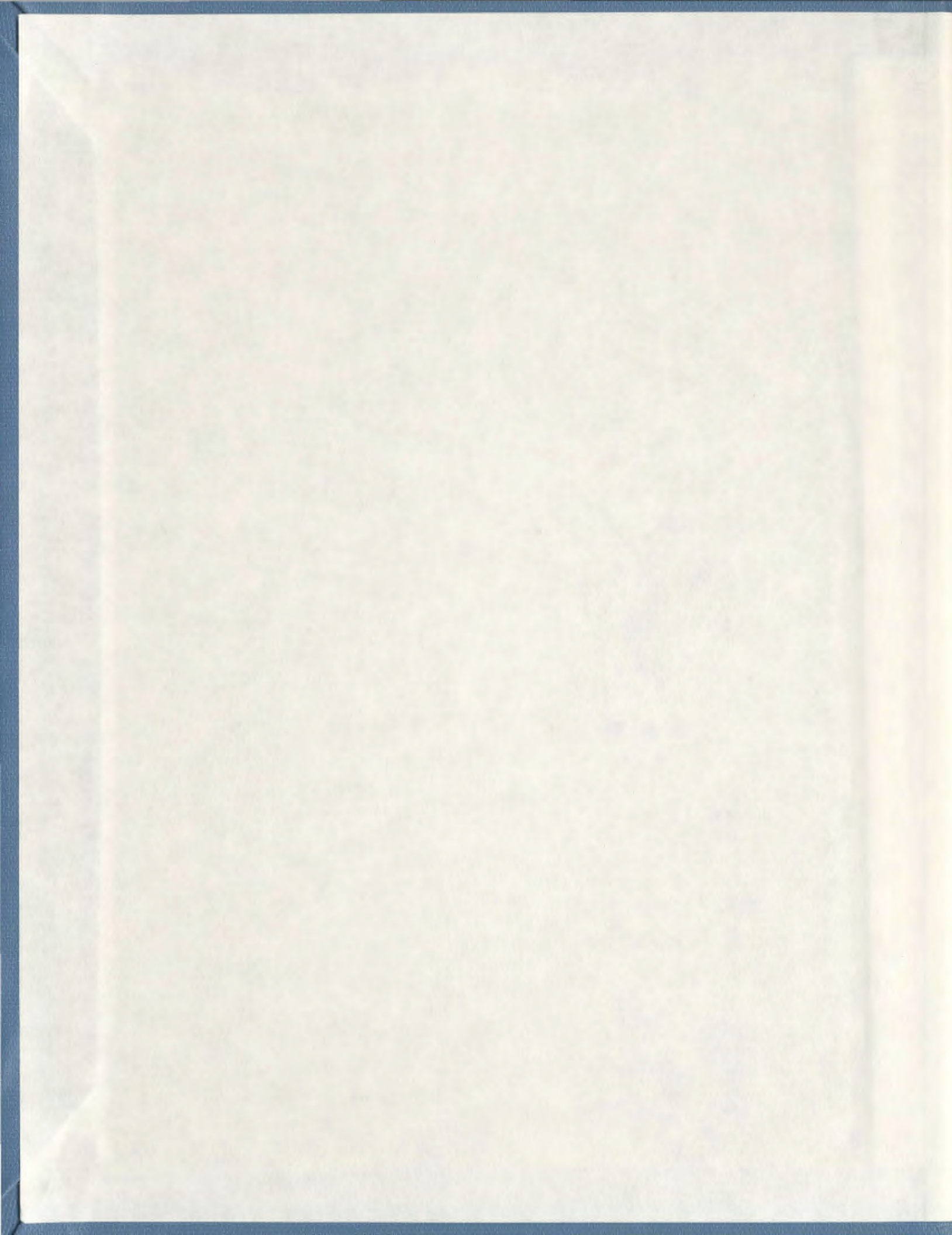# PAUL GRICE AND DONALD DAVIDSON ON THE CONDITIONS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION

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Paul Grice and Donald Davidson on

The Conditions of the Possibility of Communication

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A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the

degree of Master of Arts.

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July 2007

St. John's   Newfoundland

Abstract

I define communication, based on a combination of the work of Donald Davidson and Paul Grice, as the transmission of one party's thoughts to another. What their work shows is that communication by triangulation of the meaning of another's words from two fixed points requires a deep form of alterity or a positive orientation toward the other. The fixed points, particularly in Davidson's theory of Radical Interpretation, are the presumptions that the other party is speaking truths about commonly held states of affairs. This triangulation is only possible, they acknowledge, through a thorough application of the principle of charity or cooperation. In this way, Grice and Davidson are kindred spirits; both authors rely on serious dispositional conditions to allow the transmission of meanings from one individual to another. However, neither author might go far enough in their assessment of what the principle of charity implies. Charity requires a presumption of truth and a presumption of common states of affairs. The presumption of truth seems to depend on a presumption of honesty, while both truth and common states of affairs imply a presumption of common ontology. We do communicate, and if Radical Interpretation is a plausible theory for how we communicate, we must also, in our communication, be governed by the principle of charity. Since we are governed by the principle of charity, we must also, for the purposes of communication, share a common basic ontology and, therein, a sense of alterity that goes far beyond what either author expected from the principle of charity.

Raymond G. Critch,
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador,
July 22, 2007

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank the supportive and nurturing faculty, staff and my fellow students in the philosophy department. Without their appropriately gentle or firm guidance I would not have come to this point relatively unscathed. Singled out for special mention are: Toni Stafford, for her early encouragement and coaching in the art of exegesis; Natalie Oman, for her wit and advice, particularly in the early stages of this project; and Jay Foster, for providing a sympathetic mind, a sharp wit, and excessive confidence in my abilities.

I am also in deep intellectual debt to Walter Okshevsky and Evan Simpson for their comments and requests for clarification on the finished draft of this thesis. Additionally, Dr. Simpson's early encouragement and professional advice were instrumental in the path my philosophical career has taken, which has led to debts that can never be repaid.

Special thanks are overdue to Arthur Sullivan, who supervised not only this dissertation but also my entry into the world of analytic philosophy. It was in classes taught by him and Dr. Simpson that the ideas crystallized here first stirred, and it was under his guidance that it became a genuine kernel worth exploring. For allowing that exploration and preventing my untimely descent off numerous deep ends, I thank him.

Personal thanks are also due to my parents, who, while they might have been initially disturbed at my decision to abandon the practice of law for the study of philosophy, have supported me throughout and been (I think) impressed by the results. I once thanked them for my inherent contradictions, and gladly do so again.

Final thanks, as always, are also due to my wife, Erin Drover. In addition to helping me resolve those inherited contradictions, you have given me the strength to be an optimist in times that, on first glance, do not deserve that hope. Nonetheless, as the conclusion of this paper makes clear, hope remains, and for that you will always have my deepest love and thanks.

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List of Abbreviations

BV – Hilary Putnam, *Brains in a Vat*

CM – Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*

CTN – Gareth Evans, *The Causal Theory of Names*

ET – Donald Davidon, *Epistemology and Truth*

LC – Paul Grice, *Logic and Conversation*

MM – Hilary Putnam, *The Meaning of Meaning*

NDE – Donald Davidson, *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs*

NN – Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*

PI – Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

PNI – John Searle, *Proper Names and Intentionality*

RI – Donald Davidson, *Radical Interpretation*

SCR – John Searle, *The Social Construction of Reality*

SP – Donald Davidson, *The Second Person*

SR – Gottlob Frege, *Sense and Reference*

WO – W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object*

WRPL – Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*

Introduction: The Mental Nature of Communication

This both is and is not a thesis about Grice and Davidson. Taken for itself, it is a thesis about the plausibility, completeness and future directions of the work of these two premier philosophers of communication. It will assess the basic components of their approaches to communication, their interrelationship, and the role charity/cooperation plays in the system I believe develops out of a synthesis of their approaches. However, this thesis is not meant to be only a stand-alone project, and in that sense it is not simply about Grice and Davidson but about communication.[1] While both Grice and Davidson are commonly recognized as philosophers of language, neither claimed to be attempting anything like a comprehensive theory of communication. Nonetheless, a comprehensive and convincing approach to communication can be drawn from a synthesis of their works on language, but which is only possible if one takes a markedly broader view of charity and cooperation than either explicitly requires.

In that spirit, the first thing required is an explanation of what I mean by 'communication.' It may be helpful to begin with a paradigm case of communication. By doing this I can determine the possibilities for its essential characteristics – characteristics without which an act would not be communicative – and examine whether those characteristics are, by themselves or in combination, helpful in determining whether other potentially communicative acts really are or really are not. I naturally begin from what should be the patently obvious statement that what I am doing right now is, if you are reading this and understanding what I am saying, a communicative act. Plato and

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[1] This project is similar in spirit to Habermas's work on the rationality presupposed by communication, but commenting on his project is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this project.

others distinguish between written and oral communication, claiming that the latter was closer to the immortality all philosophers, indeed all people, seek (Letter VII). However, for the purposes of this work it does not seem to matter whether the communication is written or verbal. Indeed, the very fact that the Seventh Letter was likely originally understood when it was read to, or by, Dionysius II seems to prove that communication does not depend on whether it is undertaken in written or verbal form; something communicative transcends the media involved. Whether one kind is superior to the other in no way negates the fact that both are communicative.

What is it, then, that makes what I am doing here a communicative act? For, indeed, what I am doing here seems as much a paradigm case of communication as any. In fact, it seems to accord with Grice's approach quite nicely. Grice's approach to communication uses examples of non-literal communication to illustrate that ordinary speech, which falls outside the ambit of formal symbolic logic, nonetheless follows its own logic (LC 24). Communication, in Grice's sense, seems to be the expression of one's thoughts – using that term in the most general sense – according to a series of maxims that serve as conditions for success. The critical aspect of this formulation is 'expression of one's thoughts.' Before we can conceptually get into discussions of language, reference and other legitimate fly-bottles, Grice points out that the basic core of communication is the expression of some idea, (LC 25) and that is what I am attempting to do here. As will become clear through this essay, I have some mental things which some would call ideas, intuitions, thoughts or concepts almost interchangeably (for simplicity I will continue with thoughts as it seems most general). What I try to do when I communicate is structure those thoughts in such a way as they become comprehensible to another

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person. If humanity was a telepathic species, this might not be necessary. Given that we are not such a species, I must find ways to make manifest my unobservable thoughts.

