REAL AND APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES IN
DAVIDSON'S VIEW OF INTERPRETATION

by

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In "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Donald Davidson addresses the question how we are able to understand what people say. Davidson intends the positive arguments in these two essays to be part of a coherent explanation of communication. However, there are, I will argue, inconsistencies between the theories in his two essays which suggest that they are not reconcilable into a coherent picture.

In chapters one and two I will explicate the arguments that Davidson presents in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". In chapter three I will discuss several areas in which discrepancies between the positions presented in these two papers seem to arise. The issues that will be discussed in chapter three stem from an apparent inconsistency in Davidson's position regarding the time period over which interpretation should occur. In "Radical Interpretation" Davidson maintains that interpretation should occur over an extended period of time, while in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" he maintains that what is necessary for interpretation cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance. Although it may appear that he is inconsistent on this issue, I will argue that the differences between the
descriptions of interpretation in the two papers are differences of emphasis rather than differences of substance.

In chapter four I will argue that there is, however, a genuine inconsistency between the conception of linguistic meaning presented in "Radical Interpretation" and the one presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". Whereas in "Radical Interpretation" meaning is held to be discovered by the interpreter, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" meaning is held to be created by the speaker and interpreter. I will argue that this latter conception of meaning is problematic because it assumes that meaning is derived from, rather than being independent of, communication. I will conclude that the theories of interpretation presented in these two essays are, therefore, irreconcilable and that, of the two, the picture presented in "Radical Interpretation" is superior.
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I would like to thank Gary Wedeking for encouraging me to continue studying philosophy. I am grateful to my mother and my brother Greg for always being proud of me and for respecting my decisions. I owe special thanks to Aleem for his patience, loving support, and for sharing my enthusiasm for philosophy. Finally, I would like to express my deeply felt gratitude to Kate Talmage for being both a friend and a mentor.
Donald Davidson's positive agenda in both "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is to explain how we are able to understand a speaker's utterances. To understand a speaker's utterances we must be able to understand how the syntax of a speaker's words relates to the words' semantics. At the outset of "Radical Interpretation" Davidson asks how we can, for example, determine that a speaker's utterance "Es regnet" means "It is raining". We may know that "Es regnet" in German means "It is raining" in English but in order to understand the speaker's utterance we must first determine that the speaker is, in fact, speaking German. As a result, the question that Davidson poses cannot be answered simply by explaining how an interpreter may translate an utterance from an unknown language into a known language. What Davidson wants to address in both "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", is what could we know that would make communication possible?

Though the question that is addressed in both papers is the same, there are obvious differences in the manner in which it is addressed. Davidson analyses interpretation entirely from the perspective of the interpreter in "Radical Interpretation". By contrast, in "A Nice Derangement of
Epitaphs" he analyses both the speaker's and the interpreter's role in creating the meaning of the speaker's utterances. What I will address in this thesis is whether the positive pictures of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" are part of a consistent, coherent view. In chapter one I will explicate the argument that Davidson presents in "Radical Interpretation". Davidson maintains that the ability to understand a speaker's utterances is derived from understanding the relationship between language and the nonlinguistic facts relevant to a speaker's language use. Thus the appropriate model for a theory of meaning, he states, is one which relates language to the world in a systematic manner. The meaning of an utterance, he argues, is constituted by the conditions under which an utterance is true. We are able to understand a speaker's utterance, he maintains, when we have determined the truth conditions of his or her utterance. Interpretation, then, is a process of developing a theory of meaning or truth for a speaker's utterances.

In chapter two I will discuss both the destructive and constructive arguments that Davidson presents in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". Davidson's destructive argument consists in a rejection of the picture of communication in which meaning is derived from a conventional use of language. Convention, defined as shared rules and regularities is,
Davidson claims, both insufficient and unnecessary for communication. I will defend this aspect of his argument against Michael Dummett's criticism that Davidson fails to recognize the importance of convention to communication.

Davidson's constructive argument in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is developed in opposition to a conventional picture of communication. In order to understand a speaker's utterances it is necessary, Davidson argues, to interpret a speaker according to a theory which is the same or equivalent to the theory of interpretation that guides the speaker's language use. Communication, he argues, is successful only to the degree that the speaker and the hearer use the same theory of interpretation to speak or interpret. However, these theories of interpretation need not be guided by conventional rules or regularities.

In chapter three I will address several areas in which discrepancies seem to exist between "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". It appears that Davidson is inconsistent regarding the period of time required for interpretation. Whereas in "Radical Interpretation" he stresses the benefits of interpretation over time, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" he argues that what is necessary for interpretation cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance. I will first discuss the significance of this apparent inconsistency and then address whether Davidson is, in fact, inconsistent in this regard.
In the final chapter I will describe the apparent differences between the role of the interpreter as it is described in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". I will then discuss the evidence for the claim that Davidson's conception of the interpreter's role is not the same in the two papers. In conclusion, I will answer the question whether the pictures of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" are, in fact, part of a coherent picture of communication.
CHAPTER 1: DAVIDSON'S VIEW OF INTERPRETATION IN "RADICAL INTERPRETATION"

At the outset of "Radical Interpretation" Davidson questions what we could possibly know that would enable us to interpret other people's utterances. How is it, Davidson asks, that we are able to understand what people say even when we do not share a language? Davidson does not advance an empirical claim regarding what we, in fact, know that would enable us to do this. As Davidson notes, what we could know is distinct from the issue regarding what, if anything, we do know. It is possible, he suggests, that there is no knowledge that we possess that is necessary for interpretation. However, if there were a theory that explained what we could know that makes interpretation possible it must, in order for it to be viable, also be possible to give a plausible account of how interpreters could acquire knowledge of this theory.

According to Davidson, the need to interpret the speech of others is ubiquitous. It is not only when we encounter speakers with whom we do not share a language that radical interpretation is necessary. Even when we encounter speakers who we believe are speaking our own first language we must interpret their utterances to determine that our theory of interpretation will, in fact, apply to their utterances. Speakers of the same language, Davidson maintains, can be
interpreted using the same theory of interpretation. Though this addresses what speaking the same language means, it does not answer the further question regarding how we recognize when someone is speaking the same language as us. In order to be able to recognize speakers of the same language we must be able to distinguish between cases in which utterances merely sound the same and cases in which these utterances have the same meaning. Consequently, the question, both for languages which are familiar and those which are unfamiliar to an interpreter, is what could we know that would enable us to interpret a speaker's utterances?

It is tempting, Davidson suggests, to answer this question simply with the claim that what we know is the meaning of a speaker's words. Meanings, according to many theorists, are entities that correspond to meaningful expressions. According to this model, knowing the meaning of a speaker's utterances would be described as knowing a particular linguistic entity. This conception of meaning, however, does not provide a satisfactory answer to the initial question that was posed. Even if we describe the object of our knowledge as a meaning or entity, this does not explain how we acquire knowledge of this entity. If we accept this picture of meaning, the emphasis of the initial question would simply shift from an issue of how we interpret a speaker's utterances to an issue of how we acquire knowledge of the meaning of a speaker's utterances.
Davidson maintains, therefore, that the postulation of meanings is unproductive and removes us from what is necessarily relevant to interpretation. Rather than relating language to a further linguistic concept such as meaning, Davidson argues, we should look to the relation between language and nonlinguistic things and events to provide an explanation of interpretation.

Other theorists have avoided postulating extra entities such as meanings and have, instead, attempted to explain communication in terms of its physical or syntactic components. Reduction theorists have argued that conventional instances of verbal communication are nothing more than the intentional movement of the speaker's throat and larynx which produces sound waves which, in turn, have a physical effect on the eardrums of the interpreter.

According to reductionists, there is a causal, and hence necessary, link between nonlinguistic activities and verbal communication. The preceding description of the physical components of communication does not, however, explain the causal link between nonlinguistic activities and verbal communication. Questions regarding exactly how nonlinguistic activities cause or facilitate communication remain unanswered. Though Davidson is sympathetic to the view that we must look to nonlinguistic events and things in the world to explain how we are able to interpret speaker's utterances, the physicalist model does not, in his view, provide a
sufficient explanation of how nonlinguistic events are relevant to this explanation.

Davidson also rejects the suggestion that the connection between language and the world should be analysed in terms of the relation between individual words and nonlinguistic events. Words taken individually or in isolation from one another are not, Davidson argues, the appropriate semantic unit for this analysis. Nonlinguistic facts such as objects and events in the world, Davidson maintains, are related to words only in so far as these words occur in or as sentences. As will become apparent later, this is because it is the conditions under which a speaker holds an utterance to be true which, according to Davidson, determine the meaning of that utterance. If we are able to discern under what conditions a speaker holds a particular utterance to be true we can, according to Davidson, determine the meaning of this utterance.

Individual words do not have a truth value, however, unless they are being used as sentences. My word "rabbit", for example, relates to a nonlinguistic entity only to the extent that it is being used to make an assertion regarding a nonlinguistic fact. I may use the word "rabbit" as a sentence, for example, with the intention of conveying the meaning there is a rabbit. Clearly, this utterance will either be true or false depending on the relevant conditions in the world. According to Davidson's theory of meaning, a
necessary connection between my word "rabbit" and a particular condition in the world will occur only when this word is being used to make an assertion regarding the world and, hence, only when the utterance has a truth value. As a result, words, when taken alone, have no necessary relation to the nonlinguistic facts that are relevant to the semantics of the words in question.

Davidson further rejects the suggestion, made by Grice and others, that the intentions of the speaker are the appropriate evidence regarding what the speaker's utterance means. In order for intentions to serve as evidence for the meaning of a speaker's words, Davidson maintains, we must be able to discern the speaker's intentions prior to and independently of the meaning of his words. According to Davidson, however, belief and meaning are inextricably linked. Thus we cannot use a speaker's beliefs or intentions for the evidence regarding what his words mean because we cannot know what his intentions are independently of knowing the meaning of his words.

The final suggestion for a theory of interpretation that Davidson rejects is Quine's theory of radical translation. Though Davidson admits a philosophical debt to Quine, he maintains that radical translation is an insufficient explanation of what we could know that would enable us to interpret a speaker's utterances. According to Quine's theory of radical translation, what is required for interpretation is
a translation manual which relates words or utterances in one language to words or utterances in another language. However, this does not explain what we must know to understand the meaning of a speaker’s utterance. I may, for example, know that "Es regnet" in German translates to "Il pleut" in French without being able to recognize what would make either of these sentences true. Knowing what the correct translation for a particular utterance is, therefore, does not ensure that we will understand the meaning of the utterance. In order to ensure that we understand the meaning of a translation we must first understand the meaning of the language that the utterance is being translated into. As a result, what must be explained is our understanding of the known language. Quine takes this understanding as given and, consequently, fails to explain how we come to this understanding.

What a viable theory of interpretation should explain, according to Davidson, is how an interpreter with knowledge of something finite, and hence comprehensible by a mind with finite capacities, may be able to understand any potential utterance to which the theory applies. The evidence that supports such a theory, Davidson argues, should not rely on concepts such as meaning, interpretation, and synonymy. The theory that Davidson seeks will explain how a hearer interprets a speaker’s utterances and, in the process, what determines the meaning of a speaker’s utterances. Consequently, we cannot presuppose an understanding of these
linguistic concepts in order to verify a theory relative to which these concepts will be defined.

A theory of interpretation must, according to Davidson, also recognize the semantic relevance of the structure of utterances. The meaning of an utterance, Davidson argues, is constituted by its truth conditions and, consequently, the meaning and truth conditions of an utterance are one and the same thing. Thus, because Davidson is giving a truth-conditional account of meaning we must understand the manner in which the structure of a sentence is relevant to its truth conditions.

The relevance of structure to truth conditions is apparent in complex sentences such as conjunctions. If a sentence is a conjunction the truth value of the individual conjuncts will be independent of one another. The truth of the entire sentence, however, will require each of the conjuncts to be true. If the first conjunct is true while the second is false, the entire sentence will also be false. But, the first conjunct will remain true despite the fact that the sentence in which it appears is false.

In order for a theory to be sensitive to the relevance of structure to truth conditions it must, Davidson argues, be structurally revealing. Tarski's theory of truth, Davidson maintains, shows, in the requisite manner, how the truth conditions of utterances depend on their linguistic structure. But, in contrast to Davidson, Tarski does not attempt to
explain what knowledge we could have that would enable us to interpret a speaker's utterances. Davidson argues, however, that Tarski's theory, appropriately modified, can provide interpretations of utterances.

