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THE SEMANTIC DEFINITION OF TRUTH AS AN EMERGENT SYMBOL OF TRANSLATION PROCESS

Abstract

In their attempt to provide formal accounts of the concepts of truth and meaning, Tarski and Davidson did not completely purify their theories of cumbersome terms that retain a 'semantic' link to the physical reality. However, it can be argued that this burden was not located where the authors and their subsequent commentators generally claimed. The following article aims to demonstrate that a common semantic concept at the heart of their analyses was the idea of translation process. Firstly then, both theories will be briefly reconstructed on the basis of texts by the philosophers themselves. Subsequently, the place of a translative element will be pointed out. Its recognition will provide an interesting answer to several objections against the accounts, also shedding a new light on the outcome of their venture. Yet most importantly, the study shows that Tarski's and Davidson's definitions ultimately clinch an inextricable connection between translation and truth – a bond which should be acknowledged in any proper enquiry into the meaning of verity.

Keywords: truth, translation process, Alfred Tarski, Donald Davidson

Almost as famous as an enigmatic statement found in Aristotle's writing – "To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (Metaphysics 1011b25) – came to be regarded as the origins of the correspondence theory of truth. It expresses perhaps the most widespread intuition regarding the idea; an impression that truth involves some sort of agreement between what is asserted and the reality. The Aristotelian succinct formula-

tion was naturally followed by a plethora of other definitions, as numerous as philosophers themselves.

Their multiplicity can be roughly grouped into four main approaches. In the contemporary times, what came to be interpreted as a counterproposal to the correspondence idea is the coherence theory. First suggested in the works of Harold Henry Joachim (cf. Joachim 1906), it was later more exhaustively elaborated by Brand Blanshard in *The Nature of Thought* (1939). They propose to understand truth more in terms of mutual agreement between statements or scientific theses, rather than their possible relation with facts. Yet another explanation of the concept emerged together with the American pragmatic tradition. Its primary originator was Charles Sanders Peirce, whose ideas were subsequently developed by William James. The pragmatic theory also opposed the correspondence model, in that its proponents evaluated true statements by the degree to which these statements could be practically verified (cf. e.g. Peirce 1931–1966; James 1910 [1996]).

Finally, there came a radical caesura marked by deflationism. Its traces may be found already in the notes of Friedrich Frege, yet the theory's most famous exponent was Frank Ramsey. In his approach, he stripped the idea of truth of any substantial meaning. Focused strongly on the concept's linguistic function, he argued that expressions which contain the term 'truth' or the predicate 'true' can be paraphrased without recourse to the problematic idea, which should therefore be considered as semantically empty (Ramsey 1929). Interpretations of all these accounts as well as their possible link to the correspondence theory remain a subject of a continuous philosophical debate.

In this respect, the semantic theory is no different. But what certainly distinguishes it from other proposed schemes is that it demonstrates a link between the idea of truth and translation most clearly. Proving this is the aim of the following paper.

The bipolar nature of the semantic theory of truth – comprising the models proposed by Tarski and Davidson – continually invites new commentary since its authors seem to be perpetually throwing between each other burning coals of vague concepts which bear relation to the physical reality and which neither of them wishes to take for granted. In doing so, they attempt to elevate their analyses to the level of scientific validity. Yet, as a result, Tarski arguably drains his scheme of potential relevance to the actual philosophical problems, and Davidson manages to achieve his goal to a highly questionable extent. As Malpas neatly concludes, Tarski relies on the concept of meaning to get to the truth, while Davidson reverses the

approach (Malpas 2021: 3.2). What remains undoubted, is that they both seem to fail to acknowledge the full extent of the role which the notion of translation plays in their models and they do not elaborate on it sufficiently.

The most obvious premise that prompts to examine this role is the fact that both philosophers employ the notions of two languages and a transformation from one into the other as a necessary step in defining truth. Hence the goal of the following article will be to highlight the importance of translation in their works. First the study will concentrate on the theory proposed by Tarski, whose main focus were formal languages, and later on Davidson, who attempted to develop his scheme so that it could also accommodate the natural language. Due to the large scope of both programmes, the study will be narrowed down only to those points which encapsulate the translation process. What will also be hopefully shown is that with the recourse to the notion of translation, at least several of the major objections to the theories could be countered.