It is this goal of comprehensibility that is the focus of Grice's *Logic and Conversation*. In this essay Grice generates a framework that will provide some structure through which we can evaluate communicative acts as coherent or incoherent, and the conditions that make them coherent. His emphasis on implicature - when a secondary message is conveyed indirectly through a first as in the example I will discuss in Part I - focuses on a conversational approach to communication. Communication in his example involves two speakers and many utterances but the communication of some information which is not uttered. Out of this structure Grice develops maxims, pursuant to the cooperative principle, for understanding successful communication. These maxims are rules the speaker must follow, or break on occasion, to allow for listeners to judge communicative utterances. Through these maxims we can tell when someone is more verbose than necessary, or says things that seem out of context.[2] We know both how to judge their possible misuse of language and also how to accommodate it to ensure that even unclear thoughts can still be successfully communicated in all their opacity.

However, this conversational formulation seems to point to another necessary part of communication and therefore its own partial inadequacy. While it includes a significant role for the interpreter, Grice's approach to communication is to frame these

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[2] For Grice, we can appreciate context through a shared background, a common set of presumptions and information upon which inferences and conclusions can be based. I will discuss in part two the more extreme consequences of this view when assessed in the case of truly radical interpretative situations; situations wherein there is little in common relative to a conversation among friends.

maxims as though they were to be followed only by the speaker.[3] My writing here is not a communicative act, and certainly not a successful one, unless my thoughts become grasped by your mind as well, the mechanics of which I must leave unexplained at this stage of our conversation (see Part I, Section E). Thus a workable definition of communication upon which we can build an understanding of how it functions, must include all parts of the communicative act rather than one or another side of the coin. If a theory were given that focussed exclusively on interpretation without recognizing the need of a speaker to be conscientious in all the ways Grice requires, that too would be an insufficient theory of communication.

Donald Davidson's approach to communication in *Radical Interpretation* could seem like the flip-side of the Gricean coin, but neither thinker is so narrow as to warrant that characterization. Davidson's emphasis in that work is on what is necessary on the part of a listener to understand the speech of another (RI 125). His reformulation of triangulative theories of truth into a theory of interpretation is, I will argue in Part I, an excellent approach to understanding part of how communication is possible (RI 130). However, the considerations that arise from Davidson's discussion alone would be just as insufficient for a definition of communication because they do not explain how the second party to a communicative act must function. The operation of Radical Interpretation, does not fully assess the role of the speaker in the communicative act. Fortunately, a broader view of the audience's requirements of communication also comes

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[3] As should be apparent by my earlier comments, I make no distinction between written and spoken communication at this point because none is necessary. Whatever medium is used makes no bearing to the communicative nature of the enterprise. Whether I refer to utterances, sentences, phrases or other types of communication, I mean them interchangeably.

to the fore in that work.

In Radical Interpretation, Davidson sets out to understand "what we could know that would enable us to [interpret another's words]?" (RI 125) While the example used is in German, and our interpretation would likely be thoughts that correspond to the English phrase "it's raining," the correct term is interpretation rather than translation. In its broader sense, about which Davidson is asking, whether the words heard are in one language or another need make no difference to the process a listener undergoes in giving them an appropriate meaning. In Radical Interpretation, this process of "giving words an appropriate meaning" is the essence of interpretation, and, Davidson seems to say, it is the most critical aspect of communication (RI 126). However, Davidson recognizes that the mechanics of the triangulative approach to Radical Interpretation is an incomplete theory of what communication requires, leading to my assessment in Part II of the dispositional conditions he presents.[4]

Davidson's short answer to his own question "what knowledge would serve for interpretation?," is that "knowledge of what each meaningful word means" cannot suffice because it relies on the ambiguity of the word 'meaning.' (Ibid.) Among the possible meanings of 'meaning' are three central ones. First, following Wittgenstein, 'meaning'

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[4] My use of mechanical and dispositional elements of communication is meant as a way to make clear the relationship between the parts of interpretation that affect how we use words and grammar and the parts of communication that affect our interaction with other participants. Dispositional elements of a communicative act are those that pertain to the way a speaker orients herself towards her audience. Mechanical elements refers to the parts of speech that make up an utterance. Grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, word choice, gesture, etc., are all elements of the mechanics of speech, while irony, sarcasm, honesty, expositonal, are all dispositional rather than mechanical. For instance, when I say "Good Job, Riggio" the mechanical elements of my speech remain fixed, but differences in tone and inflection can and should lead an interpreter to different conclusions. Spoken with harshness, reflecting a sarcastic disposition, the words should suggest condescending tone, while when spoken with a lighter tone, they can be taken as reflective of sincerity. The mechanical elements of the utterance have not changed, but the dispositional elements have.

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signifies the role the word plays within a language, usually called 'linguistic meaning.' To others, following Russell, the meaning of a term is the state of affairs referred to by the utterance, usually called 'reference'. Meanwhile, to a third group in which Grice primarily falls, 'meaning' refers to some mental content. Each of these views plays out in different ways when used in addressing interpretation. To the first group what a speaker needs to know to make interpretation possible is the first of these three possible meanings. This view holds that awareness of some body of information, usually postulated as vocabulary and rules for use, i.e. syntax and grammar, is necessary and sufficient for communication (see also WRPL and NDE, 468 and 473).

Davidson rejects this position because, in addition to its apparent circularity with language learning, it fails to deal with situations in which there is no shared vocabulary or rules for usage, like in situations of inter-cultural communication or in literary works with novel or unconventional language use. I can know what a 'frood' is simply because I know that it is a faux pas to lose track of one's towel and this word is applied to someone who has not broken this second rule of interplanetary travel.[5] I need no syntactic rules or pre-existing vocabulary to come to this understanding, and consequently communication is possible without them (NDE 465-467). When the second approach to 'meaning' is applied to interpretation, it also comes up short. Knowledge of what a term picks out in the world can give an interpreter a certain insight into what the speaker meant, but it omits far too much that can be conveyed in ordinary communication. Examples of implicature, sarcasm and irony all rely on our ability to tell that what a speaker means is

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[5] The first rule is, naturally, don't panic. See Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. See also for other cases of this, *Jabberwok, A Clockwork Orange*, and any adolescent forced to deal with Shakespeare.

something other than the states of affairs picked out by the words used.

The meanings of 'meaning' presented above nonetheless deal with necessary elements of communication. The first and second I have discussed above. The third, meaning that depends on what a speaker intends to say, corresponds directly to what Grice was discussing in his work on implicature. In continuing the *Hitchhiker's Guide* example, this kind of meaning requires a listener to assesses not only the entity to which Ford Perfect was referring in discussing a 'frood,' which in other circumstances is properly labelled Arthur Dent, but also the background which allows Ford to use that term in that way. Nonetheless, this kind of meaning must, to know whether Ford applied the term correctly or incorrectly (as will be discussed later with reference to 'reference' in Kripke, Searle and Putnam), be combined with linguistic meaning and reference to develop a comprehensive view of meaning for the purposes of communication. This synthesis leads, in my view, to a broader understanding of communication than is reflected in Davidson's work on interpretation, but which also arises in Grice's explanation of how communication obeys a cooperative logic. It leads to an understanding of communication as **the transmission by whatever means of one party's thoughts to another party.**

For the most part, this characterization of communication will remain a basic assumption throughout this work. It is intended to be a broad characterization of communication - as broad of one as is possible while remaining true to the nature of communication. It does, however, lend itself to certain ambiguities that should be clarified as much as possible before venturing into the depths of this argument. The first ambiguity I attempted to cover by using 'by whatever means,' as a qualifier for the actual

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medium of communication. I intend this definition to include linguistic communication and gestures and other symbolic acts; the slap of the glove which precipitates a duel is an obvious example. Any theory of communication that excludes this obvious intent to convey information - specifically disrespect - is inadequate. Secondly, when I say it is "thoughts" that are being communicated I mean this is the broadest sense possible. Ordinarily I agree with Wittgenstein that "anything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly," (Tractatus 4.116) but for the purposes of this argument I will assume that it is possible to communicate both unclear thoughts and the fact that you are unclear about them. In fact, I think that this happens often in the case of art.[6] I am not certain that Beethoven was perfectly clear about the depths of despair when he wrote the *Moonlight Sonata*, nor am I certain that my appreciation of the piece is any more refined than his. I do, however, know that this is the message I receive from this piece, and if that is also what was meant then successful communication will have taken place.

This example presents a second difficulty that presents itself most often in dealing with art as communication but is also possible for other features, and which distinguishes Putnam's famous ant-drawn Churchill as non-communicative (BV, 478-480). My characterization is open to the accusation that it gives too little that can distinguish between types of intention. It could go something like this: "Beethoven could not possibly have been communicating with you because he did not know that anyone

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[6] It would be a fascinating essay all on its own to deal with the ramifications of this approach to communication on aesthetics and philosophy of art. While much of that discussion is unfortunately impossible I will note here that it seems to me that much art, whether musical, visual or theatrical, attempts to convey some thought the author had. If that thought is taken in by the audience, the communication has been successful. Neither party must know that the communication was successful for it to have happened.

would hear his music, let alone you, 200 years in the future. Even if you're right about the *Moonlight Sonata* as an expression of the artist's despair over unrequited love, those thoughts were not meant for you." My response is to question whether it is relevant that the speaker of a communicative act have a particular hearer in mind, or even simply that it is heard. Indeed, would it be less communicative if I were speaking in the wee hours of the morning in my office "to myself" yet a colleague, returning from a night of revelry, heard me. I would still, albeit unintentionally, have conveyed my mental content to her and as such would have communicated (this could, of course, be problematic in a different sense if she was the object of my unrequited love and that was the topic of the soliloquy). A message in a bottle cast to sea is not likely to be a communicative act, but if that message is received the act is no less communicative because its author is dead and audience unanticipated; what is relevant is the intent to convey thoughts to another for this aspect of communication.