The central claim of Tarski's theory is that a satisfactory theory of truth must generate a T-sentence for every sentence in the object language. The general form of a so-called T-sentence is as follows: "s is true if and only if p". S represents the sentence in the object language for which truth conditions are to be given, while p represents the translation of s in the metalanguage. A sample instance of a T-sentence for an utterance in English is "'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white". On the left-hand side of the biconditional, "if and only if", the utterance "snow is white" is mentioned rather than used, while, on the right-hand side of the biconditional, the same utterance is used. Tarski assumes that we are able to recognize that the right-hand side of the biconditional is a translation of the sentence on the left-hand side. The biconditional will be true if both p and s are true, or if both p and s are false. Consequently, because Tarski assumes that we are able to recognize that p is merely a translation of s we can conclude that p and s will have the same truth values. As a result, the biconditional which connects p and s must be true.

Each individual T-sentence will define truth relative to a particular utterance but will not, on its own, generate a
definition of what it means to be true. However, a theory of truth which generates a T-sentence for every possible utterance in a language will, Tarski argues, define what it means to be true. The totality of T-sentences will, Tarski maintains, therefore provide a definition of what it means to be true by providing truth conditions for every possible utterance. Thus he concludes that the ability to provide a T-sentence for every possible utterance in a language is a test of the adequacy of a theory of truth.

Tarski's theory of truth was developed for a formal, extensional language rather than a natural language. As a result, in order to use Tarski's theory to yield interpretations of a speaker's utterances Davidson must show that it is applicable to natural languages. Tarski himself was apparently sceptical about this possibility. The formal languages which Tarski used for his theory do not include certain features of natural languages such as indexicality. Indexical expressions are those expressions which may vary in truth value according to the speaker, time, and place of utterance. Such expressions are widely used in natural languages as is apparent in the use of personal pronouns, tensed verbs, and words such as "there", "here", and "now". Thus in order for Convention T to apply to natural languages it must be modified to accommodate such expressions. This can be accomplished, according to Davidson, by stating the truth conditions of an utterance relative to the particular speaker
and the time and place of his or her utterance.

Other characteristics of a natural language, such as adverbs, attributive adjectives, and modalities, may not be so easily accommodated within a theory of truth like Tarski's. Davidson concedes that there is currently no uncontentious means of representing all aspects of a natural language. How do we determine, for example, if the statement, "Amy is tall" is true? Amy may be tall relative to her female peers and the members of her family but not tall relative to her male peers. It would seem, consequently, that the truth value of this and presumably many other adjectives is relative. Though Davidson admits that these issues are problematic he remains optimistic that future progress in this area will resolve these issues.

What Davidson requires for his theory is a means of relating linguistic facts to objects and events in the world. Individual T-sentences, which are entailed by a theory which satisfies Convention T, relate linguistic utterances to the objects and events in the world which these utterances represent. The right-hand side of the biconditional in a T-sentence states the sentence for which truth conditions are to be given while the left-hand side states the relevant conditions that must be satisfied in order to make the given sentence true. In this manner, the language of an utterance is related to a condition of the world.

Davidson maintains that the process of characterizing a theory of truth for a natural language will proceed in two
stages. Initially, truth will be characterized for only a portion of the language. Basic examples of logical form will be generated by a "carefully gerrymandered" portion of the language. Presumably, this will be the portion of the language that is most amenable to characterization by a truth theory. These basic sentences will provide examples of the logical form of all potential sentences. In the second stage of this process, the remaining sentences of the given language will be correlated with one or possibly more than one of the sentences characterized in the first stage. The truth conditions for any potential utterances will, in this manner, be given.

As noted above, Davidson is attempting to use Tarski's theory to generate interpretations of given utterances. Tarski is able to assume that the right-hand side of the biconditional in Convention T states the truth conditions for the left-hand side because the right-hand side is merely a translation of the left-hand side. The statement of the truth conditions is, consequently, merely a translation of the given utterance. However, Davidson cannot assume that translation has occurred until he has provided an adequate theory of interpretation to assess the accuracy of translations.

Whereas Tarski attempted to derive a theory of truth by assuming an ability to interpret or translate utterances, Davidson proposes to assume knowledge of what is required for truth and attempt to use this to derive an account of
interpretation. Thus it is necessary for Davidson to revise Tarski's Convention T so that an ability to recognize correct translations is not presupposed.

Convention T, as stated by Tarski, assumes an ability to interpret utterances in the following manner: s is true, according to Convention T, if and only if p, where p is assumed to be a translation of s. Davidson cannot assume that p is a correct translation of s and, therefore, he modifies Convention T by eliminating this assumption. What is required under Davidson's conception of Convention T is that p, whatever it represents, is something that is true if and only if s is also true. In order to recognize what p represents for a particular sentence we must be able to determine the truth conditions for the given sentence.

Davidson has rejected the suggestion that the specific beliefs and intentions of a speaker can serve as the evidence for the meaning of a speaker's utterance. Beliefs and intentions, he argues, are interdependent in the sense that they all contribute to the content of a speaker's utterances and, thus, they cannot be determined independently of this content. According to Davidson, a speaker will hold a sentence to be true on the basis of the meaning of the sentence and what the speaker believes regarding the nonlinguistic conditions relevant to the utterance. Though specific beliefs cannot be taken as evidence for the meaning of a speaker's words, he argues that a general belief, which
may apply to all utterances, may be used as evidence for the meaning of a speaker's words. For the most part, Davidson maintains, speakers intend to say something true when they make an utterance. Consequently, most speakers, he states, share the common attitude of holding their sentences or utterances to be true. Because this is a general attitude that may apply to all sentences it is not necessary, he argues, to know the specific meaning of a sentence in order to recognize this belief.

Davidson maintains that a speaker may hold a sentence to be true in cases where the speaker wishes, wants, or believes that something will be made true. The attitude of holding a sentence to be true, according to Davidson, has a broader application than those sentences which are obviously sincere assertions. And, in many of the situations in which a speaker is not making a sincere assertion, such as those occasions when a speaker is being ironic, sarcastic, or exaggerating for dramatic effect, there may be a recognizable attitude that suggests that such utterances are not held true by the speaker.

The fact that a speaker holds particular sentences to be true under particular conditions is, according to Davidson, the evidence that enables an interpreter to understand that speaker's utterances. Evidence is related to T-sentences in the following manner. Consider a speaker, Jane, who utters the phrase, "It is raining". The appropriate T-sentence for
this utterance will be as follows: "It is raining" is true-in-English when spoken by x at time t if and only if it is raining near x at time t. The evidence(E) that supports this T-sentence will be of the following form. (E) Jane is a member of the English speech community and holds the sentence "It is raining" to be true on Saturday at noon and it is, in fact, raining near Jane at the time of utterance.

We may be hesitant to conclude that the preceding T-sentence is true on the basis of merely one piece of evidence because there is always the potential that a speaker is wrong regarding what she believes. I may, for example, look out the window and make the statement "It is raining" when, in fact, there is merely a lawn sprinkler outside my window. However, several instances in which utterances which are the same or equivalent to Jane's are correlated with the same event, in this case instances in which it is actually raining, would suggest that the T-sentence in the preceding paragraph is true.

On any given occasion of utterance a speaker may be wrong regarding what she believes. The evidence that a speaker holds a particular sentence to be true on one occasion of utterance will, therefore, be insufficient evidence to support an interpretation of an unfamiliar sentence. What is required is sufficient evidence to support particular interpretations and this, Davidson suggests, requires interpretation over time. The method, he states, is "one of getting the best fit"
The "fit" refers to the fit between the meaning that we ascribe to a speaker's utterances and the evidence which supports these ascriptions. Hence, the significance of interpretation over time becomes apparent as it is only over time that a considerable amount of evidence can be gathered in order to assess what is or is not an appropriate fit.

According to Davidson, we should interpret a speaker's utterances in order to make the speaker right to the extent that the evidence will support the conclusion that the speaker is right. Only once a theory of interpretation for a particular speaker or language is sufficiently developed can we make sense of attributing error to a speaker. Error, Davidson seems to be suggesting, can be recognized only once an interpreter has sufficient evidence to support a generalization regarding the meaning of a particular utterance or term.

The evidence, to reiterate, consists of the circumstances under which speakers hold particular sentences to be true. It is not apparent, however, how this evidence will serve as a basis for specific interpretations of a speaker's utterances. As has already been stated, Davidson maintains that a speaker holds an utterance to be true on the basis of what the utterance means and what she believes to be true. Consequently, knowing that a speaker holds an utterance to be true, but not knowing what truth it expresses, may seem to be an insufficient basis for interpretation. What is required,
according to Davidson, is that we assume not only that the speaker generally holds her utterances to be true but we also make assumptions regarding what factors determine the specific content of a speaker's beliefs.

Davidson states that we should hold, "belief constant as far as possible while solving for meaning" (324). This is accomplished, according to Davidson, by interpreting a speaker's utterances in a manner that makes them right as often as possible. Consequently, we assume not only that speakers believe that their utterances are true but, further, we interpret them with the presumption that their beliefs are, in fact, true.

For example, consider Jane who uttered "It is raining" when it was raining in her vicinity. We assume that she believes that her utterance is true and, further, we interpret with the presumption that it is, in fact, true. If, over repeated instances, we can draw a correlation between her utterance "It is raining" and the presence of rain it may seem reasonable to assume that Jane believes that it is raining. If we simply assume that a speaker believes that her utterances are true without drawing the further assumption that her utterances are, in fact, true then there is no means of determining the actual truth conditions of her utterance. This is due to the fact that without this assumption we cannot justify the conclusion that a correlation between a particular event and an utterance will be significant to the meaning of
the utterance.

The presumption that a speaker's beliefs are true does not, however, support the conclusion that the interpreter will be able to determine what thing or event the speaker is responding to. In order for an interpreter to be able to determine the truth conditions of a speaker's utterances he must be aware, or potentially aware, of what makes a speaker's utterances true. Davidson makes the further claim that we should assign truth conditions to alien utterances according to our own view of what is the case. We must assume, therefore, that the speakers who we are interpreting are responding to what we believe it is reasonable or obvious to respond to. The truth conditions for alien utterances, as a result, will be assigned according to what we believe are the appropriate truth conditions.

We assume not only that speakers are rational and that their beliefs are, by and large, consistent but we must also make the further assumption that speakers believe what it is obvious or rational to believe. The beliefs of a speaker must, as a result, be publicly accessible. In order for interpretation to get started we must assume, when interpreting a speaker, that there is a significant amount of agreement between the speakers and ourselves. It is only once we have a fairly well-developed theory of interpretation that we can attribute error to a speaker. As Davidson states, "the more sentences that we conspire to accept or reject...the
better we understand the rest" (324). This suggests that developing a theory of interpretation for a language becomes easier once a considerable amount of understanding is already present and, hence, it is a project which occurs over time.

Radical interpretation, Davidson maintains, proceeds in three incremental steps. We must, he claims, first impose our basic logical truths on the language for which we are developing a theory of truth. This is done by analysing sentences of the unknown language to determine the logical form or structure of the language. The evidence that we rely on in this portion of interpretation is, he maintains, those sentences which virtually all speakers of the language hold true all of the time. Sentences whose truth value does not vary according to time and speaker are very likely logical or analytical truths. By analysing such sentences, he states, we can determine the logical structure of the language.

In the second step of radical interpretation, sentences whose truth value varies according to observable changes in the world are analysed. The similarity between Davidson's theory of radical interpretation and Quine's theory of radical translation becomes apparent at this point. Davidson acknowledges both a similarity and a debt to Quine's theory but there are, he notes, significant differences between Quine's theory and his own. Quine defines sentences in terms of their stimulus meaning, and, in turn, defines stimulus meaning in terms of what a speaker experiences that causes her
to affirm or deny a particular sentence. Stimulus meaning, then, is the pattern of sensory stimulation that a speaker experiences when she assents or dissents to a particular utterance. Davidson, on the other hand, maintains that the appropriate conditions for an utterance are particular things or events in the world. The truth value of particular utterances, from which, according to Davidson, interpretations of utterances are to be generated, will depend directly on things or events in the world. This is a significant step as we do not, as in Quine's theory, have to infer a relationship between a thing in the world and a private sensory experience. In Davidson's theory, the relevant cause of an utterance is assumed to be an objective condition or event in the world and, as a result, the meaning of a speaker's utterance is linked with something which is publicly accessible.