However, before the analysis opens, it should be briefly explained how the process itself should be understood. Naturally, as one knows from the vastness of translation theory, defining the activity is no mean feat, and scholars have grappled with the task of pinpointing its ultimate description since time immemorial. Therefore, the present study does not pretend to provide any universal or the most accurate account of a translative activity. What must be noted instead, is that the approach assumed here diverges from what might be considered as traditionally understood translation.

The notion which will be applied here is perhaps most indebted to the model proposed by Kobus Marais in his recent, seminal work *(Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation: The Emergence of Social-Cultural Reality* (2019). The author draws on the tripartite distinction introduced earlier by Roman Jakobson, who distinguished the interlinguistic, intralinguistic and intersemiotic versions of the process (Jakobson 1959). Marais argues that, in fact, all instances of the procedure should be regarded as intersemiotic. What could be categorised as translation are not only transformations between or within various languages, but also for example shifts between subsequent acts of perception. From his perspective, in the reality which comprises a variety of semiotic systems, translating inevitably accompanies cognition. As Marais shows, all human cognitive processes consist in a balance between creating, recreating and mutual ascription of perceptual data, and the subject who performs them has therefore a translative identity (Marais 2019, 130–138). For this reason, embracing Marais' model, the following

article will be arguing for acknowledgement of translation as an activity which involves construction and change between different mental constructs, each of which being comprised of perceptual data.

A technical skeleton provided by Tarski

Remaining under the influence of logical positivism and in accordance with the physicalist doctrine, Tarski's wider intention was to purify the field of semantics by granting it the status of science. Unspecificity of semantic concepts – and among them also the notion of truth – would consist in the fact that they involved a relation between expressions and objects in the world (Tarski 1958: 17). The goal was, however, to be able to purify them of abstractness and explain them in terms of logic, mathematics and physical sciences.

Already at the outset of the analysis contained in *The Concept of Truth for Formalised Languages* (1933) Tarski admits that his aim is to elaborate the idea behind the classical conception of truth, so that of correspondence (Tarski 1958: 153). His intention was also to avoid the famous liar paradox, which shows that certain cases of assigning truth value to sentences lead to a contradiction. He further observes that it is impossible to construct a proper definition of truth for the natural language, due to its essential universality and semantic inexhaustibility. It can be infinitely expanded by adding new meanings, and it is impossible to determine whether its sentences are properly formed (Tarski 1958: 164). Thus he proceeds to develop a definition for a narrower, embraceable kind of language, taking calculus of classes as an example.

In essence, considering truth as a property of sentences, his idea is that to be able to define a true statement for what he calls an object language, one has to apply a language of a higher order – the so-called metalanguage. The latter would contain the former, and additionally, it would be equipped with a set of theoretical, 'structural-descriptive' expressions used to describe the object language, among which there would be a desired predicate of truth (Tarski 1958: 172). It is with the help of these that a general definition of a true sentence could be articulated. And so, he first poses what he named a material adequacy condition (also referred to as 'Convention T'), in which he defines an elementary, primitive sentence x: 'x' is true if and only if x (where the enquoted symbol stands for belonging to the object language, and disquoted to the meta- one). The formula is later developed

recursively by specifying rules of how the more complex sentences could be built from the elementary ones and how their truth or falsity depends on the truth-values of their constituents (Tarski 1958: 189).

But Convention T was merely a criterion of adequacy. The definition itself became ultimately formulated through the notion of satisfaction in the following way: a true sentence is one which is satisfied by an infinite sequence of classes (Tarski 1958: 195). 'Satisfying' could be understood as a process in which one assigns a series of appropriate objects, classes of individuals in a particular universe to a given sentence. Specifically, in Tarski's words, an object satisfies a sentence if it possesses a property expressed by the predicate. It is then apparent that satisfaction itself becomes a semantic term, since it relates sentences to elements in the world. In the end, it can be said that the definition assumes a form of template – a universal formula which yields their truth value if applied to particular sentences.

Finally, a point which must be underscored is that the outcome of his analysis remains valid not only for the formalised languages; Tarski notes that if his definition is applied to the natural language, one obtains a 'fragmentary definition', under which a smaller or greater number of sentences may be subsumed (Tarski 1958: 164).