I use intention in the uncontroversial sense of the thought conveyed by the communicative act. This use is consistent with how it is used in Grice's implicature example, though it is far more limited than other possible and more particular uses of the term. As I will discuss more fully in the early pages of Part I, when B seems to be opting out of the Maxim of Relevance, on a literal interpretation of his saying that C has not been to jail yet, we miss his intention – to emphasize a feature of C and make a joke at his expense by opting out of the Maxim of Relevance (LC 24). To make this interpretation, required by the cooperative nature of communication and Davidson's principle of charity, we must acknowledge that B 'means' – i.e. 'thinks,' 'intends,' 'wants to say' – something which is not expressed directly in the words used. This kind of leap is

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not possible if we focus solely on the objective fact of the role of the words used in the language game without any regard to the context in which they are used.

Is Putnam's ant, then, communicating with me by its drawing of Churchill? My response is that this is clearly not a case of communication because while thoughts are received, or sparked, by the encounter with a Churchill silhouette they were not, in any meaningful sense, intended as thoughts, let alone communicative ones. The ant is not performing a soliloquy on Churchill, as I was earlier. It is not, to the best of my admittedly meagre knowledge about ants, thinking anything at all. It therefore fails to satisfy the first part of my characterization because it is not intending to express anything at all.

My view of communication nonetheless presents a dilemma about what could be called unthought thoughts. Sometimes people can convey states of affairs, usually about their own emotions, of which they are not aware. According to my wife, I do this all the time. When I am bored I tap, often in some recognizable pattern. I am not, however, aware of this. Should my tapping be considered an utterance? If it is not, then I seem to have accepted a form of communication that requires no intentional content, while if it is, I have a very broad definition of thought which might be, to some, overbroad. I am, however, far more comfortable with this latter problem than with the former. Subconscious thoughts, then, should be considered as thoughts for the purposes of this paper, and unintended mental content is still, for relevant purposes, intentional. These thoughts are, in reality, simply very unclear thoughts rather than some different, unthought form of mental activity. Whether the work of C-fibers or *Geist*, all mental activity is 'thought' for the purposes of this paper, as discussed above (p. 3, n. 3). Unclear

thoughts are more analogous to the artist who attempts to paint the unclear or the ineffable rather than the trail of an unconscious ant. Likewise, the medium used to express these thoughts is of no real import. Consequently whether these thoughts are conveyed through linguistic communication, sculpture or through transmission in some brain-in-vat-like scenario is of no consequence to the communication of thoughts.

Following the logic of both Grice and Davidson's work on communication, I have presented a definition of communication which I feel is both specific enough from which to work and broad enough not to omit any important media or type of exchange. It requires me to accept that non-linguistic media can nonetheless be communicative, and therefore will allow me to carry on using a wide variety of examples throughout this paper. It highlights, however, that the most important aspect of communication is that some form of thought, whether concrete or amorphous, is being passed from one individual's consciousness into another's. If this means that animals and computers are communicators, this is not particularly troubling to me. I would expect computers to communicate because they were made to do some of the same things people do, only faster. I also feel little qualm about excluding my cats' meowing or my sister's dog's barking from the full range of communication. While the ant might not have been saying anything, the empty food dish confirms my initial suspicions about my cats' efforts, and the child at the door confirms my sister's guess about her dog's barking. While it is doubtless that animal mental activity is significantly different from human mental activity, that each can give rise to a communicative utterance makes them indistinguishable for the limited purposes of this paper.

Having settled on a definition of communication, I will now proceed to a discussion of the mechanics of communication according to Grice and Davidson. In the first part, I will focus on Grice's attempt to work out the pragmatics of the cooperative principle and his formulation of the maxims of conversation. I will also deal with Davidson's work on Radical Interpretation, particularly as it relates to the triangulative approach to interpretation. Together, I believe these theories present a plausible explanation of what systems and procedures are needed to allow communication. However, the most interesting aspect of each thinker's work is not that they, together, present a plausible case for how communication works, but that these pictures depend heavily for their plausibility upon some version of the principle of charity. In Part II I will attempt to understand what role this principle plays in each man's work, with particular attention to what charity requires of those who communicate. This may point in some interesting directions about the social nature of the human being as a communicative animal; directions which will be intimated toward in the conclusion.

Part I. The Mechanics of Communication and the Need for Charity

<u>Preface</u>

In this section I will show that Grice and Davidson's approaches to communication are a plausible account but require a robust view of charity/cooperation. Grice's cooperative principle, primarily a necessary dispositional condition for communication, should be read in such a way as to include the audience to a communicative act in addition to the speaker. This can be done by recognizing the important role the mental element plays in communication. Grice argues, in a manner consistent with part of Searle's approach to internalism in meaning, that intention is needed to understand how words can come to mean anything other than their literal definitions, which is an important part of everyday speech. However, Grice's internalism is curbed by his approach to communication as a cooperative, and therefore, social enterprise. This social nature of communication is best explained through Davidson's theory of Radical Interpretation. Drawing on Tarski's formula for explaining truth, Davidson argues that interpretation can be understood as a triangulation of meaning from the twin fixed points of 'taken-as-truth' and states of affairs. The presumption of 'taken-as-truth' explicitly requires a charitable approach to the other party consistent with Grice's cooperative principle. The next part will show that the required common states of affairs also implies a thorough and deeper version of charity: one that is far stronger than Davidson or Grice seem to recognize.

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<u>A. Introduction</u>

Grice marks a necessary turning point between both the behaviourism and latent

positivism in Quinean thought and the developments Davidson would bring about with Radical Interpretation. Grice's view of communication holds that it relies on conditions of cooperation analogous to the role of primary axioms in Euclidean geometry. Just as geometry depends for its functioning on various primary axioms, ordinary conversation also obeys maxims specific to it which are then instantiated in sub-maxims and are followed in any communicative act, or violated to achieve an effect in appropriate circumstances. That ordinary communication's conditions are very different from the conditions of logically precise language explains, in part, why the former cannot be reduced to the latter. However, that these maxims are present also explains that communication is not, despite this difference, illogical; it simply follows a different, though no less consistent, logic. In order to understand this logic we must examine what Grice meant by cooperation and how, using it as a principle, he derived four categories of maxims from it. The consequence of these developments is a reintroduction, against a certain stream of the private language argument (PI 199-202, *inter alia*), of the value of intention. What a speaker meant to say is relevant to the words used because what is conveyed in the words used – why they are used and the manner in which the use takes place – changes depending on various situational aspects including the thoughts in the head of the speaker. However, Grice's intentionality is spared from possible attack by externalists like Kripke and Putnam through his recognition of the importance of the listener in successful communication. For Grice, meaning is a cooperative process of which intention is an important part, but only a part.

B. Grice on Communication and Intention

Grice's discussion in *Logic and Conversation* emerges as a response to a debate

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between two equally wrong, in Grice's view, schools of thought: logical puritans and ordinary language philosophers (LC 22-24).[7] Some positivists and their heirs believed that ordinary language should be reducible to a logically perfect language and that failure to do so shows a flaw in ordinary language. While most of positivism had declared itself dead by the time Grice was writing, their influence was still felt in thinkers who held fast to the increased clarity of logically precise symbolic language over ordinary speech. Among these positivists there were two camps, one associated with Russell and the mainstream analytic philosophy tradition through Quine, and, some would say, Davidson, and the other associated with Carnap and the Vienna Circle of logical positivism. The first camp held that ordinary language could be reduced to a logically perfect language; it just had not yet been reduced and may require a thorough reform of ordinary language to do so (Graham 5-6, see also LC 22-23). The second camp, the more thoroughly positivistic thinkers who were waning by the 1970s, held that ordinary language could not be reduced to logically precise language and that this exposed a flaw in ordinary language. Ordinary language was believed to be too chaotic, too muddied, to be able to follow the rigid regularities of symbolic logic (Ibid.). On the other side of this divide, ordinary language philosophers held that ordinary language could not be reduced to a logically perfect language and so much the worse for logic. These are generally held to follow from G. E. Moore's work on ordinary language and common sense, and include

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[7] The term 'logical puritan' and its derivatives are mine, though Davidson does make reference to 'philosophical puritans' in *Truth and Meaning*. I use it to include both the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle and also their successors in the behaviouristic schools. It applies to both classes of those who advocated the supremacy of logically precise language over ordinary language. It includes both the remaining positivists and the soft positivists: those who held that the conversion of ordinary language to logically precise language was impossible and those who held that, while possible, it would be difficult. See below for elaboration.

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Strawson and Austin as later examples. To these thinkers the malleability of language was its great advantage, and attempts to systematize it according to the principles of mathematical logic would render it impotent to continue adapting to the continually changing conditions of ordinary human life (Ibid.).

Grice finds himself between these two parties, and shows, in *Logic and Conversation*, how they are both wrong. Against the logical puritans, he shows that ordinary language does have a logical structure of its own. It is simply a different logic than is used in so-called logical speech, and relies on maxims derived from the cooperative principle. Likewise, against the ordinary language philosophers, he shows that there is a logic to communication and that its developments are not as chaotic as may have been believed. To demonstrate this, Grice gives an example of communication that, while totally outside the bounds of logical language, is nonetheless not so illogical as it appears on the surface and which exposes – in light of the cooperative principle – a logic of its own. This is his example of implicature involving one of the most ordinary of speech-acts: Gossip, a conversation between two friends about a third mutual friend. The example he presents involves two people discussing the recent career-change of a mutual friend. As Grice presents it "A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies 'Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues and he hasn't been to prison yet.'" (LC 24) The last clause of this sentence seems out of place on a logical puritan's first reading. No point in the conversation to this point – and it has so far been a short conversation – has given us any indication that A or B were worried about C's propensity to commit criminal infractions. It appears, to the rigidly puritanical outsider, vague at least and obscure at worst. In reality, given A and B's common background assumptions about C,

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various possible meanings of the last phrase arise. It could be the case that the job C has taken on is one with a criminal organization and going to prison is a serious risk. On the other hand, it could simply be a position of trust, like the manager of a bank branch, with a large number of temptations that could result in incarceration. Contrarily, it could require inferences about C rather than about his work, like a criminal history or a propensity to practical joking that may not be appreciated in his current milieu. What is 'meant' by the phrase depends on the background assumptions which each party to the communication brings to it. Ordinary conversation brings this to light, while discussions dealing only with logically refined language would omit such vital details.