The final step of radical interpretation, according to Davidson, is the analysis of sentences on which there is no consensus regarding their truth value and also of those sentences whose truth value is not directly related to observable changes in the world. The truth conditions of such sentences will be determined, in large part, by their relation to other sentences. Once certain words and utterances have been assigned semantic properties, these properties will entail certain logical relations to other words and utterances. Consequently, even if the truth conditions of particular sentences are not linked directly to experience,
the truth conditions may be determined by analysing a sentence's relation to other, already interpreted, sentences.

However, even if we assume that the three steps of radical interpretation will proceed smoothly, all that Davidson has proven thus far is that a theory of truth for a particular language can be determined from the available evidence. As he acknowledges, it is insufficient to say that the meaning of a sentence is given by its T-sentence. All that the T-sentence states is that if particular conditions are present the given sentence will be true, but this does not support the conclusion that these particular conditions cause the given sentence to be true.

Furthermore, because T-sentences are in the form of biconditionals, all that is required for an entire T-sentence to be true is that the right and left-hand sides of the biconditional share the same truth value. As Davidson notes, if mere truth value were sufficient then we could simply say that "Snow is white" is true if and only if grass is green. Because both of the statements "Snow is white" and "Grass is green" are true then the biconditional, if and only if, will also be true.

It appears that there is no guarantee that truth conditions will provide interpretations of sentences. Because Davidson is attempting to develop a theory of interpretation, he cannot assume, in advance, that the right-hand side of the biconditional is a translation of the left-hand side.
Consequently, what is required is a constraint or restriction
that will somehow ensure that the right-hand side is, in fact,
a translation of the left-hand side.

Davidson attempts to fulfil this requirement by imposing
a holistic constraint on his theory. There is no guarantee,
he maintains, that each T-sentence taken in isolation will be
sufficient to provide an interpretation of a given utterance.
Davidson suggests, however, that the totality of T-sentences
for a particular language will be sufficient to guarantee that
each individual T-sentence will provide an interpretation of a
given utterance. Thus, in the same manner in which Tarski
used a holistic constraint to yield a definition of truth,
Davidson uses a holistic constraint to yield interpretations.

If we analyse T-sentences in a holistic manner then we
must seek to attain an optimal fit between all the available
evidence regarding the conditions under which native speakers
hold sentences to be true and the content that we ascribe to
these sentences. If T-sentences are to be interpretive, then
the truth conditions assigned to a particular utterance must
relate, in the appropriate manner, to the truth conditions of
other sentences in the given language.

Though truth conditions are assigned to sentences, rather
than individual words, each word that occurs in interpreted
utterances must be assigned a particular meaning. Once these
individual words are given semantic properties these semantic
properties will entail certain logical relations to other
words. If, for example, we assign the conventional meaning to the words that occur in the sentence "Snow is white" the semantic properties that we assign to these words must be consistent with the interpretation that is assigned to these words when they appear in other T-sentences.

It would appear, then, that in order to fulfil this holistic requirement we must assume that interpretation will occur over time. In order for an interpreter to determine reliably the meaning of any given sentence in a language she must be able to understand not only the given utterance but also how this utterance relates to a significant number of other sentences in the same language.
In "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson argues that knowledge of the conventional use of words in a given language may not only be insufficient for understanding a member of that speech community, it may be unnecessary. Davidson had stated, in "Radical Interpretation", that initially we may have to interpret speakers of our own language to determine that we are, in fact, speaking the same language. However, in this later paper he suggests that even once we have determined the linguistic community that a particular speaker belongs to we cannot assume that a speaker will adhere to the conventions of her community.

Meaning, Davidson argues, need not arise from a conventional use of language. As a result, he maintains, language, defined as shared rules, regularities, and conventions, is not necessary for linguistic communication. His argument to this effect leads to the seemingly contentious conclusion that, "[T]here is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what philosophers and linguists have supposed"("Nice" 446).

Davidson bases his rejection of language on the claim that convention is unnecessary for communication. This is apparent, he argues, from cases in which we are able to
understand a speaker despite an irregular or unconventional use of words. We are able to do so, he argues, by ignoring the conventional meaning of a speaker's words and interpreting the speaker according to her intended meaning. Because it is not necessary to understand the standard or conventional meaning of a speaker's words in order to understand a speaker's utterance it follows that meaning is not derived from convention. The meaning of a given utterance, Davidson states, is constituted by how the speaker intends the utterance to be understood. Thus, the intended meaning of a given utterance, he maintains, is what the speaker's words mean while the speaker meaning is what the speaker intends to do with her words. I will elaborate on Davidson's claim that we understand speakers by interpreting them according to their intended meaning later in this chapter.

Often we are able, Davidson argues, to understand the meaning of a speaker's utterance even when she has a slip of the tongue, garbles her words, or uses a malapropism. Because such usage is irregular it is impossible, Davidson maintains, to learn how to interpret such words prior to the speech occasion in question. This becomes particularly apparent, he argues, in the case of malapropisms. We may successfully interpret Mrs. Malaprop as meaning this is a nice arrangement of epithets when she says "This is a nice derangement of epitaphs", but what supports this unconventional interpretation of Mrs. Malaprop's utterance? Clearly, the
strangeness of the conventional meaning of her words may suggest that this is not the intended interpretation. However, though it may be unlikely, it is not impossible that Mrs. Malaprop's intention is to communicate the conventional meaning of, "This is a nice derangement of epitaphs".

There is no rule or regularity that determines when we should attribute the conventional meaning of a word to a speaker's utterance and when we should disregard this meaning in favour of an unconventional interpretation. Furthermore, if we believe that the speaker is breaking from convention, there is no rule that determines what unconventional interpretation we should ascribe to the speaker's utterances.

In the case of malapropisms, the speaker is understood if the interpreter ascribes the intended meaning, rather than the conventional meaning, to the speaker's utterance. For example, we understand Mrs. Malaprop's utterance correctly by taking into account her intention and disregarding the conventional meaning of her words. The intended meaning, in this manner, takes over from the conventional meaning. According to Davidson, it is important to preserve the distinction between what a speaker's words mean, the literal or first meaning as Davidson terms it, and what a speaker wants to do with her words, that is, the speaker meaning. As a result, Davidson argues, the existence of malapropisms threatens the distinction between literal meaning and speaker meaning. Communication is successful, in the case of
malapropisms, only if the conventional meaning is ignored and a speaker is understood in virtue how she intends her words to be interpreted. But, because the conventional meaning is simply disregarded there is no potential for a meaningful distinction between what a speaker's words mean and what the speaker wants to do with these words.

According to Davidson, the distinction between literal meaning and speaker meaning is significant and must be preserved. In order to do so, he maintains, we must ensure that literal meaning is defined in a manner so that it is relevant to the meaning that we ascribe to speakers' utterances. Malapropisms and the like raise questions regarding the necessity of convention for communication. Consequently, in order to preserve the distinction between literal meaning and speaker meaning we must, Davidson argues, "pry apart what is literal in language from what is conventional or established" (434).

Literal meaning, Davidson maintains, should be determined by the speakers of the words rather than the words as defined by conventional usage. Davidson redefines literal meaning, or first meaning as he dubs it, in a manner similar to Grice's notion of nonnatural meaning. According to Grice, we successfully communicate the meaning that we attribute to our words when the hearer recognizes our intention to communicate this meaning. Davidson, like Grice, also uses self-referring intentions to determine first meaning. In the series of
intentions associated with a particular utterance first meaning, Davidson states, is specified by the first intention that has this self-referring quality.

To illustrate his notion of first meaning Davidson cites the example of Diogenes' utterance, "I would have you stand from between me and the sun" (435). Assume, Davidson states, that Diogenes addresses Alexander and intends him to interpret his utterance as true if he, in fact, intends Alexander to stand from between him and the sun. Diogenes also intends, Davidson states, to have his utterance result in Alexander moving from between him and the sun and he further intends that, ultimately, this action will serve as a good anecdote to posterity. Therefore, there are several distinct intentions related to this utterance. According to Davidson, however, the first meaning of the utterance is determined by the first self-referring intention in this series of intentions. Thus the first meaning of Diogenes' statement "I would have you stand from between me and the sun" (435) is determined by his intention that Alexander interpret his utterance as true if he intends to have Alexander move from between him and the sun. Consequently, the first meaning of this utterance is realized only when Alexander recognizes Diogenes' intention to communicate this meaning.

In order to understand or grasp the speaker meaning, Davidson maintains, we must know the first meaning of a speaker's utterance. Citing a passage from Shakespeare, he
states that most of the passage is not meant to be taken in terms of its literal or first meaning. The passage in question, Davidson maintains, is meant to convey an image for the reader or listener. It is the image that Shakespeare is attempting to convey that constitutes the speaker meaning. As a result, there is a distinction between the first meaning of the words, which help us to grasp the image, and the image that is created by them.

Conversely, Davidson maintains that we may, on occasion, discern the speaker meaning and then determine the literal meaning of an utterance. It is not necessary, he states, that the order of interpretation always proceed from the literal meaning to the speaker meaning. However, Davidson has defined first meaning not in terms of the order of interpretation, but rather, in terms of the intentions of the speaker. The intention to be interpreted in a particular manner will, Davidson argues, generally be the first intention in a series of intentions.

According to Davidson's view, the literal or first meaning of Mrs. Malaprop's utterance is this is a nice arrangement of epithets. If we accept that literal meaning will be determined by the speaker we can maintain the potential for a meaningful distinction between what Mrs. Malaprop's words mean(first meaning) and what she wants to do with those words(speaker meaning). Alternatively, if we accept the conventional or standard notion of literal meaning
then, in the case of Mrs. Malaprop, we are left with a meaning that is irrelevant with respect to the meaning that she is attempting to convey. Further, in order for truth conditions to maintain relevance to Mrs. Malaprop's behaviour the truth or falsity of her statement should be analysed relative to her intended meaning. If analysed in this manner, her statement, "This is a nice derangement of epitaphs" will be deemed to be true if what she refers to is, in fact, a nice arrangement of epithets. If we accept the conventional meaning of Mrs. Malaprop's utterance, consistency requires that the truth conditions be determined relative to the conventional interpretation. As a result, literal meaning would be divorced from behaviour making radical interpretation difficult if not impossible.

If an interpreter is able to understand a speaker despite her unconventional or irregular use of words, as in the case of Mrs. Malaprop, the speaker, according to Davidson, has "[gotten] away with it" (440). This is due to the fact that the speaker's unconventional utterance could not have been understood in virtue of something learned prior to the speech occasion. In situations such as these, Davidson argues, successful communication is a matter of wit and luck rather than linguistic skill as standardly conceived.

Thus Davidson takes issue with the traditional philosophical or linguistic notion of communication which attributes an interpreter's ability to understand novel
utterances to the interpreter's knowledge of conventional rules or regularities. As noted above, Davidson defines first meaning in terms of the first intention in a series of self-referring intentions. This definition is sufficiently ambiguous to allow first meaning to apply to any symbol that is made with a specific intention. Consequently, there is nothing in Davidson's definition of first meaning thus far that limits it to linguistic meaning. Davidson proceeds to pose the question: what would be required to constrain first meaning to linguistic meaning?

It has traditionally been thought, Davidson states, that literal or first meaning is "systematic, shared, and prepared". Though Davidson accepts that first meaning is both systematic and shared he takes issue with the further claim that it must be prepared, that is to say learned in advance of the speech occasion.

A systematic relation between a speaker's words is necessary, Davidson maintains, in order for a speaker to be interpretable. An interpreter is able to understand a speaker's utterance only if she can discern both the semantic properties of the parts of a speaker's utterance and the systematic relation between these parts. In order to discern the systematic relationship between the semantic properties of a speaker's utterance an interpreter must understand the conditions under which the speaker's utterance would be true. Consequently, to be able to understand novel utterances an
interpreter must know, either explicitly or implicitly, the truth conditions of all possible sentences that a speaker might utter.

Davidson maintains that the appropriate model for a theory of truth, in this context, is a definition of truth similar to Tarski's. As was noted in the previous chapter, Tarski has a disquotational theory of truth. According to Tarski's theory, "The flower is blooming" is true if and only if the flower is blooming. Tarski's theory is appropriate, Davidson maintains, because it provides a characterization of truth conditions that is based on an analysis of a finite number of utterances but which is applicable to any potential utterance. An interpreter who understands the disquotational aspect of Tarski's theory, either explicitly or implicitly, can apply this knowledge to any given sentence. Understanding the systematic relationship between the semantic properties of a sentence also requires that an interpreter understand such axioms as a conjunction is true if an only if its conjuncts are true.