The definition of truth as a symbol of translative change

The analysis shall open with consideration of perhaps the most serious problems involved in the proposed model. The Tarskian legacy seems to prove that a certain degree of give and take is unavoidable when assuming the goal of defining truth. There is naturally an objection of relativism, since on Tarski's view truth can be defined only for a particular language, with the construction of an all-embracing metalanguage being an impossible task. What follows is that his analysis does not provide any universal meaning of truth or such that could be considered translinguistic. As Blackburn concludes, the definition is rather unhelpful if one was interested in the nature of truth as a general concept (Blackburn 1984: 266–267). Moreover, there is also a spectre of vacuity, which Kirkham views as the most menacing for the theory. He points out that a potential weakness of Tarski's idea is its neutrality, in that it does not contradict its rivals (Kirkham 2001: 182). Put even more bluntly by Walker, if one interprets Tarskian scheme as ontologically neutral, he does not have a theory of truth at all (Walker 1989: 23–25).

And finally, yet most significantly, there were objections against the crucial notion of satisfaction. Some suggested that the definition of the concept falls into a vicious circle, as it presupposes the idea of truth (an object satisfies an open sentence when its substitution yields a true sentence (Ziemińska 2014)). Notably, Field argues that in contrast to what was assumed in his initial program, Tarski did not in fact manage to reduce all semantic concepts in his theory to a physicalist basis, in particular, the concept of satisfaction. He points out that in the proposed definition, equivalence between the sentences in the object and the metalanguage is merely extensional (equality based on their reference). While in order to obtain a definition correct in all possible worlds, one would require a stronger, intensional equivalence (equality of the principle according to which the sentences come to refer to the same thing (Field 1972: 83).

In this section, Field's idea will be further developed. It will be argued that translation – an unavoidably semantic concept itself – constitutes an inherent and irreducible kernel in his theory. Its presence does run counter to Tarski's principal goal, and acknowledging it is not intended as a remedy to the above objections, yet when the concept becomes incorporated, their force indeed seems to be weakened.

Translation process manifests itself in the Tarskian model on two levels, each involving a similar activity.

Firstly, it is impossible not to recognise its role the moment when, with Tarski's explicit assent, the definition of truth becomes applied to the natural language. As he explains, this is when one obtains a 'fragmentary definition', such a formula as for example '*Schnee ist weiss* if and only if snow is white'. Obviously, to establish equivalence between these sentences, one has to translate the one formulated in the object language into the meta-one. The fact that the process has to take place is rather uncontroversial when the two languages are different.

Yet arguably, a similar activity must also be carried out when both statements are expressed in the same language and, just as Tarski demanded, the metalanguage contains the object one. It should be observed that when the definition takes such a form as '*Snow is white* if and only if snow is white', the two sentences are not in fact the same and establishing equivalence does not consist in mere disquotation. Since the meaning of a given sentence is always to a certain degree influenced by the totality of semantic content comprised in the language in which it is formulated, when the language becomes enriched, the change in its overall semantic structure also affects the

meaning of particular lexical items. With the metalanguage being stronger, the sense of phrases expressed in it would be different.

Richness is not the only factor which makes the two languages dissimilar. Following the Tarskian rules, for the individual who approaches the definition, whatever is articulated in the object language should represent purely linguistic items – a certain abstract, linguistic entity. In contrast, what appears at the right-hand side of the formula should be considered as an entity referring to an actual state of affairs. Consequently, the ways in which the subject conceives the sense of the two sentences diverge – their understanding of the latter also incorporates the way they construe a relation between the given phrase and its corresponding fragment of reality. It must be highlighted that the conceptions of statements in the object and the metalanguage are both certain mental constructs. Nevertheless, such mental constructs would essentially always differ.

Summing up, a sentence on the left-hand side of the formula should be regarded as the original, and the other one as the target text. The individual translates the former into the latter, and the moment they ascertain correspondence between them, they validate their equivalence and acknowledge the initial sentence as true – a condition which is expressed by the logical functor 'iff'.