What makes the communication in this example make sense is explained by the cooperative principle. At its most general, this principle derives from two features of communication. The first is that communication is a common effort between parties rather than two individual and separable efforts by distinct individuals. Both the speaker and the audience must participate in a common communicative act for Grice. He says "each participant recognizes in [conversations], to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction." (LC 25) While most of the onus in following the maxims of cooperation is on the speaker, as will be discussed shortly, it is nonetheless necessary for communication that there be more than one party and that the parties recognize the mutuality of the enterprise. This mutuality underlies the cooperative principle's consequence that "at each stage, *some* possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable." (Ibid.) Grice then goes on to give various examples of potentially illicit conversational moves that, when interpreted charitably, can reveal not only the how the move was illicit, but that there can be a legitimate purpose to

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what initially seemed like a wrong turn.

However, the mutuality requirement also points toward a Gricean approach to intentionality that becomes even stronger in the second criterion for cooperation: the view that communication is a unified activity. Grice says "our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks" and consequently, cannot be interpreted by the theorist in isolation from one another (LC 26-27). Mutuality does not, however, require that the intention to communicate be mutual. One-sided communications, like expletive filled utterances that follow the stubbing of a toe and the composition meant only for private consumption, are nonetheless communicative when they are interpreted by a second party. This one-sided activity becomes mutual because the listener interprets the intentional content of the expression, the expletive or the composition. They come to share the intentional content, the mental aspect, even if the utterance was never intended to be interpreted.

These examples illustrate the role intention plays in Grice's understanding of communication. While it is clear that, following the work of Frege in the late 19th century, communication involves both internal and external elements, philosophers throughout the 20th century spent a great deal of time determining the dividing line between these two elements. Much ink was spilt over exactly how much of the forces involved in communication are within the minds of speakers and hearers and exactly how much of what is conveyed in conversation is 'objective' in the sense that it could be known independent of knowing facts about the speaker's mental state. There is a spectrum of views, from thorough internalists like John Searle on one end, to externalists like Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke on the other. Those like Putnam and Kripke do not hold that

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there is nothing mental happening when we communicate, but that the mental element, while present, is not the part of communication that determines meaning. Rather, for externalists, meaning is fixed in some way by the social environment in which the words are used (NN 93). John Searle, on the other hand, espouses internalism about meaning that derives from a more thoroughly intentionalist world-view (PNI 306). While Grice recognizes the critical nature of intention, he nonetheless manages not to stray so far down the internalist path as to fall prey to some of Kripke and Putnam's criticisms of Searle, including confusion intentionality's approach to meaning causes in understanding necessity and accidentalness of properties (NN 74-75). The externalist critique focuses, in part, on the problem of other minds; saying that meaning is somehow in the head of the speaker makes communication seem more like telepathy than language (MM 220-227). While this difficulty is more problematic for Searle because of his thorough intentionality, Grice occupies a middle part of the spectrum, which recognizes both the meditative value of the words themselves and the critical importance of the way in which they are used and grasped by the speaker and the hearer respectively. In other words, Grice's contribution to this debate consists in showing how both internal and external elements are required in communicative interpretation. He shows that even when meaning is derived from the use of a word, that use is imbued with a great deal of mental content that may not be apparent when one simply hears the word or sentence alone (LC 25). This mental content becomes clear when one is certain about the communicative (i.e. necessarily including a thought component) nature of linguistic communication (PNI 308-312).

In his internalism about meaning, Grice comes close to Searle's work on

language. Searle exploits the ambiguity of 'meaning' wholly in favour of the internalist approach. He uses terms like 'background' and 'network' in much the same way as Grice (PNI 306, LC 31-37), but goes beyond Grice in his claims about their overwhelming importance for a theory of meaning. Indeed, Searle holds that "linguistic reference is always dependant on or is a form of mental reference and . . . mental reference is always in virtue of Intentional content, including Background and Network." (PNI 306) For both, the 'background' includes all the experiences that go into the acquisition of a word and develop a speaker's understanding of how that word is to function. In other words, the current use of a word by a speaker is informed by the prior occasions on which that speaker heard the word uttered and their prior comprehensions of its role on those prior occasions (PNI 306, LC 35-36). The network, by contrast, is the place of that word in a user's vocabulary; a relationship with other words rather than with mind-independent reality, which is a contradiction for Searle (PNI 321). The network plays a similar role in fixing the meaning of a term to the part played by the community in other linguistic theories, where reference is extensional – derived from the word's denotation of an object – rather than intensional – derived from the word's connotation to the speaker or hearer. In both theories we learn what words apply correctly to from various things. In Searle and, to a certain extent, Grice this learning process becomes internalized and the authority for what is meant by a term becomes the individual who is expressing it. Where Grice differs from Searle is that the term and its meaning, as part of the cooperative enterprise, become, when used, the joint property of the speaker and the listener.

For externalists like Putnam and Kripke, the meaning of a word, even when learned, is still not something internal to the speaker. Rather, even when the word has

been internalized in some way, its meaning remains the social creation it was before it was internalized in whatever sense (NN 91-97). They follow Wittgenstein's work in *Philosophical Investigations* on this point. Not only is all language in fact acquired from the culture in which we are reared, including language developed poetically from that cultural milieu, but understanding the meaning of any term in a language involves understanding the place of that term within the whole, and, consequently, having some appreciation for the whole of a language (PI, numerous sections; see also RI 126). In other words, the divide between these two camps is not whether words are learned by internalization of social functions, but whether the meaning primarily depends on what the speaker says about the word or on the role the word has in the community with which the speaker is participating. Grice's cooperative principle excludes the former and favours the latter in one sense because the mental nature of communication cannot exclude the collective element of the enterprise. For Grice, the meaning depends both on what the speaker meant and how the interpreter takes the speaker's words. This connection can only be accomplished by recognizing the value of cooperation, just as Davidson recognizes the importance of charity, as a mediator between these two vitally important factors.

Grice's approach to meaning as communicative seems to include all the positive features of intentionality while also addressing the concerns of externalists through communication's necessarily cooperative nature. However, internalism about communication is nonetheless subject to a persistent difficulty. In order for someone to understand the meaning of the words or the phrases of another person in an internalist view of communication, what he must grasp is not the meaning of something objective, like the words used or the behaviour patterns associated with their usage. What the

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listener grasps is the internal mental state of the speaker. Since linguistic communication is so common, it seems to indicate that this is done with apparent ease. However, all the best science tells us that we cannot read the minds of other individuals. Furthermore, if an individual could know another's mind as intimately as she (sometimes) knows her own, there would be no need for, and no practice of, linguistic communication. Unfortunately, as Grice illustrates, this is an unresolvable problem. Even if we accept the most externalist accounting of what words mean – if we presume that an account like Kripke's of causal chains and adhered-to dictionary definitions – we are nonetheless left with the problem of context posed by ordinary features of communication like implicature. Going back to Grice's example, A and B can understand perfectly well what was meant by B's apparently unconnected phrase – they can even get a good laugh out of it on one reading – but they cannot do so through an objective analysis of the public meanings of the words involved. They must have some beliefs about each other's mental state in order for the implicature to make any sense. It is in that sense that intention is a necessary feature of communication.

C. Grice and the Cooperative Principle

It is in explaining our ability to understand others' mental states that Grice develops his understanding of the cooperative principle. Grice's most explicit formulation of this principle claims that a speaker must "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (LC 26) From this one overarching principle, Grice develops four categories of maxims "which will, in general, yield results in accordance with the Cooperative Principle." (LC 27) These four categories

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include maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. Maxims of Quantity regulate the amount one should say in an attempt to participate in a conversation, which is essentially a series of communicative acts with a common purpose. Grice attempts to establish two Sub-maxims of Quantity, which boil down to the requirement that one say neither more nor less than necessary to make one's point clearly. While the first maxim, controlling how little must be said in order for the communication to be informative, is critical – without it communication would no longer be informative or would be unintentionally ambiguous – the second maxim, controlling a surplus of information, is valuable even if it is less essential to the purpose of communication (LC 26-27). Since the purpose of communication is the transmission of thoughts – including but not limited to informative thoughts – from one person to another, a surplus of potentially relevant thoughts, while inconvenient, is not usually prohibitive of communication. The collective value of Maxims of Quantity is that they make communication an efficient enterprise through ensuring that enough is said to transfer thoughts but no more than is necessary for that purpose. The restrictive maxim serves to improve communication by eliminating the mental clutter, while the inclusive maxims is not possible to avoid in any effort to convey thoughts.