Davidson, as noted above, further accepts the claim that literal meaning is shared by speakers and interpreters. What is shared, according to Davidson, is a systematic method of interpretation between the speaker and the interpreter. If communication is successful both the speaker and the interpreter will use the same or equivalent theories. The speaker's theory concerns how she believes the interpreter
will interpret her utterances while the interpreter's theory concerns how he believes the speaker intends to be interpreted. If the meaning that the interpreter ascribes to the speaker's words is the same as the meaning the speaker intends to convey with her utterance then these theories will, in fact, be the same or equivalent.

Though Davidson accepts that first meaning is systematic and shared, as already stated, he rejects the further suggestion that first meaning is governed by conventions or regularities. This claim, he argues, is inconsistent with the existence of malapropisms. To reiterate, there is no rule that can explain when to attribute the conventional meaning to a speaker's words and when to ignore it in favour of an unconventional interpretation. And there is no rule to explain what the unconventional interpretation should be. As a result, the successful interpretation of malapropisms cannot be explained in terms of a rule, regularity, or convention learned prior to the occasion of utterance. First meaning, Davidson concludes, need not be conventional in character.

A further empirical question may be raised regarding how frequently we do, in fact, communicate without relying on convention. According to Davidson, this is a ubiquitous phenomenon. In order to understand the speech of others we must, he maintains, be able to adapt our theories of interpretation to the idiosyncrasies of particular speakers. What proper names, for example, will have meaning and the
meaning that they will have will largely vary from person to
person. Members of the same family, work, or social group
will share the same theories of interpretation for particular
names, but variation in the members of such groups, through
the group expanding or decreasing in some manner, will require
that we adapt our theories of interpretation.

The meaning, Davidson maintains, that we attribute to a
speaker's words, whether it is a proper name, common noun,
etc., depends on how we believe he intends to be interpreted.
Even in standard cases, Davidson maintains, we will attribute
the conventional meaning of words to a speaker's utterance
only if we assume this is how the speaker intends to be
interpreted. As a result, it is insufficient merely to apply
the conventional meaning to a speaker's words as convention
will always be secondary to intention.

Due to the importance of the speaker's intention in
determining the meaning of her words both the meaning that we
ascribe to particular words and the meaning that we intend
particular words to have may vary depending on the speech
occasion. At the outset of an occasion of utterance both the
speaker and the hearer, Davidson maintains, have a theory of
interpretation which he terms the prior theory. The speaker's
prior theory, then, consists of how she believes the hearer is
prepared to interpret her utterances. In a parallel manner,
the hearer's prior theory consists of how he believes the
speaker intends to be interpreted. The speaker won't
necessarily speak in accordance with her prior theory as, in the course of utterance, she may attempt to have the hearer modify his prior theory. As a result, a hearer may be required to adjust the meanings that he ascribes to particular words during the course of the speaker's utterance.

According to Davidson, it is the passing theory, rather than the prior theory, that is essential to communication. For both the speaker and the hearer, the passing theory includes any nonstandard uses of words, that is, any meanings that are attributed to specific words for the occasion of utterance only. While the speaker's passing theory consists of the theory she intends the hearer to use in interpreting her utterance, the hearer's passing theory consists of how he actually interprets the utterance. Communication is successful, Davidson argues, if the passing theories of the speaker and the hearer coincide.

Davidson maintains that neither prior nor passing theories are language-like as they cannot be acquired or mastered by learning a set of rules, regularities, and conventions. It is clear that a passing theory could not constitute a language as, by definition, it consists of words and meanings agreed upon only for a particular occasion of utterance. Davidson concedes that a prior theory, specifically one that we bring to a first conversation, may conform more obviously to our sense of what a natural language is. Having said this, however, he proceeds to argue that
prior theories need not be shared. This is apparent, he
states, because we will tend to have different prior theories
for different people. Even superficial considerations such as
age, dress, and occupation may influence the formation of a
prior theory. Davidson maintains, then, that our speech will
always be relative to a particular speaker on a particular
occasion. As a result, successful communication, he argues,
does not depend upon the adherence to either rules or
regularities.

It may appear that Davidson is too quick to dismiss the
importance of convention for communication. Michael Dummett,
in his criticism of "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", has
attempted to argue that this is the case. However, what
becomes most apparent in examining Dummett's criticisms is
that he misrepresents much of Davidson's theory.

Davidson rejects a philosophical or linguistic notion of
language, that is, language that is based on rules and
regularities and is learned prior to the speech occasion. At
no point does he deny that conventional notions of meaning
exist and that we often rely on these conventional meanings in
communication. What he clearly states, however, is that such
conventions are unnecessary for communication.

Consequently, to address Davidson's conclusion directly
Dummett must argue that convention is necessary for
communication. But, rather than attempting to do so, Dummett
simply asserts that we rarely deviate from the conventional
use of words when we communicate and, as a result, some concept of language is necessary to explain this phenomenon. According to Dummett, we must appeal to the concept of language in order to explain certain empirical facts.

For example, he questions how we can describe the distinction between an English speaker and someone who speaks only Yoruba without reference to language. All that is required to explain such distinctions, however, is an appeal to convention. Specifically, the standard word or sound that is associated with a particular meaning in English will be different from the standard word or sound that is associated with the same or similar meaning in Yoruba. Though it may be convenient to use the term "language" to associate such groups, it does not follow from this that any particular notion of language must be invoked.

Dummett further criticizes Davidson for dismissing the distinction between correct and incorrect usage. It is only because Davidson presents an artificial speech situation, Dummett argues, that the significance of correct usage does not become apparent. According to Davidson's model, Dummett maintains, there is no interaction between the speaker and the hearer. The hearer can neither ask the speaker to clarify or explain what he is saying nor correct the speaker's word usage. As a result, Dummett argues, Davidson fails to acknowledge the fact that we hold ourselves responsible to the conventional use of words. This is apparent, Dummett
maintains, from our willingness to conform to conventional usage when we realize that we have deviated from it.

Dummett's claim raises the following questions: do we, in fact, hold ourselves responsible to convention and, if so, what does this prove? In response to Dummett's criticisms, Davidson argues that there is no evidence to support Dummett's claim that we hold ourselves responsible to convention. A willingness to conform to convention may be based solely on our desire to facilitate communication. I may speak in a conventional manner but not feel an obligation or responsibility to do so.

Moreover, even if we did feel an obligation to speak in a conventional manner this does not prove that convention is actually necessary for communication. This may reflect only a belief that convention is important or necessary for communication. However, the belief that this is the case does not support the claim that this is, in fact, the case. This may be an interesting psychological fact but it does not fundamentally challenge Davidson's claim that convention is not necessary for communication.

Furthermore, the basis for Dummett's criticism, that is, the claim that Davidson presents an artificial speech situation, is unfounded. In presenting his prior and passing theories, Davidson refers to the speaker and the hearer and analyses these roles relative to a specific occasion of utterance. If we consider only a particular phrase it hardly
seems artificial to assume that the speaker and the hearer do not exchange roles. If we consider an entire conversation as our standard, however, there is no reason to assume that the roles of speaker and hearer are not interchanged throughout the speech occasion. There is nothing in Davidson's description of prior and passing theories that excludes the possibility that these roles are exchanged during the course of a conversation.

Dummett is concerned, however, not only with error but also with the significance of a hearer asking a speaker to clarify or elaborate on her comments. But it is not apparent how this is relevant to Davidson's theory. Davidson states that he is interested in cases in which the speaker "gets away with it" (440). This includes only those cases in which the hearer understands the speaker despite the fact that the hearer could not understand the speaker in virtue of something learned prior to the speech occasion. Consequently, if the hearer does not understand the speaker then the speaker hasn't "[gotten] away with it" (440).

Perhaps a hearer could partially understand the speaker and have to confirm that her interpretation was the intended interpretation. This may show that deviation from convention makes communication more difficult than adherence to convention. However, even in cases where a speaker is relying on the conventional use of words, the hearer may have to elicit clarification of the speaker's intent. We often have
to confirm that a speaker intends to convey the conventional meaning of her words when this interpretation makes the utterance sound odd or strange sounding.

As a result, it is not readily apparent how such interaction between speaker and hearer is relevant to Davidson's argument. There is nothing in his theoretical definition of prior and passing theories, then, that excludes the possibility of this type of interaction. Consequently, as these cases are of little interest to his argument it would have been a distraction to have included them.

In a general sense Dummett is emphasizing the significance of the social element of communication. Consistent with this, he emphasizes the importance of the division of linguistic labour and criticizes Davidson for ignoring it. According to the division of linguistic labour, we often use words which we have only a partial knowledge of and, in so doing, we rely on the relevant experts in our community to determine the extension of our words. Dummett and others argue that, in these contexts, the speaker's words have a determinate meaning and extension even though the speaker does not have sufficient knowledge to fix the meaning on her own.

Responding to this claim, Davidson maintains that he does not question that we often use words without having a determinate concept of what the meaning of the word is. In so doing, we may, as Dummett claims, be relying on the "experts"
in our linguistic community to fix the meaning of our term. But this, Davidson argues, proves only that we believe that experts exist but not that they, in fact, do. The fact that we believe that the extension of our words is fixed by the conventional or expert use of particular terms does not prove that this is the case. In situations in which the speaker does not have sufficient knowledge to fix the meaning of her words, Davidson argues, the meaning remains indeterminate.

Davidson wants to maintain a connection between the speaker's behaviour and the meaning of a speaker's words. If a speaker is unaware of the meaning of her words, as would be the case if meaning were determined by the experts in a linguistic community, then this meaning cannot potentially be reflected in the speaker's behaviour. As noted above, Davidson explains communication in terms of prior and passing theories. What is necessary for communication, Davidson argues, is not convention, but rather, the convergence of passing theories. When passing theories coincide the meaning that the speaker intends the hearer to ascribe to his words coincides with the meaning that the interpreter does, in fact, ascribe to the speaker's words. In such a manner the interpreter forms an accurate theory regarding how the speaker intends to be interpreted. Dummett argues, however, that this picture of communication is flawed because such second-order theories, that is theories about other theories, are operational only in exceptional cases and cannot be the norm.
Dummett includes, amongst these exceptions, cases in which a third party overhears a conversation. According to Dummett, in order for the third party or eavesdropper to form an accurate picture of what is going on, she must take into consideration both what the speaker intends to convey and how the hearer understands what the speaker says. There is no reason, however, to assume that the participants in a conversation will be any better acquainted with one another than a third party listening to their conversation. As a result, it is not apparent why considerations of intent and understanding are any less necessary for the participants in the conversation than they are for the eavesdropper.

Furthermore, having acknowledged the importance of such considerations it is just a short step to conceding that there will be certain cases in which the consideration of intention overrides knowledge of convention. How is an eavesdropper able to understand a speaker's garbled words, malapropism, or slip of the tongue? What emphasis should the eavesdropper place on the speaker's intentions in order to form an accurate picture of the conversation? All that Davidson requires is one case in which convention or shared practices are not necessary to explaining how successful communication occurs. That is, a case in which the eavesdropper disregards the conventional meaning in favour of the intended interpretation.

Dummett must provide a relevant distinction to explain why considerations of intent and understanding are necessary
for the eavesdropper and not necessary for the participants in the conversation. However, the distinction that Dummett provides is a theoretical rather than a practical one. Because the eavesdropper is not a participant in the conversation, Dummett argues, he can rely on second-order theories in order to interpret the conversation. According to Davidson's definition of prior and passing theories, Dummett argues, if the participants in the conversation were to speak and interpret each other with reference to such theories an infinite regress would arise.

As noted above, Davidson maintains that the speaker's prior theory consists of how she believes the hearer is prepared to interpret her utterances. Similarly, the hearer's prior theory consists of how he believes the speaker intends her utterances to be interpreted. Consequently, Dummett argues, the threat of an infinite regress arises. That is, the hearer(H) forms his prior theory based on how he believes the speaker(S) wants to be interpreted. If the hearer takes into consideration the fact that the speaker wants to be interpreted based on how he(H) is prepared to understand her(S), the hearer may then modify his prior theory accordingly. This returns us to the initial consideration that the hearer's prior theory is supposed to be constituted by how he believes the speaker wants to be interpreted, and so on ad infinitum.

In response, Davidson states in "The Social Aspect of
Language" that although he described the speaker and hearer as having theories this was merely an explanatory device. The point is not that they actually have a theory, Davidson maintains, but rather that they communicate in accordance with a theory. It is clear that the situation described in the preceding paragraph would not arise if the speaker and hearer did not have explicit knowledge of the theory. Though they will have knowledge of the meanings of particular words, for example, deviant uses that are agreed upon for the occasion of utterance only, they do not have knowledge of the framework of the prior and passing theories. As a result, there is no theoretical reason why the eavesdropper can have a second-order theory while the participants in the conversation cannot.