So when the natural language is involved, the necessity of carrying out translation seems hardly questionable. The subject is initially faced with an externally provided source text that is a 'truth candidate', which they construe in an individual way. Subsequently, on such a basis they create its equivalent, a target text that is a new mental representation of its meaning. The activity is partly constrained by a number of rules, inasmuch as the person is not free in the way they correlate meanings in the two languages, and the extension with which metalanguage is strengthened is pre-established. At the same time, the target text also becomes partly relativised to the individual since it involves their personal construal of the potential link between language and reality.

In this way, the entire 'fragmentary definition' becomes an explicitly formulated symbol of translation process – from the representation of language as language into the representation of language as a reference to reality.

Turning now to the intended area of application for Tarski's idea – the formal languages – a nonnegligible presence of translation in the proposed formula has already been pointed out (cf. e.g. Kirkham 2001; Milne 1997; Raatikainen 2010). It is however possible to argue that the process would

be analogous to the one identified in the case of natural language, with the above arguments retaining their essential validity.

Translation takes place in every instance of a T-schema. It starts with the individual approaching a given formula, that is, the original. Even though the symbols are provided externally, they are subjected to the person's specific interpretation. Clearly, this interpretation would not be as free and diversified as was the case with sentences belonging to the natural language. But it would still vary since the meaning of symbols is acquired empirically, and this experiential process never runs along the same track.

With this initial conception of the source text in mind, the person proceeds to construct the target one. Again, the activity is partially constrained by specific rules – as Tarski demanded, the metalanguage had to contain the object one, so the symbols on the right-hand side of the schema would remain the same. But with the language in which they were expressed being extended, their sense would also change. Now this sense would be a part of a wider horizon of abstraction, covering the individual's construal of language together with the frame of its description. Such a process of shift between two levels of symbolism would remain subjectivised, in that the acquired meaning of symbols and their mutual correlation always up to a degree remains person-specific.

All these translative acts inherent in T-schema formulations become ultimately summarised in the proper definition of truth, which becomes their universalised expression.

It is in the concept of satisfaction that multiple translative processes are implied. The definition states that the truth of a sentence can be realised when the sentence is satisfied by an infinite sequence of classes (with a given entity satisfying a sentence as long as it possesses the property expressed by the predicate). So the definition communicates, in fact, that truth is an endless process. In order to actualise it, one will be carrying out acts of substitution by choosing objects which they would consider as evincing the relevant property. So they will be translating the original – a sentence made 'open' by variables – creating a potentially infinite amount of particular target ones. Thereby, creation of these target texts will be endlessly exploring the vacuity of variables in the formula, deriving still anew from the semantic potential of the original. The totality of these translative acts would constitute and exhaust the sentence' truth. This totality however, just as the translator's goal of reaching perfect equivalence, remains forever pursued yet never fully achieved.

If one accepts translation as an ineradicable semantic concept at the heart of Tarski's definition, what may be said in answer to the objections recalled above? Yes, truth becomes relativised to a given language, just as the nature of translational equivalence is relative to particular instances of the translator's work. But this does not invalidate such equivalences, and neither does this undermine truth. Just like reflections of the original, the plurality of definitions obtained from Tarski's formula are not mutually exclusive, but instead, they testify to the concept's infinite semantic depth. As regards the notion of satisfaction, it does not push the theory into a damning regress. If satisfaction consists essentially in the process of translating, then a given entity satisfies a sentence not when its substitution yields a true sentence (which would lead to circularity), but when the appropriateness of its substitution is approved by the translating subject, according to their chosen set of criteria (which leaves the choice open and individual-dependent). Finally and perhaps most crucially, the theory should not be viewed as vacuous. Admittedly, it does not disprove its competitors. But instead, it further bears out the translational foundation of truth. And it does so not only by sharing ground with other accounts of truth. In presenting his ultimate idea – the definition which yields infinite T-schemas, Tarski appears to have given an explicit articulation for truth as conditioned by the transformation carried out along the lines of Convention T – so for truth as being realised by translation process, for which a collective infinity of T-schemas becomes a universal symbol.