Grice's second set of cooperative maxims includes those that fall under the category of Quality. Maxims of Quality, Grice claims, fall under one super-maxim, which holds that a speaker should "try to make your contribution one that is true." (LC 27) Under this, he gives two operational maxims, which require that a speaker "not say what you believe to be false," and also that a speaker "not say that for which you lack adequate evidence." (Ibid.) However, I think Grice has gone a little too far here. Rather than

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eliminating discussion of possibilities and impossibilities because of a lack of epistemic justification, it would be better if we spoke in such a manner as to account for the reasons for our potentially true beliefs. This arises because of an ambiguity in what counts as 'adequate evidence' for a given claim. Presumably, different parties will have different criteria for what constitutes justification, and different claims will also require different sorts and degrees of evidence. If interpreted harshly, this could lead to a chilling effect on what can and cannot be topics of conversation. However, a more charitable view, which is also more consistent with the cooperative nature of the enterprise, is to resolve this ambiguity in favour of a version of the Sub-maxim of Epistemic Justification that allows one to speak about things clearly, taking account of one's justification for belief. This formulation opens up the possibility of discussing things for which we have limited evidence on the very necessary ground that if we do not discuss potential beliefs, how are we ever to grow them sufficiently to see whether they are true or not? For example, at the start of this essay, or this part, I may have been less than certain of my understanding of Grice's approach to the overriding maxim of quality. By attempting to discuss it within the context of a search for understanding, I have not misled my audience into presuming I have a stronger epistemic foundation than I actually have. Rather, I have come to develop a stronger justification for the various views discussed by the very discussion that Grice's Sub-maxim of Epistemic Justification might, on an uncharitable reading, prohibit. Something very like this maxim will also play an important role in Davidson's explanation of how communication is possible in the sense that the principle of charity explicitly requires that we be able to trust the other party to the communicative act (RI 135), and following the Maxims of Quality helps justify that trust.

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Grice's Maxims of Relation deal with the relevance of a statement to the conversation in which it is involved (LC 27). Grice spends very little time on relevance, but he does point out that it is a problematic area of study. It remains to be seen, he says, exactly what degree of relevance is required and how and when legitimate conversational transitions can be made. What relevance contributes to cooperation is that when a piece of information is given as part of a series of common communicative utterances we are able to presume that it in some way relates to those utterances that have come before (Ibid.). In Grice's implicature example, the unaware outsider might think that B's mentioning of C's continued liberty might be irrelevant to the common enterprise. However, by presuming that it is not, that it does have some relevance, we can come to a better understanding of what might actually have been meant by the utterance. It is only through presuming relevance that we can understand communication as cooperative – i.e. resting on a shared foundation supporting a common conversational edifice.

Grice's final category of maxims concerns Maxims of Manner. These seem to be among the more difficult to assess with philosophical rigour, and Grice accordingly spends far less time on them despite the wealth of possible examples. Maxims of Manner relate, he says "not (like the previous categories) to what is said but, rather, to *how* what is said is to be said." (Ibid.) He sums these maxims up under the general command of "be perspicuous," but elaborates with several examples of perspicuity, including "avoid obscurity of expression," "avoid ambiguity," and "be orderly," which I then interpret negatively as "avoid interruption." (LC 27-28) Perspicuity is required because it facilitates the exchange of information through improving the social aspect of communication by improving the relationship between the parties to the communicative act. We ought not

to discuss things in terms that may not be understood by other participants to the discussion because this might alienate those people and limit their ability to participate in the discussion. Underlying this is a desire that those other people participate in the common enterprise and a broader view of the charity required by communication than maxims dealing more strictly with the conveyance of information address.

While all of these maxims are valuable, they nonetheless only explicitly address the requirements of communication from the speaker's side. From the interpreter's point of view, a fifth maxim is necessary, which I call the Maxim of Interpretation. This maxim requires that we ignore any of these maxims rather than interpret someone to have said something ghastly. This Orwellian-influenced phrase attempts to understand how the cooperative principle would apply to the interpreter's standpoint and also imposes the listener-oriented spirit of the Radical Interpretation directly on the Gricean speaker-focussed framework. In a sense, this maxim attempts to schematize according to a unifying principle the various interpretative leaps taken in the many examples toward the end of *Logic and Conversation* (LC 29-32). Grice discusses how the implicature example and other common conversational situations violate the various maxims, yet they are nonetheless subject to legitimate conversational interpretations. Take, for example, the scenario where someone abruptly changes the subject. This may be seen as a violation of the Maxim of Relevance, and possibly also the Maxim of Manner, but it could also be interpreted in such a way as to indicate displeasure with the direction of the conversation, by using the particular devices Grice suggests, like 'opting out' and 'flouting.' (LC 30) This would be a fairly sophisticated interpretation, requiring some advanced knowledge of the other participants, but it is a more charitable interpretation and more fully

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appreciates the collaborative nature of a communicative enterprise. A Maxim of Interpretation would provide a common principle under which 'flouting,' 'opting out' and other useful techniques could be schematized and also provides a link between Grice's project and Davidson's.

His very thorough approach to cooperation could be applied, with only minor modifications, to both parties to the conversation, but he nonetheless does not take this step. His failure to do so is problematic because if intentions are important, and Grice makes it clear how they are, then the impact of the words spoken on a hearer is just as important as how the speaker meant them to be received. For example, certain jokes that a speaker means as light-hearted can be interpreted as condescending or offensive by certain audiences. While Grice assesses this primarily from the speaker's point of view, showing the need for speakers to use only terms that will be appropriate to their audience, a reciprocal approach to the Cooperative Principle advocated in Davidson's Principle of Charity and the Maxim of Interpretation to explain that communication is analogous to a two-way street rather than a one-way lane. In *Radical Interpretation*, Davidson shows how both parties to a conversation – which is the quintessential communicative act – are responsible for giving meaning to the terms used. In other words, it is not simply incumbent upon the teller of a dirty joke to ensure that she only speak in such a way as not to offend the sensibilities of a listener, but the listener must also understand that the speaker has her own set of sensibilities which inform her ability to perceive her audience's sensibilities. Davidson's approach supplement's Grice's Maxims by addressing communication as an act of mutual interpretation and therein employing the Maxim of Interpretation, rather than the one-sided variety that comes

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through in Grice's article. This initiates a reciprocity that then provides the basis for dispositional conditions of the possibility of communication.

D. Davidson on Communication

While Grice creates a very important role for the listener, he does not explicitly deal with that role in his assessment of the Cooperative Principle and its Maxims. While this has more serious consequences on how that principle breaks down, as we have seen, it also has consequences for the kind of intentions he requires of participants. While Grice requires his speaker to attempt to understand how the listener will receive the phrase, he does not deal with the steps the listener must take to understand the background and network of the speaker. It is in applying Davidson's explanation of how interpretation works that we can synthesize these two communicators into one cooperative enterprise. It is in the combination of the role of speaker and listener that we see clearly the fundamental role charity and cooperation must pay in any explanation of how communication is possible.

Davidson focuses on the interpretative work undertaken by the listener to a communicative act but also explains how that work will impact on the speaker's approach to communication. The speaker must anticipate how his words will be received, and often does this by interpreting various features of the listener – including prior conversation if that is a possibility. However, this only reflects what Grice establishes. The feature Davidson adds is that the listener must interpret the utterances of the speaker in a manner consistent with his perceptions both of the words and also of the speaker. In other words, communication is not solely about interpreting words and their common usages, but also involves interpreting the speaker who uses those words – albeit,

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often through the words they use. The interpretation happening in a communicative act is two sided in the sense that both the speaker and the listener must assess the position of the other to develop an explanation of what various utterances, intonations, omissions and other conversational features mean.[8] That this mental requirement links to the kind of approach to intention Grice uses in establishing the cooperative principle should be clearly understood because of the nature of communication as set out earlier, in the Introduction.

Davidson's most important distinction from Grice is that he gets into an explanation of the mechanics of how conversation actually function, while Grice focuses thoroughly on the dispositional considerations involved in the participants' approaches to one another. While Davidson's is a conceptual account – if it actually takes place all the various mental and linguistic processes are so common that they appear to be instinctual – it nonetheless provides a plausible account of how interpretation happens in the mind of a party to communication that goes beyond Grice's explanation of cooperation and explains how that cooperation takes place. His discussion explicitly brings the parties to a communicative act together, in a way that Grice's depiction leaves implicit. Davidson's account begins with an explanation of inadequacies in prior accounts of the nature of communication, and employs a modification of Tarski's truth formula to arrive at a structure of interpretation that presents a plausible account of how communication takes place (RI 130-131). While the key contribution of Tarski's work on this point was to

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[8] That what is unsaid is often as important as what is said is an old adage, now attributed commonly to Leo Strauss. In the case of communication what goes unsaid includes omitted yet logically relevant details of the kind that would make sense of the implicature in Grice's example, but omissions also include a wide array of other possible examples. What is particularly difficult about omissions is discussing them and explaining their function.

elaborate on the consequences of the elementary point that truth is a property of words rather than of the world, the way in which he established that principle, particularly through the device of the T-sentence, plays an important role in Davidson's constructive project in *Radical Interpretation*.

Davidson spends much of *Radical Interpretation* showing why various theories do not adequately explain the problem of meaning. The common thread between all these insufficient or implausible theories is that they do not deal with meaning as inherently connected to communication. He begins by dismissing the Platonic, and on some accounts Fregean, view that the meaning of a word is an entity separate from the word (RI 126). In the Platonic account this is a reference to the 'form' of the word that transcends full human grasp but which nonetheless informs our understanding through its relationship with the ordinary, imperfect material world (*Phaedo*). To Frege, the sense of a word was an almost equally amorphous entity, an element of the "common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another." (SR 177) For Davidson, these views merely delay the question of meaning rather than serve to answer it. Plato and Frege's shared hypothesis of a separate realm where meanings are found shifts the problem of meaning to another realm of inquiry. Rather than dealing with meaning as a part of language and communication, these views establish meaning as a part of one's understanding of metaphysics, or as the proper study of anthropology, which must the be assessed apart from explicitly linguistic concerns they are nonetheless intended to address; this move creates (at least) two problems where only one need exist. In the case of communication, Davidson argues, this move only leads to an unjustified disenchantment with theories of meaning and separates theories of meaning from their

most valuable aid – the context of communication. He says "appeal to meanings leaves us stranded further than we started from the non-linguistic goings-on that must supply the evidential base for interpretation." (RI 126-127).