Dummett, then, accuses Davidson of being dismissive with respect to the significance of the correct versus incorrect use of words. Describing this distinction as shallow, Davidson states that he wants to preserve a deeper notion of what words mean in particular contexts. Dummett incorrectly believes that this deeper distinction is between, "the speaker's long-range theory (prior theory) and his short-range theory", between, "how he wants the hearer usually to understand certain words that he has uttered, and how he wants him to understand that particular utterance of them"(461).

There are two substantial errors reflected in Dummett's analysis. Dummett claims that the prior/passing distinction
is confusing and that these theories are more appropriately dubbed, the long-range and the short-range theory. Though a passing theory is necessarily short-range a prior theory need not be long-range. It is prior only in the sense of being prior to the occasion of utterance. Secondly, he misrepresents the deeper distinction that Davidson seeks.

In order for this deeper distinction to be between how a speaker usually wants to be understood and how, on this occasion, the speaker wants to be understood, there must be a standard for what is usual. As a result, Dummett's analysis of the distinction depends on his mistaken claim that prior theories are long-standing. In the absence of a long-standing prior theory there is no standard for what is usual and, consequently, no basis for comparison.

The distinction that Davidson is, in fact, interested in is the distinction between literal or first meaning and speaker meaning. To reiterate, he describes the difference between first meaning and speaker meaning as the difference between what a speaker's words mean and what she means by them. Dummett's failure to understand the relevant distinction is further apparent in his criticism of Davidson's reference to Keith Donnellan. Donnellan's example, Dummett argues, does not exhibit a distinction between what a speaker means and what his words mean. However, Dummett analyses Donnellan's example relative to his erroneous interpretation of Davidson's distinction and consequently fails to grasp its
significance.

According to Donnellan, the truth value of a sentence that contains a description that is used referentially won't necessarily affect the success of the speaker's reference. For example, Jones can refer to someone by saying, "Smith's murderer is insane" if the person he is referring to is, in fact, insane, even if that person did not murder Smith. In this manner, Jones can use a false sentence to say something true.

Davidson maintains that this is not an example of words changing their meaning or reference but it is, he argues, a clear example of the distinction between first meaning and speaker meaning. In order for a speaker's words to convey a particular meaning the speaker must not only have the intention that this meaning be conveyed, Davidson maintains, he must also reasonably expect that his listener is ready to interpret him in the intended manner. Jones, however, has no intention of changing the meaning of the utterance, "Smith's murderer is insane". Jones intends to convey the conventional meaning of the word "murderer"; he is simply mistaken in his belief that the man he is referring to is Smith's murderer.

Jones can be contrasted to Humpty Dumpty's character in Alice in Wonderland when he makes the bold claim that his words mean exactly what he intends them to mean. Humpty Dumpty says that his words "There's glory for you" mean there's a nice knockdown argument. Humpty Dumpty fails,
however, to provide Alice with clues to the unconventional meaning that he intends to convey. As a result, his words, according to both Davidson and Donnellan, do not mean what he says they mean.

In analysing this example, Donnellan uses the same phrase, "There's glory for you", with the intention that his utterance will have the meaning there's a nice knockdown argument. The relevant difference between Humpty Dumpty's use of the phrase and Donnellan's is that, in the course of his analysis, Donnellan provides sufficient information to make his intended meaning apparent to the interpreter. Consequently, Donnellan's utterance, "There's glory for you" means there's a nice knockdown argument while Humpty Dumpty's utterance does not.

Donnellan uses his discussion of the Humpty Dumpty example to support his claim that Jones can say something true when he says "Smith's murderer is insane" if the man that he is referring to is insane even if this man did not, in fact, murder Smith. However, Donnellan's unconventional use of the phrase "There's glory for you" supports his claims regarding Jones' utterance of this sentence, Davidson maintains, only if this latter utterance is an example of words changing their meaning or reference. As has already been stated, according to Davidson it is not. What must be made clear is what is required for words to change their meaning or reference. The difference between the Jones case and Donnellan's sentence
There's glory for you", Davidson argues, is that in the latter case Donnellan changes the meaning of the utterance "There's glory for you" by providing clues to its new meaning, whereas, Jones has no intention of changing the meaning of his words. Jones is successfully able to refer using a sentence which is, in fact, false because he is using the phrase "Smith's murderer" in a purely referential manner.

According to Dummett, if Jones does not mean anything unusual by his words then this example cannot exhibit a distinction between what Jones words mean(first meaning) and what Jones does with those words(speaker meaning). In contrast to Dummett's claim, however, it is because this example has nothing to do with words changing their meaning that there is a clear discrepancy between first meaning and speaker meaning.

If Jones had intended to attribute an unusual meaning to his words, then his sentence, "Smith's murderer is insane" need not have been false. For example, assume that the man that Jones believes murdered Smith is standing in the corner of the room within Jones' visual field. If Jones has provided the appropriate clues to his intended meaning, "Smith's murderer" could then have the nonstandard meaning of, the man in the corner, without any of the conventional connotations of murder or any association with Smith. It would not be an empirical question as to whether the man in the corner is Smith's murderer, but rather, it would be the case that
"Smith's murderer" means the man in the corner. Consequently, the literal or first meaning of this utterance would simply be the man in the corner is insane.

However, as noted above, Jones has successfully referred via the usual meaning of the words. According to Davidson, this has to do with the difference between what a speaker's words mean or refer to and what a speaker wants to do with these words. In this case, the reference of the words, "Smith's murderer" is the individual who actually murdered Smith. However, Jones intends to refer to the man who he incorrectly believes murdered Smith. As a result, Jones' utterance, "Smith's murderer", refers, in this instance, to the man Jones believes murdered Smith. Because he doesn't have the intention to change the meaning of the words "Smith's murderer", there is a discrepancy between what Jones' words mean and what he does with those words.

The Humpty Dumpty example is significant, however, because it emphasizes the need for a speaker to be interpretable in order for his words to have meaning. Davidson has stated that in order for communication to succeed the passing theories of the speaker and hearer must coincide. Humpty Dumpty's utterance "There's glory for you", then, does not mean there is a nice knockdown argument because he has not provided sufficient clues to support this unconventional interpretation. Moreover, as Davidson notes, Humpty Dumpty is entirely aware that he has not provided sufficient clues.
This is apparent when Alice retorts "I don't know what you mean by glory" and Humpty replies by saying, "Of course you don't -'til I tell you"(440).

Before Humpty provides the appropriate clues to his unconventional meaning of this utterance Alice would apply the meaning in her prior theory which would likely be the conventional meaning. In this manner Humpty's passing theory and Alice's passing theory do not coincide. If Humpty were to provide the appropriate clues and if Alice modifies her prior theory accordingly then she will be disposed to interpret Humpty's utterance "There's glory for you" as there's a nice knockdown argument.

Though what is necessary for communication is convergence of passing theories, the speaker's prior theory is relevant in terms of achieving convergence. The speaker's prior theory, her theory about how the hearer is disposed to interpret her utterances, is part of what the speaker has to go on in ensuring that she is interpretable. Humpty Dumpty knows that Alice is not prepared to interpret his utterance of "There's glory for you" as meaning there's a nice knockdown argument. He neglects to provide clues to this unconventional interpretation and, consequently, his utterance does not have that meaning.

However, had Humpty Dumpty encountered someone who he knew was prepared to attribute the unconventional meaning to his utterance, it would be unnecessary for him to provide
clues to this interpretation. When Humpty Dumpty is speaking to Alice his utterance won't be meaningful; however, in the hypothetical case his words would convey the intended meaning. This emphasizes the need for a speaker to tailor his speech to a particular interpreter. The self-referring intentions which determine first meaning must, as a result, be directed towards a particular interpreter.

In contrast to Humpty Dumpty, Donnellan does, in fact, provide the appropriate clues to the unconventional meaning that he wants to convey with the utterance, "There's glory for you". Prior to giving these clues, Davidson maintains, this interpretation of Donnellan's utterance would have been wrong. Consequently, the interpreter will interpret Donnellan's utterance correctly if he or she modifies his or her prior theory only once the appropriate clues have been given.

It is only when the speaker and hearer's passing theories correspond that there is communication and, according to Davidson, meaning. However, the hearer's ability to interpret the speaker accurately is not, Davidson maintains, a sign of her linguistic competence as standardly conceived. According to Davidson, it is simply knowing how to interpret a particular utterance on a particular occasion.

By challenging the claim that language is necessary for communication Davidson also questions the claim that successful communication is a result of linguistic skill. To the extent that we are able to interpret malapropisms, slips
of the tongue, and garbled words etc. we are able to do so, Davidson argues, as a result of intelligence and luck, rather than linguistic skill. There is no set of rules, regularities, or conventions that we can master in preparation for interpreting unconventional utterances. A speaker must speak with a particular interpreter in mind and, similarly, a hearer must interpret with the particular speaker in mind. Consequently, most theories of interpretation, rather than being learned in advance of a speech occasion are, Davidson argues, tailored to a particular occasion of utterance.
CHAPTER 3: APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES

In chapters one and two, we saw how Davidson describes interpretation in his essays "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". At no point in the latter paper does Davidson suggest that the picture of interpretation presented in this essay is intended to be different from the one presented in "Radical Interpretation". Further, in both papers he states that a theory of interpretation may be thought of as a machine which yields an interpretation of given utterances. While in "Radical Interpretation" he defends the claim that Tarski's theory of truth is the appropriate model for such a machine, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" he simply directs the reader to the argument presented in "Radical Interpretation". This, I would argue, suggests that Davidson intends "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" to be part of a coherent, consistent picture of how linguistic meaning is determined.

Yet, there appear to be differences between the conceptions of communication presented in these essays which suggest that these may be separate, irreconcilable pictures. Presumably Davidson would attribute any apparent differences between the pictures of communication presented in these two essays to mere differences of emphasis. However, I will argue that there are real, rather than merely apparent, differences
which make these pictures of communication difficult to reconcile into a coherent whole.

In both "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson attempts to explain how we are able to understand a speaker's utterances. However, in the latter paper he questions not only what is necessary for interpretation but also what is necessary for speech. Whereas, in "Radical Interpretation", Davidson analyses interpretation entirely from the perspective of the interpreter, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" he analyses both the speaker's and the interpreter's role in facilitating communication.

What Davidson rejects, that is, his destructive project, is also far more central to the structure of "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" than the destructive project is in "Radical Interpretation". Though, in "Radical Interpretation", Davidson rejects many alternative suggestions regarding what we could know that would enable us to understand a speaker's utterances, his positive project is not constructed in clear opposition to any particular view. In "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", however, Davidson advances his own explanation by stressing the opposition between his own view and the conventional view which he rejects. There are, as a result, obvious differences between the agendas of each essay. What must be reconcilable, however, are the positive views presented in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice
Derangement of Epitaphs". The question remains, then, are the constructive pictures presented in these essays part of a consistent, coherent view?

Davidson's destructive project in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is to challenge and reject the picture of communication in which meaning is derived from a conventional use of words. Convention, defined as shared rules or regularities, Davidson argues, is not essential for communication. In chapter two, I defended his claim that conventional meanings, which are learned prior to the occasion of utterance and are shared by speakers of a given language, are frequently used for communication but are not, in fact, necessary for communication. What is necessary for communication, Davidson states, cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance. If this is the case then it would appear that our theories of interpretation for a given utterance must be developed during the course of the utterance. Furthermore, if what is necessary for communication cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance then it appears that there is no need to interpret a speaker over an extended period of time in order to understand the speaker's utterances. In contrast, in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson presents an explanation of how, over an extended period of time, we can develop a theory of interpretation for a particular language. It may appear, consequently, that Davidson is inconsistent with respect to
the time period that is required to develop a theory of interpretation.

Davidson does acknowledge, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", that what we know about a particular speaker, prior to the occasion of utterance, is significant with respect to our ability to develop a convergent passing theory to interpret the speaker's utterances. There is, as a result, some knowledge that may be acquired prior to the speech occasion that may be beneficial to interpretation. According to Davidson, however, the knowledge that is relevant to this ability should not be narrowly defined in terms of knowledge of how to interpret particular words or utterances. Knowledge of a speaker's age, occupation, manner of dress, etc., he maintains, may all be relevant to developing a convergent passing theory. This knowledge is so broad, according to Davidson, that, at the end of "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", he concludes that what is required for communication is much like what is required for making one's way in the world in general.