Davidson's appropriation of Tarski

It is in the insight of Davidson that the following study arrives at its tipping point. With Tarski's formula as a formal affirmation of the link between translation and truth, if it turned out to be possible to graft his scheme onto the natural language as well, the translative foundation of the concept in its full philosophical depth would be ultimately proven. And it was precisely Davidson who recognised and extensively explored the applicability of Tarskian theory to the natural languages. He was also the one who openly acknowledged that Tarski assumed the notion of translation as primitive in order to explicate truth (Davidson 1973b: 134). Yet at the same time, in his own analysis Davidson claims to have escaped this burdensome assumption, discarding the idea of translation and instead resting his theory on a broader

term, namely interpretation. Thus the goal of the following part would be to revisit Davidson's analysis, demonstrating that his escape was merely apparent. The theory needs to reclaim its translative core, thereby sealing the bond between translation and truth.

When intending to place the Davidsonian account in a broader context, it must be first observed that he differed from Tarski in terms of his general objective. Davidson's aim was to propose not a theory of truth, but that of meaning. And since he considered them as fundamentally connected, in the end, he constructed a combination of both: a mechanism generating the meaning, propelled by the clogs of the Tarskian formula.

Davidson envisions the process of recreating from scratch an entire semantic structure of a potential language. His project straddles two approaches, semantic holism and semantic compositionality – the significance of a sentence depended for him both on its internal lexical components as well as on the meaning of all other sentences in that language. The analysis was supposed to enable a person to understand this meaning by offering a relevant formula. Additionally, the theory would be supplemented with a finite set of axioms, each for specifying semantic properties of every predicate in the language (although, in fact, no actual example of such an axiom is provided) (Davidson 1973a: 70).

But in the formula to generate meaning there lurked a threat of a vicious regress, which is why Davidson turns to the concept of truth. In any instance of such a precept as 'S means p' the term itself had to be removed, so Davidson decides to replace the notion of meaning with truth conditions. Drawing on Tarski's idea, he suggests that the recipe should have in fact the same form as T-schema – 'S is true if and only if p'. In this way, he employs the concept of truth as primitive. He considers the idea of truth to be essentially undefinable, yet at the same time more intuitively graspable than that of meaning. Such an appeal to intuition suggests that he understands truth in terms of classical correspondence. This in turn would implicate him in assumptions just as problematic as those identified in other correspondence theories – a necessity which Davidson openly acknowledges (Davidson 1973b: 134).

Accepting this supposedly undefinable kernel at the heart of his theory, he still realises that applying the formula for the natural language, with an unlimited intricacy of its semantic mechanisms, requires considerable refinement. Therefore, he suggests that meaning should be analysed as a relation between a specific sentence, person and time. Hence the formula

becomes modified to take these factors into account and assumes the form 'Sentence *s* is true for speaker *u* at time *t* if and only if *p*' (Davidson 1969: 45). Thereby, the semantic relativity of statements from natural language becomes taken into account, and the sentence on the left-hand side of the conditional ceases to be a simple repetition of the one in the object language. Instead, as Kirkham explains, it is much more 'self-conscious' (Kirkham 2001: 235), as it now becomes a meta-recognition of an initial sentence as a linguistic act. Most importantly, *p* now consists in a form of instruction on how to recognise the reference of *s*. Attempting to avoid an appeal to another semantic concept, Davidson calls this instruction a way of 'demonstrating'; a term which, in his view, belonged to the category of pragmatics.

Each instance of applying the revised formula would constitute a step on the way of reconstructing an entire semantic spectrum of the language under analysis. Nevertheless, there still remained a problem of relativity inscribed in the above scheme, with a sentence being true *for* a given person at a given time. Moreover, each such ascription of meaning was in fact merely a hypothesis. That is why Davidson intended to entrench the technical core of his account within a larger theory concerned with how the beliefs of others should be understood. To grant every such hypothesis a certain degree of validity, he maintained that a person should assume that speakers of other languages hold as true essentially the same as what the person would believe to be true themselves, according to a rule he called 'a principle of charity'. This conjecture was entirely radical, in the sense of not being aided by any prior knowledge either of the language in question or the actual content of the speakers' beliefs.