Davidson's next target is the behaviourist view of meaning as linked with other, not necessarily communicative, human actions. These theorists come in two kinds; those who attempt to deal with words behaviouristically and those who try to do the same for sentences. Davidson argues that the former kind are even more wrong, since words alone, without any context, are no longer linguistically relevant. He says that "the phenomena to which we must turn [to explain meaning] are the extra-linguistic interests and activities that language serves, and these are served by words only in so far as the words are incorporated in (or on occasion happen to be) sentences." (RI 127) Therefore, he argues, making sense of words behaviouristically is only possible if we are capable of making sense of sentences in the same manner. The latter kind of behaviourism, sentence-behaviourism, is also implausible because it attempts to connect linguistic data with non-linguistic phenomena for which they are not sufficiently related to serve as an explanation. Davidson says here "the phenomena to which we must turn are the extra-linguistic interests and activities that language serves." (Ibid.) In other words, in attempting to explain communication through behaviour, we miss the fact that sometimes what is conveyed is not conveyed directly in the language, which is taken as the only relevant piece of evidence by behaviourists, but in the context of that which the speaker intends to communicate. In a sense, this is explained well through Grice's implicature example. The behaviourist focusing on sentences or words will still only arrive at the conclusion that B has said something about C. The indicators that are

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required to make sense of what was fully communicated between A and B one needs to know something about their mental states, i.e. their intention, at the time of communication. This cannot be known through an analysis of the speech act; rather, it can only be known through an understanding of the circumstances in which the participants believe themselves to be. As Grice has shown, the intentions that cannot be explained by behaviourists are critical to the success of communication.

However, Davidson also takes certain kinds of internalism to task as well. In this I believe he is talking more about the Searlean approach to intentionality and meaning rather than the Gricean, externalist-sensitive approach. As I mentioned earlier, the two can be distinguished by the uses to which each author puts intention. For Grice, understanding what is meant by the words used, the intention, comes after one has determined those words' semantic meaning, while for Searle, internalism also serves to determine the meaning of the words themselves. Here, Davidson accuses internalist claims about language of circularity (Ibid). They attempt to explain linguistic meaning by reference to intentions, but can only explain intentions by reference to linguistic phenomena. In other words, attempts to explain meaning internally either presuppose meanings or presuppose intentions. While intention certainly plays a role in communication for Davidson, it is not the same thoroughly internalist role that Searle would have it play, though it is much closer to the role Grice envisions. For both Grice and Davidson there are some objectively fixed elements in communication, specifically the words used, while in the Searlean approach those words are only subjectively fixed and one cannot, therefore, determine their meanings in any other way than through understanding the speaker's intentions (Ibid.). The pure internalist winds up tying himself

in knots, while the fixed point of Davidson and Grice allows them a fulcrum from which to progress.

After arguing against these theories, Davidson shows how they do provide a starting ground. They show, he claims, that the criteria for the success of a theory that would make interpretation possible, and would therefore explain how words mean what they mean, is one that will enable a listener to "understand any of the infinity of sentences the speaker might utter." (Ibid.) We will know that this has been achieved when an individual who has no advance knowledge of the meanings of words and therefore derives their understanding from the evidence available to them. This evidence, Davidson says, "must be of a sort that would be available to someone who does not already know how to interpret utterances the theory is designed to cover." (RI 128) In other words, interpreting the speech acts of speakers of the same language is not a sufficient test of Radical Interpretation. It can only be tested when speakers of one language are speaking to listeners who have no knowledge of the ordinary functioning of words in that language. This is not to say that Radical Interpretation does not apply to speakers of the same language – Davidson argues, convincingly, that it does (RI 125) – but that the best test of it will be situations where the parties have no underlying assumptions about the communicative actions undertaken. In same-language situations, Radical Interpretation is most visible when encountering words with which a listener is unfamiliar, whereas in different-language situations all words are unfamiliar and interpretation becomes a routine part of life.

At this point in his discussion, Davidson takes care to distinguish his project from that of Quine (RI 129-130). In Quine's work, Radical Translation is used to show the

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limitations of interpretative theory; that no matter how many times the native says "Gavagai" when we see a rabbit, we can never know that 'Gavagai' is identical with 'Rabbit.' (WO 51-53) To do so would require far more knowledge of the native's ontology[9] (which stage of the lifeform is the Gavagai?) and of the native's ethics (what is the value of a Gavagai? Is it a demi-god, an ancestor, or simply lunch?). However, the role of radical translation in Quine is limited both by what he intended it to do and the author's own thorough behaviorism, to which we have already seen Davidson's objection. While Quine had only proposed radical translation as a heuristic device, Davidson makes much more out of the project[10] (RI 129n). Radical Translation and Radical Interpretation are both "radical" in that both apply to inter-language and intra-language communication, though they differ in far greater respects. While this seems like a plausible explanation of what is happening when I attempt to understand some of my philosopher friends who do not share my hatred for jargon, it is nonetheless a problematic theory. Davidson points out that radical translation, while it might be a plausible explanation of some communicative activities, does not fully get at the question of meaning (RI 129). He shows that it would be fully possible to achieve a literal translation from one language into another via a meta-language without grasping the

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[9] When I use the word 'ontology,' in both this part and following, I intend it to refer to a worldview, a view of the way the world is. A person's ontology, then, would encompass the things they hold to be real, in whatever sense they mean. If, to use Quine's example, a primitive tribe holds that the Gavagai that just crossed a path is a manifestation of an ancestor who is also providing itself for a tasty meal, both of those features are part of the speaker's ontology. This definition of ontology will play an even more important role in Part II when I discuss the ontological requirements of the cooperative principle/ principle of charity and how they lead to a requirement of alterity.

[10] I should note that Davidson is careful to qualify the difference between his project and Quine's. He says, in the famous footnote on 129, that "since Quine did not intend to answer the questions I have set, the claim that the method of translation is not adequate as a solution to the problem of Radical Interpretation is not a criticism of any doctrine of Quine's."

speaker's meaning. In part, this is due to Davidson's subtle use of intentions. We may accurately understand that Gavagai (hypothetically) refers to the small hopping rodent, but it is only if we are able to more fully put ourselves in the cultural milieu of the native that we can come to understand that Gavagai was also the pet name fathers use for first-born sons and therefore has a more nuanced meaning than its semantic referent would indicate. Grice's implicature example is again illustrative here. A literal translation of B's utterance would tell us that C has not yet been to prison, and possibly, if we were astute enough, that there was some expectation that he would go to prison at some point. Such a translation would not convey the same meaning to this listener unless he also had the background information that provides a full meaning to the utterance in this context.

Nonetheless, it is in light of his observations on Radical Translation that Davidson begins his discussion of how Radical Interpretation works. It is, he claims, a theory that "may be viewed as the result of the merger of a structurally revealing theory of interpretation of a known language, and a system of translation from the unknown language to the known." (RI 130) This is a restatement of the ultimate criteria for success for a theory of interpretation, which is nonetheless different from translation even if they look the same at some basic level. Radical Interpretation, Davidson is careful to point out, does not depend for its success on a word-specific matrix of equivalences. Indeed, it accepts that some concepts that are routinely expressed in one language will not necessarily be expressed, or will be expressed differently, in other languages. Examples abound, including the translations into English of the Greek word '*logos*,' the German word '*Geist*' and a multitude of idiomatic English phrases that cannot adequately be formulated in other languages. While this would be a problem for a theory of translation,

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it is not such a problem for a theory of interpretation. Interpretation does not depend on such a matrix. What it requires is that the interpreter come to understand the concept roughly as the speaker understands it. This may be in a different language from that of the listener but, alternatively, it may require the listener to come to understand parts of the speaker's language in, quite literally, its own terms. In the end, what is required is not a translation, but a shared understanding for successful communication in order for an interpretative act to be a success.

E. How Radical Interpretation Works

In that same transitional paragraph, Davidson tips his hand to show how the structure of Radical Interpretation will mirror the truth theories of Alfred Tarski (Ibid.). Tarski's approach to truth is that it is a semantic relationship between language and the world rather than some Platonic metaphysical ideal or a mere property of language. While this could be seen as a form of a correspondence theory, it emphasizes that truth is an elemental concept, i.e. one that cannot be further analysed into constituent parts. Tarski's famed T-sentences essentially consist of a statement in an object language that is held true if and only if a corresponding state of affairs is actual. The typical example runs "'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white." In this sentence, what is true is relationship between the linguistic expression 'snow is white,' and the state of affairs of snow's whiteness, rather than either the expression or the state of affairs alone.

While Davidson spends some time showing the potential quirks and snags of Tarski's truth theory (RI 131, 133-134; see also ET 178-183), what is relevant about it for the purposes of Davidson's take on interpretation is its form and that form's possible application to a theory of meaning. In Tarski's approach to truth, we are presumed to

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know the meaning of words, and we know states of affairs in the world. These two points allow us to triangulate a third point, in this case the elementary relationship between language and states of affairs that constitutes truth. For Davidson's theory of interpretation, if we hold 'truth' as constant by making it 'taken-as-truth' and also manage to hold the states of affairs stable, we can modify this formula to solve for the meaning of linguistic expressions rather than truth. It is still triangulative, but is set up to solve for meaning rather than to understand legitimate and illegitimate uses of the concept of truth, and in so doing break into the hermeneutic circle of meaning and states of affairs – that our knowledge of meanings depends upon our knowledge of states of affairs and vice versa. To borrow the tired example, Tarski would take our knowledge about "la neige est blanc" and our awareness of the fact that snow is predicable with whiteness to establish an example of truth, which takes truth to apply to the phrase "la neige est blanc" under certain conditions. Davidson, on the other hand, would take our knowledge of this thought's 'taken-as-true'[11] status and the whiteness of snow to allow us to determine the meaning of "la neige est blanc." To be sure, this triangulative approach is not limited to foreign languages, but should also be seen to apply to conversational instances in our own language. This becomes particularly apparent when dealing with words or phrases never before seen or which a speaker intends to use unconventionally. Presuming that what they speak is a 'taken-as-truth' about a presumed to be known state of affairs allows us to hold those two points as fixed and thereby triangulate meaning.

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[11] What I mean by the phrase 'take-as-true' and its various permutations is equivalent to belief. I do not use the term belief because for Davidson a belief is a narrower sub-class of all possible thoughts. My definition of communication is intended to apply to more kinds of mental things than Davidson finds pertinent. See "Rational Animals," in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, New York: Oxford (2001) 95-105.