In contrast, in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson appears to have a much more narrow sense of what we can learn that will enable us to understand a speaker's utterances. Furthermore, the description of interpretation in this paper suggests that what is learned is learned over an extended period of time. This is apparent from Davidson's comments regarding the benefits of a well-developed theory of
interpretation. He maintains that we can only ascribe error to a speaker once we already have a fairly well-developed theory of interpretation for the speaker's utterances. Interpretation, he further states, will become progressively easier the more sentences that we have already interpreted. Thus, it is clear that in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson believes that interpretation over time is, if not necessary, at very least beneficial to understanding a speaker's utterances.

As a result, initially it may seem that Davidson is inconsistent with regard to the period of time over which interpretation should occur. It is possible, however, to reconcile the apparent discrepancies between "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" and "Radical Interpretation" on this issue. Though Davidson maintains in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" that what is necessary for interpretation cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance it is also possible that a speaker may be understood only because of something learned prior to the speech occasion.

Consider, for example, Donnellan's discussion of Humpty Dumpty's utterance "There's glory for you". We have already established that Humpty Dumpty's utterance "There's glory for you" cannot mean there's a nice knockdown argument because he has not provided Alice with the appropriate clues to this unconventional interpretation. Conversely, Donnellan's utterance of the phrase "There's glory for you" does have the
meaning there's a nice knockdown argument. This is because Donnellan, in contrast to Humpty Dumpty, has provided the appropriate clues to this interpretation. In order for a speaker's words to convey the intended meaning, then, the speaker must provide clues to the interpreter regarding the intended meaning.

Now, consider a scenario in which an interpreter encounters Donnellan years after he has had a conversation with him regarding Humpty Dumpty's utterance in the manner outlined in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". On this occasion Donnellan, again, uses the phrase "There's glory for you" to mean there's a nice knockdown argument. Donnellan does not provide any more clues to this interpretation, but rather, he assumes that the speaker will remember their earlier conversation and interpret him accordingly. The hearer does recall the clues from the earlier conversation and, consequently, she interprets Donnellan as intended.

The interpreter, therefore, must interpret Donnellan over time in the sense that she must rely on clues from their earlier conversation in order to understand his utterance. Consequently, because a speaker must provide the appropriate clues to his or her intended interpretation this may, in turn, require that interpretation occur over time. This may appear to be inconsistent with Davidson's claim that what is necessary for interpretation cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance. But, we cannot assume, prior to the
occasion of utterance, that a speaker will speak in accordance with past usage. Donnellan, for example, could have provided new clues to a new interpretation of the phrase "There's glory for you" rather than using this phrase to mean there's a nice knockdown argument. Thus the interpreter who successfully understands Donnellan's utterance "There's glory for you" as meaning there's a nice knockdown argument because of the clues that she was given earlier cannot assume, prior to the occasion of utterance, that Donnellan will use this phrase, again, to convey this unconventional meaning. Though the clues that suggest this unconventional interpretation are learned prior to the occasion of utterance, the interpreter must determine, in the course of utterance, how Donnellan intends to use this phrase.

In "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson not only maintains that what is necessary for interpretation cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance, but he further argues that it is unlikely that our theories of interpretation will be shared with other speakers. As noted in the previous chapter, Davidson believes that we tailor both our speech and our theories of interpretation to particular occasions of utterance. If our theories of interpretation are, in fact, geared to particular speakers and occasions of utterance then there is no reason that these theories will be widely shared. We will have different prior theories for different people and, Davidson maintains, different passing theories for
virtually every occasion of utterance.

It is clear in "Radical Interpretation", however, that Davidson assumes that theories of interpretation will be widely shared by both speakers and interpreters. This is apparent from Davidson's description of the three step process which he presents for developing a theory of interpretation for a given language. What is significant about the description of these steps is that Davidson distinguishes the evidence to be analysed in each step in terms of the consensus, or lack thereof, amongst speakers regarding the truth or falsity of various sentences.

The first step, Davidson suggests, is to impose our logic on the language in question by analysing those sentences which are always held true or always held false by members of a linguistic community. Because he is using this method to develop a theory of truth or interpretation, we will be able to identify sentences only in terms of their syntax. As a result, to determine which sentences are always held true or always held false by speakers we must not only interpret speakers over time but we must also assume that they are speaking in accordance with a shared theory of interpretation. If there is consensus over time then it is probable, he assumes, that these sentences express logical or analytic truths. Thus Davidson is attempting to identify first the general nature of utterances, in terms of the consensus regarding their truth or falsity, and then use this
information to assist in determining the meaning of the utterance.

The second step, Davidson maintains, is to analyse those sentences whose truth or falsity depends on observable changes in the environment and the time, place, and conditions of utterance. According to Davidson, the final step is to analyse those sentences on which there is no general consensus regarding their truth or falsity. Presumably these sentences will express beliefs which are not observably or demonstrably true.

In order to identify sentence types in the preceding manner, therefore, we must assume that a linguistic community exists in which members use syntactically similar words to convey the same meaning. Further, we must assume that this usage is relatively constant over time. If this usage is not constant over time then we cannot conclude that particular sentences are always held true by speakers unless we already have a theory which generates an interpretation for the sentences in question. In a similar manner, we cannot determine whether there is consensus regarding a particular belief or claim, prior to developing interpretive theories, if speakers do not use a conventional or shared means of expressing such statements. In the absence of a shared means of expression each individual speaker would, effectively, speak in a different language. Though the same truth may be expressed in each speaker’s language we cannot determine which
utterance expresses the truth in question until we have a theory of interpretation for each language being interpreted. Clearly, there will be consensus amongst rational speakers regarding the truth of logical or analytic truths. The problem will arise in identifying which sentences express these truths.

Unless we can first identify the sentences which express the logical truths of the language in question we cannot analyse and impose our first order logic on a language. Consequently, in order for this first step, as described by Davidson in "Radical Interpretation", to be viable it would seem that speakers must share a common language that is relatively constant over time.

If the meaning that speakers intend their words to have is constant over time then, presumably, it would be possible to learn how to interpret a speaker prior to the occasion of utterance. However, as noted above, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson repeatedly states that what is required for communication cannot be learned prior to the occasion of utterance. We cannot assume that the meaning that speakers intend to convey with particular words will remain constant over time because, according to Davidson, speakers and hearers tailor their theories of interpretation to particular individuals and occasions of utterance. Consistent with this we also cannot assume that theories of interpretation, according to which speakers and hearers speak and interpret,
respectively, will be shared. Because these theories are geared to specific individuals and specific occasions of utterance it is improbable, Davidson maintains, that such theories will be shared.

We have already established that the manner in which Davidson describes the first step of radical interpretation assumes that language use will be both shared and relatively constant over time. However, from the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" it would appear that theories of interpretation will neither be widely shared nor constant over time.

There are two ways in which we may attempt to reconcile these apparent discrepancies between "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". We may first attempt to reconcile the two by addressing the question whether it is, in fact, necessary to assume that meaning is shared and constant over time in order for the first step of radical interpretation to be viable. If the answer to the preceding question is yes, then this first step can be viable under the picture presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" only if we can show that meaning, under this picture of communication, may be shared and constant over time.

With respect to the first question we must consider whether it is possible to determine what class of sentences express logical or analytical truths simply by analysing one speaker over time. If the speaker's language use is constant
over time then we can determine what sentences the speaker always holds true. But, without an already well-developed theory of interpretation, we would be unable to distinguish between sentences which express logical or analytic truths and those which express firmly held beliefs or opinions. If we consider a speaker whose language use is neither widely shared nor constant over time then identifying those sentences which express logical truths appears to be even more difficult.

If these assumptions regarding language use are necessary for making the first step viable then in order to reconcile this with the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" we must prove that it is possible for language to be both shared and relatively constant under this picture. Though Davidson argues that convention is not necessary for communication he does not take issue with the claim that we frequently communicate in accordance with convention. To the extent that we do communicate in accordance with convention, language use will be shared with other conventional speakers.

As a result, it is an empirical rather than a theoretical question regarding whether this first step can be viable under the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". Because Davidson's objective in this latter paper is to prove that convention is unnecessary for communication he emphasizes those cases in which it is not. The question remains, then, if these cases are as ubiquitous
as Davidson suggests can we, in fact, develop a theory of truth for a language along the model that he outlines in "Radical Interpretation"?

As noted above, Davidson has claimed that usually prior theories will not be shared because they are tailored to particular speakers and hearers. The prior theory that I have for Mrs. Malaprop, for example, may include some words which are defined in an unconventional manner. And, if I interpret Mrs. Malaprop correctly, my passing theory must include words which are attributed unconventional meanings. In this manner, both my prior and my passing theory for Mrs. Malaprop may be somewhat different from theories that I adopt for speakers on other occasions. Similarly, another speaker's prior theory for Mrs. Malaprop may be different from my own. It is also safe to assume, I would argue, that many of the phrases or words in both my prior and passing theories will be shared with other speakers and interpreters. When speaking with Mrs. Malaprop I may ascribe an unconventional meaning to the words "derangement" and "epitaph" but much of my prior theory and passing theory may consist of words which are ascribed conventional meanings. In this manner, much of my prior and passing theories may be shared with other speakers.

Davidson, of course, is attempting to challenge the conventional picture of communication so, in keeping with this agenda, he emphasizes the potential differences between speakers. However, all that is required to prove that
convention is unnecessary for communication is one instance in which a speaker is understood despite the fact that she didn't rely on conventional usage. As a result, Davidson can prove that convention is unnecessary for communication without presenting a picture of communication in which language is so dynamic and individualistic that it threatens the viability of the process for developing a theory of truth which he outlines in "Radical Interpretation".

The apparent differences between the manner in which interpretation is described in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" have further implications however. These differences are significant with respect to the issue of recognizing and ascribing speaker error and, more significantly, with respect to the viability of the holistic constraint described in "Radical Interpretation".

Davidson states in "Radical Interpretation" that we can ascribe error to a speaker only once we have a fairly well-developed theory of interpretation. Presumably this is because we can determine error only relative to a background or history of usage. Consider, for example, the scenario described in chapter one in which a speaker states, "It is raining" when water from a sprinkler hits a nearby window. Until we can be confident that we know the appropriate truth conditions for a speaker's utterance we cannot be certain when a speaker is making an error. It is only when we are certain that a speaker does not want his term "rain" to apply to water
from sprinklers that we can ascribe error when he does so.

However, in order for the historical use of a term to be relevant to whether a speaker is using the term correctly we must first determine that the speaker intends to use her words either in a conventional manner or in a manner consistent with her history of use. It appears, therefore, that in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson maintains that we cannot ascribe error to a speaker unless we know the history of the speaker's use of a particular term and we also know that the speaker is intending to use this term in a manner consistent with this history. However, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson maintains that we cannot assume that speakers are speaking in accordance either with convention or their own history of usage. This latter point is made when Davidson states that we cannot infer from a past occasion of utterance that a speaker will use the same theory of interpretation to guide her current utterances. As a result, it may appear difficult, if not impossible, to ascribe error under the picture presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs".

Although error may, of course, occur, it is recognizing and determining the exact nature of the error that seems problematic. It is clear from his definition of first meaning that, according to Davidson, speakers must speak with the intention of being understood. This was apparent in the Humpty Dumpty example in which Humpty's words did not mean what he said they meant because he had not provided the
appropriate clues to this unconventional meaning. Speakers, Davidson argues, are supposed to facilitate understanding by providing clues to the intended meaning of words which are used in an unconventional manner or in a manner inconsistent with their past usage. It is possible, in the preceding example, then, that a speaker who utters the phrase, "It is raining" when water from a sprinkler hits the window intends to use the term "rain" in an unconventional manner. Given this possibility there are two types of error that the speaker may commit. The speaker may have erred by failing to provide the appropriate clues to this unconventional interpretation or, alternatively, the speaker may have intended to use his words in a conventional manner but he has simply made an empirical error.

Thus given the picture of communication described in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" ascribing error may, in certain circumstances, be impossible. If the speaker intends to use a term in an unconventional manner but, at the same time, makes an empirical error then it may be impossible to construct a convergent passing theory and, hence, to ascribe error. This would be comparable to a situation in which we do not have a well-developed theory of interpretation for a speaker and so cannot attribute error because we cannot determine the meaning of a speaker's words. It is apparent, therefore, that history of usage is significant with respect to our ability to recognize or ascribe error to a speaker.
However, the need for the speaker to provide clues to her intended interpretation may also enable an interpreter to recognize an error on the part of the speaker. It may be possible, then, to determine the meaning of a speaker's term and recognize an error in the use of the same term in the course of a given utterance. For example, consider the scenario in which Humpty Dumpty provided clues to the intended meaning of the utterance "There's glory for you" so that the hearer successfully interprets him as meaning there's a nice knockdown argument. Assume that Humpty then uses this phrase, "There's glory for you", to refer to an argument which is, in fact, fallacious. Because Humpty Dumpty has provided the appropriate clues to his intended interpretation the hearer knows that Humpty's utterance means there's a nice knockdown argument. Assuming that the hearer also knows that the argument to which Humpty refers is fallacious, the hearer is able to ascribe error in the appropriate manner. Though interpretation over a considerable period of time and a well-developed theory of interpretation may make it easier to ascribe error to a speaker they are not, strictly speaking, necessary.