Here Davidson derives from the work of Quine, who described a similar process of establishing the language meaning, which he regarded as 'radical translation'. The idea was inseparably tied to his intriguing and fatal thesis dubbed as the 'indeterminacy of translation'. His claim refers to essentially three main obstacles which one inevitably encounters when attempting to understand a foreign language. Taking only empirical data as a basis, it is impossible to unambiguously establish the meaning of either a single term, an entire sentence or any longer structure of discourse (*Word and Object* 1960). Each of the proposed semantic explanations may be consistent with the speaker's observed behaviour an environment, and yet different from what they actually intended to communicate. Hence the radical nature of the translational project; it remains an assumption suited to the sensory surroundings.

Inheriting Quine's famous claim, the Davidsonian venture is analogously 'indeterminate', in that there are many ways in which an entire semantics of a language can be 'understood', each of them equally plausible and coherent with empirical data on the basis of which the research was performed. With the Quinean legacy as a fundament, Davidson's theory becomes anchored in a project which is originally translative. Yet Davidson knowingly dispenses with the idea of translation, considering it too narrow, and replaces it with a supposedly broader term of 'interpretation', more suited to describe the scope of his analysis. His explicitly formulated goal was to embed the theory of truth in a larger one, such 'that includes the decision theory itself' (Davidson 1996: 17). This crucial manoeuvre will be discussed more extensively in the following section, yet already now its significance must be pointed.

Ultimately, the theory describes a continuous interpretative endeavour involved in understanding a given language. By successive applications of the revised T-schema one would be gradually building its semantic structure, making hypothetical ascriptions of meaning to utterances of the speakers, whose validity would then be constantly verified against the speakers' behaviour and empirical data, remaining subjected to continual adjustments and corrections. The completion of the project, although providing a sufficiently operable account of language meaning, could not mark a definite closure to the process, since the proposed interpretation could always be contested by a new one, just as accurate.

The translation manual revisited

Davidson's analysis itself, with its Tarskian and Quinean affiliations, can be thought to invite re-examination in terms of its link with the translation process convincingly enough. But the unobvious and undeniable connections were also pointed in critical response to the project, which should therefore be now briefly recalled.

A concern which arises perhaps most readily is that even with the formula amended as above, the theory cannot provide axioms which would embrace infinitely complex properties of natural language, let alone explain how exactly these axioms would describe them. This point was taken up among others by Harman, who argued that the theorems postulated by Davidson are to be describing semantic properties of sentence components, yet the nature

of these properties is in no way specified (Harman 1974). So Hartman seems to be materialising the threat which looms unavoidably over the accounts that appeal to correspondence. For these properties would have to involve some sort of relation of reference to reality, while Davidson concludes that what it is to refer to an object 'will not be analysed' (Davidson 1977: 213).

Another difficulty is connected with sentences which contain ambiguous terms or those whose surface grammar does not correspond with their deep structure. They would require background knowledge and properly interpreted factors which are arguably impossible to contain in universalised theorems (see, e.g. Parsons 1973). An analogous problem would concern terms whose meaning proved controversial, e.g., those belonging to the field of ethics (Kirkham 2001: 242).

Soams, in turn, contends that the project might not be sufficiently well-argued. If one takes the notion of truth for granted, then even if the speaker knew all instances of T-schema, this would not give them any insight into meanings of sentences included in them. (Soams 1984: 413).

Yet the most extensive criticism was developed by Dummett. He not only suggested that Davidsonian holism precludes a possibility of gradual language learning, but most importantly, he argued his theory was precisely what Davidson did not mean it to be when he disowned the term 'translation'. Dummett claimed that the project was reducible to a mere 'translation manual' – a procedure which would enable translating one language into another, without actually understanding any of them. While in order to explain the phenomenon of meaning, an account of understanding must first be provided (Dummett 1975).

In view of the above, a key question arises – does Davidson manage to rise above the notion of translation in his theory? And if so, does it actually refine or cripple his account?

Dummett's argument does not appear to be sufficiently well-founded in a sense that it was precisely the raw 'translation manual' that Davidson aimed to avoid by introducing the notion of interpretation. In their common revulsion towards translating, they seem to hold a similarly narrow understanding of the concept. In their view it was reducible to a mechanical procedure allowing one to correlate meanings between two languages as if 'blindly'. When only such a limited meaning of the term is taken into consideration, it must be admitted that the Davidsonian project certainly involves more, with interpretation supposedly preceding the translative activity. But it has to be conceded to Dummett that the theory offers little in terms of explaining

what the broader act of interpretation would actually consist in, and there is effectively no account of how understanding would come about.

