus or the reference it determines. As a result, reference will be underdetermined by behavioural evidence, and inscrutability of reference would represent an epistemological rather than constitutive problem. Given that this argument is correct, Dummett's criticism can be applied to Quine.

However, an alternative treatment of indeterminacy of translation would put it outside of the scope of Dummett's argument. Such an account must be based either on the rejection of the premise that there is anything like a determinate reference in the mind of the individual, or on the denial that given the suspension of homophonic translation this reference cannot be communicated. If the first path is taken, then an appropriate explanation of what exactly the individual acquires when he learns the apparatus of reference must be given, and this explanation should make clear its relation to the claim that reference is determinate relative to this apparatus. However, if the second path is taken, then it must be explained by what means and merely on the basis of behavioural evidence one can understand the reference as another speaker intends it. If a satisfactory account of either of these approaches were given, then Dummett's criticism would not apply to the indeterminacy of translation at home.

However, the problem is that even if Quine does accept the priority of idiolect in

the manner just expounded it seems that Dummett's argument against him has no force. The fifth chapter concluded that Dummett's argument against Quine is unconvincing because it rests on the assumption that misunderstanding that can never come to light is absurd. This formulation, however, leaves it open for an idiolect theorist to claim that a misunderstanding that can never come to light is simply irrelevant: it might simply be disqualified from being meaningful. Since Dummett's argument is premised on the assumption that Quine rejects from the outset, this argument, ultimately, has no force.

The final chapter of this work aimed at presenting an alternative and a more effective argument against the priority of the idiolect conception of language. The argument based on the sceptical paradox and its solution as formulated by Saul Kripke, undermines the idea of idiolect directly by questioning whether any content can be given to the idea of a rule outside of a social setting. The advantage of this argument over Dummett's is that it challenges the proponent of the idiolect conception of language to specify the alleged fact that constitutes the rule that is supposed to guide the behaviour. The sceptical solution implies that since no such fact can be specified the only ground for the attribution of rules to speakers is social use. This argument not only provides a challenge to Quine's formulation of the indeterminacy of translation at home, but also to any other position within philosophy of language that would take idiolect as the main framework of its theory.

Some concluding remarks are in order. In arguing for the common language conception Dummett pursues the Fregean objective of saving thought from subjectivism. In *Logical Investigations* Frege insisted that if we are to save objectivity in communication we must look on thoughts as something that can be shared among

speakers. In Frege's work the property of thought as something shared was the feature that underlined the distinction between objective thoughts and subjective ideas. This distinction, in turn, was based on the rejection of solipsism and the assumption of other minds. Frege justifies the assumption simply by saying "we must make this venture even at the risk of error if we don't want to fall into greater dangers" (Frege, 1918, p.15). It is quite telling that for Frege the rejection of solipsism is a leap of faith, its necessity does not follow from the nature of thought or language. Nothing in the consideration of thought or meaning necessitates the conclusion that there must be other minds. This is hardly surprising since for Frege society has never been a necessary condition of thought, but rather a sufficient condition for drawing the distinction between thoughts and ideas.

Dummett's modification of Frege's argument turns on the idea that if we assume that the idiolect conception of language is primary, there will be no way of getting at the meaning of expressions as each individual understands them. To ask the speaker about the theory which guides his utterances would not further our understanding of his or her speech because we have no shared guide to the understanding of the response. Dummett argues against the priority of the idiolect conception of language by saying that if it were so then communication would be based on faith. The problem is that within the context of his argument against idiolect Dummett is content simply to note that such conclusion is unacceptable.

It is also evident that this argument cannot claim that language must be social. In adopting Frege's argument Dummett fails to take advantage of a more direct approach that would draw the need for social setting from the very nature of thought. Therefore, as was already pointed out, something else is needed in a way of argument, to show that the

very notion of idiolect, as Dummett understands it, is implausible. An independent argument that does not in any way prejudge its conclusion must be made to show that the account of social practice must be a necessary condition of any adequate account of language.

Kripke suggests that if meaning were based on an idiolectic pattern of use, then there should be some fact about the individual that would constitute the rule that governs that pattern. The sceptical paradox was meant to flesh out such fact. In the absence of a suitable fact, public linguistic use becomes the only criterion and the sole ground for attribution of meaning. Davidson's discussion of rule-following complements Kripke's discussion by drawing attention to the idea that the fundamental social nature of thought follows from the very objectivity of the thought itself. In a move that ties social interaction to objectivity of thought as a necessary condition, Davidson does what Dummett has been trying to do all along, that is, defend the objectivity of thought without the recourse to the mythology of the "third realm", and to do so in a manner consistent with the "Linguistic Turn".

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