Davidson's emphasis in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" on interpretation during the course of an utterance, rather than over an extended period of time, also appears to be problematic with respect to the viability of the holistic constraint that he introduces in "Radical Interpretation". We
established in chapter one that there is no guarantee that individual T-sentences will yield interpretations of given sentences. Davidson maintains, however, that if T-sentences are constrained in a holistic manner they will yield interpretations. The holistic constraint requires that the interpretation of words that comprise a given utterance must "fit" in an optimal manner with the interpretations of these words in other utterances. In addition, optimal fit must also be sensitive to the logical relations between words. Davidson proposes, then, that if we impose a holistic constraint on the T-sentences the meaning that we ascribe to particular utterances will be constrained by the relation between the utterance in question and other utterances. For example, if we interpret the utterances "Snow is cold" and "It snows in winter" holistically then the meanings that we ascribe to "cold", "winter", and "snow" must be related in the appropriate manner. In order for this constraint to be effective, consequently, the words which appear in utterances which are being interpreted must also appear in other utterances in a given set of interpreted sentences.

This appears to be unproblematic with respect to the explanation of interpretation given in "Radical Interpretation". Because a theory of truth for a given language is developed over time, there will presumably be a considerable amount of evidence with which to interpret a language. If we assume, however, that the evidence is what is
available only on an isolated occasion of utterance then there is no assurance that a fit between this evidence and the given T-sentences will serve to constrain the meaning that we ascribe to words in a given utterance. Consider, for example, the evidence that supports an interpretation of the isolated utterance "Snow is cold". If we do not interpret the speaker's language over time then the actual evidence which we consider when ascribing a meaning to this utterance will be limited to what is available during the occasion of utterance. Only if a theory of meaning or interpretation is developed over a substantial period of time will there be a significant body of actual evidence and a large number of T-sentences. Presumably, the greater the pool of evidence the more likely that the fit between available evidence and T-sentences will serve as a constraint on the meaning that is ascribed to particular words or utterances.

As a result, it is not apparent how the holistic constraint can be effective under the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". If the words that we use to convey particular meanings change depending on who we are speaking with and when we are speaking, it is not clear that there would necessarily be any benefit to interpretation over time. If language does not remain relatively constant over time then the only benefit that can be derived from interpreting a speaker over time is the benefit of being in a position to observe any clues regarding
the direction and manner in which the language is changing.

Though a hearer may have only a limited pool of actual evidence regarding the meaning of a speaker's words there will, presumably, be significant potential evidence at any given time. For example, a speaker may utter the sentence "snow is cold" under a particular set of conditions on a given occasion. Though the only actual evidence will be the particular conditions which prompted the given utterance there will be significant potential evidence. A variety of potential situations in which both the term "snow" and "cold" and related terms could be used would, for example, be part of this potential evidence. If it is potential, rather than actual, evidence that is to be considered, then the actual time over which interpretation occurs is irrelevant to the viability of the holistic constraint. This would then allow for the holistic constraint to be effective under the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs".

Whether Davidson intends the holistic constraint to apply to actual evidence or to potential evidence remains uncertain. The larger context in which Davidson introduces the holistic constraint suggests that Davidson intends it to be a practical device that is to be used to analyse actual evidence. At the outset of "Radical Interpretation" Davidson states that he is looking for a possible explanation of what we could know that would enable us to interpret other people's utterances.
Clearly, a finite mind cannot determine the optimal fit between an infinite number of T-sentences and all potential evidence. Thus, in order for the holistic constraint to be a practical tool it would seem that the constraint should apply to actual evidence only.

At the end of "Radical Interpretation" there are further suggestions that Davidson intends the holistic constraint to be a practical tool. In this portion of the essay Davidson addresses the question whether T-sentences can, in fact, yield interpretations of given utterances. Before discussing his own proposal, however, he first rejects several suggestions of how T-sentences could be supplemented so that they may yield interpretations. This discussion is significant because the manner in which Davidson rejects these proposals suggests that he is looking for a practical tool that will assist in interpretation. Firstly, Davidson rejects the suggestion that T-sentences will yield interpretations if we provide a canonical proof of the T-sentences. This suggestion fails, according to Davidson, not because we can't provide such a proof but because it would not reveal anything more about meaning. As he states, "in fact we would know no more than before about how to interpret"("Radical" 325-6). Secondly, Davidson rejects the suggestion that we can interpret a sentence provided we know a correct theory of truth that deals with the language of the sentence. He rejects this proposal for the same reason as the previous suggestion. This
knowledge, Davidson maintains, won't be of any assistance with respect to our ability to interpret sentences. Thus the manner in which Davidson rejects these proposals suggests that he is looking for something which we can use as a practical tool to assist in interpretation.

If we more narrowly construe the context surrounding Davidson's introduction of the holistic constraint, however, it appears that he intends it to be a theoretical rather than a practical device. In order to fulfill the holistic constraint, Davidson states, the "totality of T-sentences...should optimally fit evidence about sentences held true by native speakers"("Radical" 326). What remains ambiguous is whether "totality" refers to the actual T-sentences which are being interpreted or the potential T-sentences and, similarly, whether "evidence" refers to actual or potential evidence. Because the total potential number of T-sentences for a given language is infinite we could not assess a fit between the totality of T-sentences, so defined, and potential evidence.

Shortly after defining the holistic constraint Davidson notes the similarity between his holism and Tarski's. Though the similarity between the two are clear, Tarski, in contrast to Davidson, is unambiguous with respect to the exact nature of his holism. Tarski attempts to use a holistic constraint to yield a definition of truth. If the holistic constraint can elicit all potential sentences to which the predicate "is
true" will apply then Tarski will, effectively, have a
definition of truth. But, in order to yield a definition of
truth in this manner Tarski's holism must apply to all
potential T-sentences for a given language. This is
significant because Davidson notes the similarity between his
holistic constraint and Tarski's but does not draw any
distinction between the two. Because it is clearly necessary
that Tarski's holistic constraint apply to all potential T-
sentences it may be concluded that Davidson intends his holism
to apply to potential utterances as well.

Given this ambiguity it is difficult to determine what
Davidson intends his holistic constraint to apply to. If it
is interpreted as a theoretical device then the holistic
constraint is viable under the picture of communication
presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". The holistic
constraint, then, will be something which, in a sense,
constrains what the appropriate interpretation is. There will
be a fact of the matter regarding how well the potential
evidence fits with the totality of T-sentences, but we cannot
be aware of all potential evidence and, consequently, we can't
assess the optimal fit between potential evidence and T-
sentences.

Alternatively, if the holistic constraint is intended to
be a practical device then what deems an interpretation to be
appropriate will be the fit between actual evidence and T-
sentences. It may be argued, however, that the holistic
constraint can be both a practical and theoretical device. We may interpret utterances based on the manner in which particular ascribed meanings relate to other utterances and, in this sense, our interpretations will be constrained by this holistic approach. In the same manner, whether a T-sentence in fact yields an interpretation of a given utterance will depend on whether the T-sentence optimally fits with all actual and potential evidence. The two interpretations are not incompatible with one another. This would allow the holistic constraint to be viable under the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" though the extent to which it may be used as a practical guide would be limited. In order to present a consistent picture of interpretation Davidson should, I believe, characterize the holistic constraint in this manner. If he defines the holistic constraint in terms of the optimal fit between actual evidence and T-sentences then we must further characterize interpretation in a manner that ensures that sufficient actual evidence will be available. Thus the constraint would be viable only in contexts in which there is a significant amount of accumulated evidence, like the picture of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation", but it would not be viable under the picture presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs".

Though Davidson's agenda in "Radical Interpretation" is to explain what we could know that would enable us to
understand a speaker's utterances, he repeatedly states that it is not necessary that we have explicit knowledge of a theory of interpretation. What is necessary, Davidson maintains, is that we interpret in accordance with an appropriate theory. The holistic constraint, Davidson maintains, will ensure that T-sentences yield interpretations of given utterances and, hence, that his theory will be sufficient for interpretation. However, an optimal fit between actual evidence and T-sentences will not ensure that T-sentences will, in fact, yield interpretations. We must describe the pool of evidence in a manner that ensures that it will be sufficiently large to constrain the interpretations we ascribe to utterances. The greater the pool of evidence the more likely that the fit will constrain the interpretation in the appropriate manner. And, ultimately, what Davidson seeks is a theory which can explain interpretation. Thus it is appropriate to describe the holistic constraint as the optimal fit between potential evidence and all T-sentences. Though, theoretically, the holistic constraint will be viable under the picture of communication in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" it is apparent that we will be more likely to interpret in accordance with the holistic constraint under the model presented in "Radical Interpretation".

Thus the apparent discrepancies between the time period over which interpretation occurs in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" do not result in any
substantive differences between the pictures of interpretation presented in these essays. It is possible for Davidson's model of how to develop a theory of truth to be viable under the picture described in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". Similarly, though it may be beneficial to have a well-developed theory of interpretation in order to ascribe error to a speaker it is not, strictly speaking, necessary. Further, the holistic constraint described in "Radical Interpretation" may be viable under the picture of interpretation presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" if it is interpreted as applying to potential, as well as actual, evidence. Therefore, there is nothing discussed thus far that suggests that the pictures of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" are not part of a consistent, coherent view.
CHAPTER 4: REAL INCONSISTENCIES

The issues discussed in chapter three resulted from apparent inconsistencies in Davidson's position regarding the time period over which theories of interpretation are developed and the degree to which these theories are shared. More substantive differences in his position become clear as we discuss what motivates Davidson's claim that interpretation need not and perhaps cannot occur over a substantial period of time. Because he maintains in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" that speakers tailor their speech to particular interpreters, it is not obvious that there would be a clear benefit to interpreting a speaker over an extended period of time. According to Davidson, it is necessary for speakers to tailor their speech to particular interpreters because interpreters play an active role in creating the meaning of a speaker's words. The interpreter as characterized in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is active in creating the meaning of a speaker's words in a way in which the interpreter is not in "Radical Interpretation". This, I would argue, is both a clear and an irreconcilable difference between "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". I will first characterize the respective roles of the interpreter and I will then argue that these conceptions of the interpreter's role are distinct and irreconcilable.

In "Radical Interpretation" Davidson characterizes
meaning as something that is discovered by the interpreter. This is apparent in his description of the proposed three step process for developing a theory of truth for a language. Davidson maintains that, in order to develop a theory of interpretation, we should first classify and analyse sentences according to the degree of consensus amongst speakers regarding either their truth or falsity. He does not suggest that we should interpret the behaviour of both the speaker and the hearer to determine the meaning of a sentence, or whether the sentence, in fact, has meaning. Rather, he seems to assume that meaning is present and that it will be discovered over time.

This is made further apparent when Davidson suggests that we can allow for intelligible error only once we have a fairly well-developed theory of interpretation. Presumably, error will be intelligible only once we have a theory of interpretation. Davidson does not suggest that error is only present once it can be identified, but rather, he suggests that we can only identify error once we have developed a theory of interpretation. Thus, at no point in "Radical Interpretation" does Davidson suggest that meaning will not be present unless successful communication has occurred.

The picture presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is quite different. As noted above, in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson addresses the question what we could know that would enable us to interpret a speaker's utterances.
In "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson also questions what the ability to interpret a speaker consists in, but he further questions what constitutes the ability to speak to another person. Davidson responds to the latter question by stating that the ability to communicate consists in the ability to make oneself understood. It is fairly uncontentious that communication will succeed only if the speaker is interpreted as he intended. According to Davidson, however, communication is necessary not merely for understanding; it is also necessary for a speaker's words to have meaning.

Linguistic or first meaning is defined by Davidson in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" as the first in a series of self-referring intentions related to a given utterance. According to Davidson, these intentions are the intentions to be understood in a particular manner. They are self-referring in the sense that the speaker's intentions will be fulfilled only when the hearer recognizes these intentions. According to Davidson, these intentions not only identify first meaning, first meaning is present only when these intentions are fulfilled and, hence, when a hearer has understood the speaker as the speaker intended.