That is why it will be argued here that translation is indeed taking place in the centre of Davidson's vision – not merely on one, but in fact on two levels. In order to appreciate both, a deepened sense of the process has to be recognised and acknowledged as part of the analysis. With such a proviso, the theory could hopefully be considered as more comprehensive.

Without doubt, there is a place in the model where one could identify a certain 'translation manual'. Inherited with the Tarskian T-schema, the process is necessitated by the distinction between the object and the metalanguage. The way in which Davidson modifies the formula exposes a need for translation to take place even further. His left-hand side of the equation does not present only a sentence equivalent to the one on the right. Instead, it becomes more universalised, since it contains an actual instruction of how the object statement should be analysed, with possible relativity of its meaning taken into account – a schematic procedure of how it should be translated. This would be a surface level of translation in the project.

Yet for any relativity or ambiguity to be transferred into the metalanguage, they must first be consciously recognised by the individual who is to perform the process. And that is why translation in its wider sense would have to occur also at an earlier stage, the moment when a person approached the object language statement. This would be the unexplained point of understanding demanded by Dummett, and that of applying the mysterious, speculative axioms.

Before truth conditions become ascribed to a given sentence, they need to be initially construed in the mind of the subject. Arguably, this activity has a translative nature.

A potential obscure utterance in the object language functions here as a source text. It is approached and apprehended by the individual in a way that is utterly unique for them; even if not yet understood, it sparks a reaction which is personalised in terms of associations and images it evokes as well as possible connections with other object language utterances, to which meaning has been previously assigned. Next, along the lines of Davidsonian theory, the subject is gathering empirical data, to be used as a basis for making their prospective hypothesis. Out of the repository of such data, they will go on to choose possible truth conditions of the statement.

This activity is, in turn, akin to constructing a target text. The experiential evidence collected by the person remains a part of their subjectively

perceived reality, which in a sense constitutes a new, target medium. The data are subsequently processed, in that the subject will select and combine elements which they consider as good candidates for truth conditions of the utterance. A mental construct thus created functions as the target text. It is an outcome of a series of choices regarding which items within the target medium should be used to reflect the original statement best. Decisions made on the way are largely indeterminate, motivated by intuition and previous practice. The activity is regulated by how the chosen ingredients will continue to successfully represent the source text, the extent to which they will agree with other meaning hypotheses, and with the behaviour of speakers of the object language – constraints taken into account only with the translator's consent. Such a mental construct of truth conditions is naturally creative since it is entirely novel, individually marked and effective in representing the original statement, with there simultaneously being no access to its equivalent in the foreign language speaker's mind.

Such a creative process may continue interminably. As Davidson himself suggests, the hypotheses are subject to constant adjustments and revisions, and it is only up to the person to decide which version should be taken as ultimate. Then they sanction the validity of the truth conditions in the same way as the translator legitimises translational equivalence. It is when they regard the quality of the created representation as sufficient and satisfying – and on such a basis they establish a relation between the source statement and its truth conditions, between the original and the target text.

What is nevertheless most crucial is exactly the same illusion to which both the translator and the individual fall pray. The translator who declares reaching equivalence does so since they believe that there is a certain similarity between the source and target text. In fact, however, they consider them alike because they are the creators of both. They have subjectively processed and shaped the image of the original to reflect this shape later in their translation. In the same way, the individual comes to regard the construct of truth conditions as corresponding to the original sentence, since both constitute an outcome of their own perceptual work.

This form of translational equivalence can be logically identified with the mysterious relation inscribed in axioms of Davidsonian theory, binding semantic properties of sentence components with their reference. A relation spun and stipulated exclusively by the person who analyses them, which comes to be considered as independent merely in the ignorance of subjective contribution made to both – the preceding act of inconscient self-translation.

From such a perspective, it is now clear why the translative process described above precedes Davidson's idea of interpretation. Instant, intuitive, and inherent in perception, it seems to be taking place prior to any other more complex mental operations. Only in the aftermath of such a translation may one entertain any possibility of further conscious intellectual work. It is this translative impulse that paves the way for understanding.