Davidson spends the rest of *Radical Interpretation* questioning the reasonableness of this approach to meaning (RI 132-139). His first requirement is that his thesis can, both conceptually and in practice, work to allow for the interpretation of speakers of natural languages without recourse to anything outside the theory itself. He claims that the great virtue of Tarskian T-sentences is that they allow for a resolution of their problem by using no other resources than the terms of the linguistic clause itself. (RI 132) All we need to explain the truth conditions of "snow is white" is to know about snow, whiteness and that 'is' in this instance is intended as predicative rather than to make an identity. This is ontologically and epistemologically appealing, because it does not require us to know about anything else beyond what is included in the original sentence; no knowledge of "possible worlds, intensional entities, properties or propositions," is needed (Ibid.). He envisions the work undertaken to "apply a theory of truth to a natural language" as dividing up into two parts (RI 133). The first will require a characterization of what is 'taken-as-true.' This involves understanding that states of affairs are actual and which are not actual or have truth conditions that could never be met. In other words, knowing what can be 'taken-as-true' requires us to know something, or rather to presume something, about the party whose utterances are in question. 'Taken-as-truth' itself, here, is usually taken as fixed by something like a relationship, usually correspondence, between statements about the world and the conditions of the world itself. The second requirement is to actually implement the theory by "match[ing] each of the remaining sentences [in the language to be interpreted] to one or (in the case of ambiguity) more than one of the sentences to which the first stage applies." (Ibid.) In other words, we use our knowledge of states of affairs in the world, and presume the other party holds these

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as 'taken-as-true,' to determine what we mean by various sentences. The fact that it is snowing, and that my conversational companion seems to be shivering in these conditions can be used to triangulate the meaning of 'la neige est froid' to 'the snow is cold' if I presume that her shivering and utterance are not only related but 'taken-as-true.'[12]

Davidson's second criterion is the most important one for my concerns, and the one in which he addresses concerns about knowing fallibility; i.e. would an interpreter, following Radical Interpretation, know when they were right and wrong about their interpretations without any knowledge of the object language? Davidson asks "can a theory of truth be verified by appeal to evidence available before interpretation has begun?" (Ibid.) If it cannot, then it would seem quite difficult for us to begin interpreting, since interpretation depends on a fixed and shared definition of 'taken-as-true.' Without this condition, no one would be able to tell whether he/she was interpreting phrases that were true or false, which correspond or fail to correspond to states of affairs in the world.

Davidson argues that this condition is met through recourse to the principle of charity. He says that an interpreter "may know that a person intends to express a truth in uttering a sentence without having any idea what truth." (RI 135) We presume, in other words, that thoughts 'held-as-true'[13] are being spoken according to whatever world-view the speaker has adopted. In one sense this is appropriate, because it is not our thoughts

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[12] A fuller explanation of how the relation between the utterance and the observed behaviour connect to give a common fixed point of states of affairs will be given in the next section.

[13] 'Held-as-true' is a subjective, belief-oriented version of the intersubjective, interpretative 'taken-as-true.' Equivalents would include 'believed,' which I again avoid for the reasons expressed in note 13.

that we are attempting to understand, but those of another as expressed in his/her own language. However, in another sense, this is problematic. If we do not know about the speaker's world-view, how can we accurately know whether he/she shares in the same views about states of affairs in the world upon which the truth relationship normally depends? If someone were to say "x is the will of god," to me, he/she would be speaking what they consider to be a truth but something I consider false. Nonetheless, I understand, because we have some common background, that many parts of his/her worldview are different from mine. I can account for this differences in worldviews accordingly by presuming that what the other person is saying is something he/she holds true. This is the principle of charity's approach to truth, i.e. 'taken-as-truth.' What the next section of this paper will examine is whether the principle of charity might be more robust than Davidson seems to acknowledge.

If Radical Interpretation works in the field, we can safely presume its applicability to more complex situations because the theory in which it is a part has been shown to be effective. Once we have confirmed the theory on certain points, like snow and whiteness, we can use it on others, including what the other takes as true. Furthermore, if we are simply not communicating, we may have an error in our presumption of what 'taken-as-true' constitutes, and we can try another version. Fortunately, there is enough in common among various human cultures that we can largely agree about states of affairs in the world, and can build our communication from there. Our differences represent the peak of an iceberg, the bulk of which remains obscured by seas of commonality; our differences stand out because of the common background communication rests upon.

Grice's implicature example presents an ideal case study of the need for a strong view of charity in radical interpretation's triangulative approach. Without a view of charity that incorporates more than simply the extension of a word, Radical Interpretation cannot tell me what B meant by saying "C has not been sent to prison yet." It could tell me what these words mean in one sense, a literal sense, but it cannot tell me what they mean in the context of this conversation unless I begin to presume more about the parties involved and certain detailed aspects of their worldview. It is in this presumption that charity becomes important. I must presume that they have some information about C that I do not have and that this information makes it an issue whether he has committed such an infraction in his new work as would land him in jail. Since the statement will likely be followed either by a sigh or a laugh, I can discern some more information from this. In the event that the parties sigh and that sighs mean the same for them as they do for me, I can presume that they feel some affection for C and would not wish him this potential harm. I can also presume that C is the kind of person who might be tempted to commit crimes because that is an appropriate response to exasperation and crime is generally seen as a negative thing. If they had laughed, however, I can either presume that neither party particularly likes C and is indifferent to his legal fate, or that the problem is not with C but with the job itself. Further observations would help distinguish these two possibilities. In any event, to understand the complete meaning of this conversation I must read more into the people involved than Radical Interpretation's explicit but narrow appeal to charity calls for, as will be the focus of the next section. This is not to say that this reliance on charity is implausible, merely that it is even deeper than Davidson's "across the board" admission allows (RI 136n).

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In this section we have seen that both Grice's and Davidson's approaches to the mechanics of communication may require a strong view of charity or cooperation. For Grice, the cooperative principle could be read in such a way as to make it more inclusive of both parties to a conversation. This can be accomplished by viewing the cooperative maxim in an interpretative light rather than as requirements on a speaker. Grice's internalism about communication – his main contribution to understanding its mechanics – is justifiably curbed by his approach to communication as a social enterprise. This social nature of communication, and the mechanics it involves, is most thoroughly explained through Davidson's theory of Radical Interpretation. Drawing on Tarski, Davidson argues that interpretation can be understood as a triangulation of meaning from the twin fixed points of truth and states of affairs. The next section will show both that the presumption of truth and the presumption of common states of affairs may imply an even stronger version of charity than Grice or Davidson seem to realize.

Part II – Dispositional Conditions of Communication in Grice and Davidson

<u>Preface</u>

In this section I will show how the dispositional conditions of the possibility of communication – the cooperative principle and the principle of charity – may imply a deeper sort of charity, here called alterity, than either Grice or Davidson recognize. I use alterity to mean something like 'being favourably disposed toward, and actively concerned with, an other.' Alterity seems to be required by the principle of common ontology, which seems to be a necessary condition both of the shared states of affairs clause in the triangulative formulation of Radical Interpretation and the presumption of truth. I discuss how both Davidson's presumption of 'taken-as-truth' and Grice's analogous Maxim of Quality seem to depend on the principle of common ontology – and, consequently, on alterity – in the same way as the shared states of affairs condition. This principle of common ontology in turn gives rise to the requirement of a certain communicative alterity. Its possible ramifications will be discussed in the conclusion.

<u>A. Introduction</u>

While his own discussion of this point is minimal in *Radical Interpretation*, Davidson's theory of Radical Interpretation is thoroughly soaked in the principle of charity. In *Radical Interpretation*, his only explicit mention of the principle of charity is in a footnote referring to his relationship with Quine. Nonetheless, the principle of charity underpins all of the arguments he presents, in a manner very much like Grice's explicit cooperative principle. The two main ways in which Radical Interpretation relies on an

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attitude of charity are its presumption of honesty and the less discussed presumption of common states of affairs. In his discussion of both, I will argue, Davidson does not go far enough in understanding what is fully implied by charity. Davidson uses charity to inform his presumption of honesty in much the same way as Grice uses his maxims of quality. While Grice requires the speaker not to make unjustified utterances, and Davidson requires an interpreter to presume truth, both lead to a common result; both ultimately speak to a presumption of 'held-as-true' in communication. Radical Interpretation also requires, however, a broader sort of charity than Davidson recognizes in his discussion of the principle of truth. This broader approach to charity is also involved in his second, less elaborated-upon requirement, the principle of common states of affairs. This second principle refers to the second fixed point in Davidson's triangulation approach to Radical Interpretation and attempts to answer the question of how we can come to understand to what the 'taken-as-true' statement is meant to refer. While the presumption of honesty is, I argue, charity's way of addressing the needs of the principle of truth, to access the other party's views on states of affairs we must come to a presumption of common ontology. Both presumptions, when fleshed out, lead to a deeper alterity than Davidsonian charity initially envisages.

In the first place we must understand that the presumption of 'taken-as-truth' which interpretation requires, implies and relies on a more alteristic presumption of honesty. Taking what the other party to a communicative act says as expressing a truth in their view is Davidson's way of breaking the hermeneutic circle of truth and meaning by fixing truth. However, implicit in this is the presumption that the other person is not speaking something they do not 'take-as-true.' This condition cuts both ways. The

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speaker must count on the interpreter to 'take' their words as indicative of genuinely held thoughts, while the interpreter must depend on the speaker not to speak things which are not held true. The fact that most paradigm cases of communication are cooperative enterprises further highlights this need for a presumption of honesty. The cooperative nature of communication would not be possible were parties not reliably forthright with one another both in their utterances and in their interpretations.