Successful communication, Davidson states, occurs when the speaker and hearer construct convergent passing theories. He further maintains that the ability to speak to another person requires the ability to form a convergent passing
theory. Therefore, convergence of passing theories is necessary both for successful communication and for the speaker's utterances to be meaningful.

Linguistic ability, Davidson maintains, is the ability to converge on a passing theory from utterance to utterance. In the same manner in which the ability to interpret depends on the ability to understand, the ability to speak depends on the ability to make oneself understood. Thus Davidson redefines linguistic ability in accordance with his picture of communication.

In the absence of understanding, therefore, the speaker will, in essence, have failed to speak and so her "words" will be nothing but sounds without meaning. Thus in order for meaning to be present, under the picture of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", communication must be successful. By contrast, in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson suggests that, through interpretation, meaning is discovered rather than created. It appears, consequently, that in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" Davidson is presenting two distinct conceptions of linguistic meaning.

As noted above, there are no references made in "Radical Interpretation" to the necessity for the hearer to understand a speaker's utterances in order for the speaker's utterances to be meaningful. Perhaps we could conceive of the "radical interpreter" as a third party who observes the speaker but who
is not the hearer to whom the speaker's utterances are directed. There is no reason given in "Radical Interpretation" for assuming that the interpreter is speaking with the speaker for whom he is developing a theory of meaning. But, presumably, there must be someone to whom the speaker directs her utterances. If we assume, then, that the interpreter is a third party it would be the case that the hearer to whom the speaker's conversation is directed is "active" in creating the meaning of the speaker's words while the radical interpreter is not.

However, not only is this explanation cumbersome, it is difficult to defend the claim that this picture of interpretation is what Davidson intends to convey in "Radical Interpretation". If the speaker's utterances are, in fact, meaningful only if the hearer to whom the utterance is directed understands the speaker as intended, then, it would appear that the interpreter can ascribe meaning only when she is certain that communication has been successful. This is due to the fact that, in the absence of successful communication, meaning will not be present. It may appear that if the radical interpreter has understood the speaker, even if the intended hearer has not, then communication has been successful and the speaker's words will be meaningful. However, Davidson has stated that linguistic ability, specifically the ability to speak, is the ability to construct a convergent passing theory. A speaker's passing theory, he
maintains, is specific both to a particular hearer and an occasion of utterance and, as a result, if a speaker is not understood by the intended hearer then, according to Davidson, her words cannot be meaningful.

Thus if we assume that the radical interpreter is a third party observing the speaker in various speech occasions then the interpreter must analyse not only the speaker but the intended hearer as well. This is necessary in order for the interpreter to assess whether the hearer has understood the utterance as intended and, hence, whether the speaker's words are meaningful. There is no suggestion made, in "Radical Interpretation", that the interpreter should interpret not only the speaker but the hearer as well. Therefore, it is not the case that the "creative" role of the interpreter which is explicitly described in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is merely implicit in "Radical Interpretation".

As noted above, in "Radical Interpretation" Davidson describes interpretation in a manner which suggests that the interpreter discovers, rather than creates, the meaning of a speaker's utterances. In contrast, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", Davidson suggests that the speaker and interpreter, together, create meaning. It is difficult, I have argued, to interpret "Radical Interpretation" in a manner which is consistent with this picture of the interpreter's role. However, the active role which the interpreter plays in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", is problematic for several
reasons. It would be a mistake, as a result, to revise "Radical Interpretation" to accommodate this conception of the interpreter's role.

We have already established that meaning, under the theory of communication presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", will be present only when the intended hearer understands the speaker's utterances. This presents a complicated picture in which people who overhear a conversation may understand the speaker as intended while the hearer to whom the utterance was directed may not and, thus, the utterance won't be meaningful. This raises a further complication regarding the issue of error.

Consider Archie Bunker's utterance "We need a few laughs to break up the monogamy". If we assume that the hearer to whom the utterance is directed ascribes the conventional meaning to the word "monogamy" then it would seem that the hearer has failed to understand the utterance correctly. According to the picture of communication in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", however, the hearer cannot be wrong regarding the meaning of Archie's words because, in the absence of understanding, Archie's words are meaningless.

An interpreter can be wrong in the sense that he ascribes meaning or content to a speaker's utterance when, in fact, the utterance is not meaningful. But he cannot be in error in the sense of ascribing the wrong or incorrect content to a speaker's utterances because this assumes that there is a
content to be described. There seems, as a result, to be a very limited manner in which error can manifest itself with respect to the interpretation of a speaker's utterances. Either the interpretation will reflect the speaker's intention and, hence, the speaker's utterances will be meaningful or, alternatively, the interpretation will be wrong in the sense of ascribing content when there is none.

Thus the picture of communication in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" does not allow for the possibility that an interpreter could be in error about what a speaker's words mean. In the absence of this possibility Davidson's conception of linguistic meaning fails to reflect a fundamental characteristic of our linguistic experience. Therefore, it is not only difficult to reconcile "Radical Interpretation" with this picture of linguistic meaning it is, moreover, undesirable.

We must, consequently, dispense with the idea that successful communication is required for a speaker's words to be meaningful. As already noted, the conception of literal meaning that Davidson presents in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" assumes that meaning will be present only when communication occurs. What is required, then, is an alternative conception of literal meaning that does not require that communication be successful in order for meaning to be present. An appropriate alternative to the definition of literal meaning in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is, I
will argue, presented by John Searle in his essay "Meaning, Communication, and Representation". In examining Searle's argument, the particular nature of the differences between the conceptions of literal meaning in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" becomes clear. It also becomes apparent that the picture of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation" is superior to the one presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs".

In his essay "Meaning, Communication, and Representation" Searle argues that the intention to represent is independent of and necessarily prior to the intention to communicate. Meaning, Searle maintains, is derived not from communication intentions but rather from representation intentions. The fact that the intention to represent and the intention to communicate are distinct has previously gone unnoticed because, Searle states, we have analysed these notions strictly in terms of linguistic acts. However, a distinction between representation and communication intentions becomes apparent, he argues, when we analyse communication in terms of pictures rather than speech acts.

Searle illustrates this point by presenting an example in which a person's car breaks down while driving in Italy. Speaking no Italian and confronted with a mechanic who speaks no English, the driver must find a nonverbal means of communicating with the mechanic. The driver believes that the source of his car trouble is a broken crankshaft and so
attempts to convey this to the mechanic by drawing a picture of a broken crankshaft: The picture represents a particular state of affairs but it does not, according to Searle, communicate that state of affairs. What is communicated is the representation of the state of affairs. The distinction between representation and communication is made apparent, Searle argues, by the necessity for a that clause in the statement of communication. I may be correct in saying that the picture represents my crankshaft as broken but it is incorrect and ungrammatical to say that the picture communicates my crankshaft as broken. It would be correct, however, to state that the picture communicates that my crankshaft is broken.

The distinction between representation and communication is also apparent in the difference between what counts as a success or a failure for each. According to Searle, the intention to represent is the intention that a picture or a series of words or symbols represent a particular state of affairs. In order to determine whether a representation is successful we must, Searle maintains, look to the nonlinguistic facts that are relevant to the representation. Thus the intention to represent a particular state of affairs, he argues, entails that the success of this representation will be determined in part by whether the state of affairs in fact obtains. For example, the truth or falsity of the driver's representation of a broken crankshaft will depend on
whether his crankshaft is, in fact, broken. In contrast, his intention to communicate will be a success if the hearer recognizes his intention to represent.

Communication intentions, Searle argues, are similar to Gricean nonnatural meaning in the sense that they are self-referring. These intentions are self-referring in the sense that they are realized only when the hearer recognizes the speaker's intention to communicate a particular representation. It is apparent, therefore, that the manner in which Searle identifies communication intentions is similar to the manner in which Davidson identifies first meaning in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". My intention to communicate consists, Searle argues, in my intention that you recognize that a picture of a series of words or symbols is a representation of a particular state of affairs. At the point at which you recognize my intention to communicate this representation my intention will be successful.

Thus communication intentions presuppose that there is something to be communicated. Consequently, representation intentions, characterized in this manner, are prior to and independent of communication intentions. They are independent in the sense that one can have the intention to represent without having the further intention to communicate this representation. Further, because communication intentions presuppose that there is a representation to be communicated it is necessarily the case that representation intentions are
prior to communication intentions. According to this model, then, meaning is derived from representation intentions rather than communication intentions.

Though Searle's theory clearly presents an alternative to the conception of linguistic meaning presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" it is, at the same time, compatible with the conception of linguistic meaning presented in "Radical Interpretation". Davidson maintains in "Radical Interpretation" that meaning is constituted by the truth conditions of a given utterance. What an utterance means, according to this picture, is what would be required for the utterance to be true. Searle argues that the intention to represent a particular state of affairs entails that the success of this representation will be determined in part by whether the state of affairs in fact obtains. Therefore, Davidson analyses meaning in terms of nonlinguistic facts and Searle analyses the intention to represent, from which meaning is derived, in terms of nonlinguistic facts.

In "Radical Interpretation" Davidson states that the meaning of my utterance "It is raining" is the conditions under which this utterance is true. Thus "It is raining" will mean it is raining if and only if this utterance is made true by these conditions. Searle, in a similar manner, maintains that my utterance "It is raining" will be a successful representation of the state of affairs in which it is raining if it is, in fact, raining at the time of utterance. Searle's
conception of linguistic meaning, then, is clearly consistent with the conception of linguistic meaning presented in "Radical Interpretation".

In contrast, Searle's notion of linguistic meaning is inconsistent with the notion of linguistic meaning presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs". Davidson states in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" that literal meaning is specified by the first in a series of self-referring intentions associated with a given utterance. In this respect, his conception of literal meaning is, as Davidson acknowledges, much like Grice's notion of nonnatural meaning which is also defined in terms of self-referring intentions. However, Searle argues that the intentions from which meaning are derived, that is representation intentions, will not be self-referring. This is due to the fact that an intention to represent does not have to be recognized by a hearer in order to be fulfilled. It is communication intentions, Searle argues, that are self-referring in this manner. Furthermore, if representation intentions are prior to communication intentions, as Searle maintains, then Davidson's characterization of literal meaning in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" will not identify the intention that determines meaning. Therefore, if we accept Searle's argument that representation intentions are prior to and independent of communication intentions then it appears that Davidson's definition of first meaning in "A Nice Derangement of
Epitaphs" is flawed. The theory of interpretation presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is also flawed as it relies on an inadequate conception of linguistic meaning.

Thus the picture of interpretation presented in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" is problematic for several reasons. Not only does it rely on a flawed conception of linguistic meaning, but also the intentions that Davidson uses to identify literal meaning are not the intentions that are relevant to meaning. One may argue, however, that much of the positive argument in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" appears to be relevant to explaining how a speaker may realize her communication intentions. For example, Davidson's discussion of how a speaker must tailor her speech to her intended hearer is relevant to the speaker's ability to realize her communication intentions. Further, his claim that the speaker and hearer must converge on theories of interpretation in order for communication to succeed is a clear statement of what is necessary in order for a speaker to realize her communication intentions. But, though we may attempt to resurrect the positive aspect of Davidson's argument by characterizing it in this manner, it would be futile as Davidson does not characterize this portion of his argument as a discussion of communication intentions. Rather, as noted above, he maintains that linguistic meaning is derived from communication and, hence, he maintains that this aspect of his positive argument addresses what is necessary in order for
linguistic meaning to be present. But, as Searle argues, meaning is derived from representation intentions rather than communication intentions. Thus Davidson mistakenly assumes that his argument is relevant to what is necessary in order for linguistic meaning to be present when, in fact, it is relevant only to what is necessary in order for a speaker to realize her communication intentions.

However, Davidson's destructive argument in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" remains convincing. In order to prove that convention is unnecessary for communication, all that he must do is cite one example in which communication is successful despite the fact that the speaker and the hearer did not rely on convention in order to communicate. Michael Dummett's criticisms of this argument are therefore unconvincing. But, of the two positive pictures of interpretation it is the picture presented in "Radical Interpretation" that is convincing. Davidson maintains, in this essay, that the meaning of an utterance is the conditions under which the utterance is true. Although he does not deny this claim in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" he maintains, in this latter paper, that a speaker's utterances will be meaningful only when successful communication occurs. Thus the pictures of interpretation presented in "Radical Interpretation" and "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" are not part of a consistent, coherent theory of communication because they rely on different conceptions of linguistic meaning.
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