Individuality of the act naturally reels out an infinite number of ways in which the process may be carried out – here realises itself the Quinean and Davidsonian indeterminacy, in multiple unique works of translation performed by all the people who approach a foreign language with the purpose of analysing its meaning. Each translation is valid in its own way; with the source text of experiential data having been structured by the translator themselves, there is always an impression of consistency which allows them to legitimise the ultimately proposed target text of truth conditions. With such an original translative activity taken into account, it may be argued that a theory of meaning for a language is always an architecture constructed out of building blocks of truth conditions carved by the individual in their empirical environment. And they are the authors of its semantic content to the same extent as the translator authors the target text.

To conclude, the reasoning proposed above hopefully proved that in Davidson's theory the presence of a semantic notion of translation is unquestionable. Though dreaded by the author, its acceptance brings along not only an unwanted, vague relation with reality in the figure of a translating subject and their unpredictable creativity. The idea of translation can be taken as an evil lesser than that involved in other semantic terms. In contrast to such notions as meaning, truth, demonstration, synonymy, etc., it has its roots in a specific type of practice. And as such, although still to a certain degree indeterminate, it is nevertheless more easily analysable, for instance in terms of standard features which all acts of translation uncontroversially share.

Now it also seems easier to neutralise objections recalled above. The theory might be applied to statements which are ambiguous, because the experience of translators would prevent against their incorrect 'blind' analysis. They would also be able to recognise a potential discrepancy between the sentence surface grammar and its deep structure. As for the argument which states that truth conditions supposedly give an insufficient insight into the language meaning, when translation is accepted as part of the project, the concept of truth is no longer taken fully for granted, since it is underpinned by translative procedure, which in turn can be analysed at least

in terms of its primary characteristics. Translation equivalence which the person spins between statements and the construal of their truth conditions accounts for the relation contained in axioms of the theory, as well as one involved in every meaning hypothesis. Agreeing with Dummett, a 'translation manual' does constitute an element of the analysis, but it is not everything that the project amounts to, for there is an additional, more refined instance of the process taking place where Dummett would require an account of understanding. The involuntary, self-translation act would be the first step towards it, enabling a broader, conscious interpretative work to begin.

A final note should be made regarding a possible idealist nature of the proposed reformulation. With truth conditions understood as a mental target text, the entire scheme seems to have been lifted from the ground of external world on the level of overly speculative, fleeting products of the mind. Admittedly, the translative shift revealed at the moment of making meaning ascriptions takes place in the mental dimension. Yet at the same time, the extent to which truth of sentences is rooted in the external reality becomes once again identified with the degree of access to the source text. Although unreachable in the form conceived by its author and never solidified into an intersubjective shape, the original remains a necessary anchor – an external substance, only such that is forever changing together with the cognitive motion of its reader, perfectly sensitive to the translators' creative, perceptual touch. And so is the material substructure for truth conditions.

Summary

First, in the model proposed by Tarski it was pointed that his distinction into the object and the metalanguage necessitated a translative process occurring at the moment of passage between them. It was further argued that even when the T-schema were applied to formal languages and the meta- contained the object one, this passage was not a mere rewriting. Instead, it involved a more complex transformation which accompanied the change of context and language richness. With all the instances of his formula brought together, translation process was also identified in the final definition of truth, in the activity of turning open sentences into their particularised equivalents.

Transition to Davidson was an ultimate probe for the hypothesis linking translation with truth, when the formal scheme was applied to natural languages. It was contended that Davidson's project should reclaim its

translative roots since, in the analysis, the process manifested itself twofold. On the surface, there was the Tarskian formula which Davidson refined so that it became a certain universalised translative principle. This prescription was, however, only a technical symbol for an instance of translation occurring on a more profound level. It was when the source text of experiential data surrounding a foreign language was used as a basis for mental construal of its truth conditions – a personalised reception of the original, attempted to be rendered in a new medium in the form of a comprehensible target text.

By exposing the process in both theories, the analysis pointed how strongly translational is the ground for the concept of truth. But, more significantly, the study thereby also presented a strong argument in favour of recognising translation as a phenomenon that hides an intriguing philosophical depth as well as inexhaustible potential for interpreting philosophical questions.

Translated by the Author

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Declarations

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