The second path to alterity is through the need for a common ontology. By "common ontology" I mean that several components of each participant's world-view are shared. First and foremost, because it is relied upon by the first requirement of the principle of charity, I argue that the participants must adopt a common presumption of truth. In order for Davidson's triangulative approach to work, what parties 'take-as-true' must be held constant to allow for the triangulation of meaning. This process of fixing a characterization of 'taken-as-true' in the manner described by Davidson, relies heavily upon a common ontology because of the logical, semantic and other features of communication upon which the theory of truth can be built. Nonetheless, if the presumption of honesty sets out a foundation for charity as alterity, the requirement of 'taken-as-truth' starts that building process.

However, that project only comes to full fruition when we assess the demands of a common ontology as required by the second aspect of the triangulative approach: the requirement of common states of affairs. This second charitable presumption, the presumption of common ontology, is required in order to know that the other party to the communicative act is talking about the same state of affairs as one is interpreting and is not explicitly addressed in Davidson's own discussion of charity. In order to

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accomplish this we must place ourselves in the position of the other, attempt to see the world through their mindset. This deep sort of empathy implied by the principle of charity is what I term alterity.

While this philosophical architecture seems precarious, typical conversational patterns do normally work and intercultural communication is not only possible but is far more common than is generally acknowledged. The fact that we do communicate means that not only do we commonly trust one another to speak the truth on a regular basis, but that we all share, at a basic level, a coherent enough ontology that we can understand how each other expresses a 'taken-as-truth' and the states of affairs of which each other speaks. This is a transcendental reason in the Kantian sense. That we do communicate is certain; if this communication needs an alteristic principle of charity then we can rely on that alterity as much as we can of the charity and the communication itself.

B. Radical Interpretation, Meaning and Truth

Davidson only directly mentions the principle of charity once in *Radical Interpretation*, and then only in a footnote. Nonetheless, that moment of clarity exposes the deep structure of charity underlying and supporting the entire project. He says, in discussing the extent to which his proposal mirrors Quine's discussion of Radical Translation in *Word and Object*, that among the differences between these two projects is "the principle of charity, which Quine emphasizes only in connection with the identification of the (pure) sentential connectives, I apply across the board." (RI 136n) In *Word and Object*, Quine, also in a footnote, points out that this version of charity he is using is both limited and not his own. It derives, he claims, from Wilson's principle of charity, which requires translators (interpreters for Davidson) to "select as designatum

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that individual which will make the largest possible number of . . . statements true." (WO 59n, quoting N. L. Wilson, "Substances without substrata," Review of Metaphysics 12 [1959] 521-539) What this means is that we are to presume that what a phrase designates, or has as its reference, is that which would make the largest number of statements containing that phrase true.

Quine is clear about how he limits his use of the principle of charity, while Davidson is equally clear that he is far more expansive in his own use. It is initially raised in the context of a discussion of the limits of translation. In this section of *Word and Object*, Quine is talking about how if we were to encounter someone who did not recognize that their language was bound by the law of non-contradiction, we would nonetheless presume that they were and interpret accordingly. If we came up with an absurd presumption, Quinean charity would require us to presume there was something wrong with the interpretation manual rather than with the speaker. He says in defence of this Maxim of the Presumption against Absurdity that "the common sense behind the maxim is that one's interlocutor's silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation." (WO 59) In other words, for Quine, the principle of charity requires a presumption of logicality rather than a presumption of truthfulness or empirical correctness, which are what I will show charity requires for Davidson. Quinean charity requires that we presume that people are not simply random in their underlying rationality and in the things they hold true. Accordingly, Quine advises that we presume that the person with whom we are involved in a communicative act is not so much truthful as logical. Under a more expansive view of charity, we need not exclude the possibility of communication with non-logically rational beings provided we could still

make the same presumption of honesty. In this sense, Davidson mirrors Grice's argument in *Logic and Conversation* that communication follows its own kind of rationality that need not be logically valid.

Davidson takes Quine's principle of charity a step further by advocating for a presumption of truth of an individual's speech acts. In fact, this seems to be his only explicit use of the principle of charity in *Radical Interpretation*. However, in so doing he also incorporates the Quinean presumption against absurdity, but in a different manner. While Quine allowed that there might be communicated absurdities, phrases that seem to violate the laws of logic and other restrictions on comprehensible thought, Davidson says,

> "The methodological advice to interpret in a way that optimizes agreement should not be conceived as resting on a charitable assumption. If we cannot find a way to interpret the utterances and other behaviour of a creature as revealing a set of beliefs largely consistent and true by our own standards, we have no reason to count that creature as rational, as having beliefs, or as saying anything." (RI 137)

This is, in a sense, a substantially more restrictive position than Quine's view in *Word and Object*. It requires us not to be overly charitable when it comes to the plausibility of another's expression. It also may require us to dismiss as nonsense a far greater number of cases that might, under a more charitable construction, be interpreted as logical in a different way. However, the broadness of Davidson's views of charity and 'taken-as-truth' ought to militate against this supposed harshness. Charity requires a broadness of mind that would make circumstances in which we could not characterize a "set of beliefs [as] largely consistent," (Ibid) extremely limited. We would, again, frequently fall back on a version of the Maxim of Interpretation I added to Grice's discussion of the Cooperative Principle. It is only in the unlikely event that we could not interpret a

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communication as something other than ghastly that we would to dismiss it as non-sense.

The apparent harshness of this view of interpretation is also mitigated by the requirement of 'taken-as-truth.' What is 'taken-as-true' for Davidson is what is believed true by one party and recognized as believed true by their audience. Davidson's views follow Tarski's on this point because it is the intentional linguistic expressions that are true or false, rather than the states of affairs to which these expressions correspond (ET 178-180). What is important is that if multiple parties hold that there is the same relationship between a communicative expression and a state of affairs then the two parties share a 'taken-as-truth' (SP 117-121). If communication has happened, even though some facet may violate the law of non-contradiction, it will nonetheless be communicable and understandable because it is 'taken-as-true' by the parties to the communicative act. In a sense, this could be seen to move the principle of charity one step further down the intellectual line from where it is in Quine's view. While for Quine, we should presume poor translation instead of absurdity (WO 59-60), for Davidson, we should accept that there can be absurd views that are nonetheless 'taken-as-truths' (RI 137). Charity in the sense of openness to the views of others is, therefore, applied not only to the communicative expression but also to the underlying concept of 'taken-as-truth.' Indeed, for Davidson on interpretation, the two seem to be connected. Davidson says that "the interdependence of belief and meaning is evident in this way: a speaker holds a sentence to be true because of what the sentence (in his language) means, and because of what he believes." (RI 134) In other words, our beliefs about the speaker's 'taken-as-truths' directly influence what we interpret them to mean because we presume the things spoken to be true.

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C. The Presumption of Truth and the Presumption of Honesty

As discussed in Part I, the principle of charity and the interpretative enterprise require that we adopt a presumption of truth – or 'taken-as-truth' – so that we can find a way into the otherwise vicious circle of truth and states of affairs. By presuming each of these as fixed we are better able to remain open to a variety of interpretative situations (examples of which will be discussed at the end of this Part). Furthermore, the presumption of 'taken-as-truth,' which is such an integral part of the principle of charity, may both support and be supported by an attitude of beneficence toward the other party to a communicative act. This beneficence of the principle of honesty is the cornerstone of the alterity I see necessary in any thorough understanding of charity and cooperation.

Davidson's only explicit use of the principle of charity is in the presumption of 'taken-as-true.' In part, this is a way to break into the interpretative circle formed by the close connection between 'taken-as-truths' and meaning assessed above. However, this presumption involves an attitude about the intentions of the other party to a communicative act – it is in this sense that I call it a dispositional condition of the possibility of communication. Davidson claims that interpretation must begin from "the attitude of holding a sentence true, of accepting it as true." (RI 135) This is, he points out, a dispositional restriction on communication because it does not require that we agree that the sentence is true, only that we recognize that it was meant, and should be taken, as true.[14] He continues to say that the presumption of truth "is a single attitude

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[14] Indeed, a full version of interpretation should also account for circumstances in which we are intended to take some things, like fiction, sarcasm and irony, as false under appropriate circumstances.

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applicable to all sentences, and so does not ask us to make finely discriminated distinctions among beliefs." (Ibid.) In other words, we should begin interpretation from the presumption that what the other party to a communicative act is speaking is a truth in that person's language. Davidson recognizes that this is not the only way to speak – that we can frequently use lies, irony and other non-literal communicative devices – but that even these falsehoods or exaggerations depend for their success on a greater bedrock of speaking 'taken-as-truths' (Ibid.).

It is in this presumption of 'taken-as-truth' that Davidson comes closest to Grice's work on the maxims of the Cooperative Principle. In particular, Davidson's presumption of 'taken-as-truth' can be seen as the interpretative flip side of Grice's Maxim of Quality. While Davidson's presumption applies to the listener of a communicative act, the Maxim of Quality applies to the speaker but both adopt the same requirements: a justified belief in the truth of a statement. While this is not the point in his work where Davidson acknowledges his debt to Grice – that comes in a discussion of communication's reliance on internal as well as external features (SP 112) – I find him towing a Gricean line on this point. I can make this claim, in part, because Davidson is not particularly detailed in his discussion of the dispositional requirements in *Radical Interpretation*. However, the fact that the listener must interpret the speaker's words as though they were true according to the speaker's own understanding is tantamount to requiring that the speaker "try to make [her] contribution one that is true" (LC 27). If both parties are acting cooperatively, each will independently apply the principle of charity in different ways to their separate roles in the common enterprise.

Both the Maxim of Quality and the presumption of truth seem to require the

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parties to a communicative act to trust one another in the sense that they must presume the other party will be benignly disposed to one another, i.e. the other will not lie or deliberately misconstrue. This beneficence creates what I call the presumption of honesty, which is implicit in the principle of charity and the cooperative principle's maxim of quality. Put simply, each of these principles and maxims, when operational, require that I take the other person's thoughts as expressing some truth rather than some falsehood or nothing at all. Were I to take them as false, I could not pick out the possible falsehood to which they were referring. Likewise, a reference to nothing leaves an interpreter with no linguistic traction. I must presume that they are speaking things which are 'taken-as-true,' leading to the view that they are attempting to be honest rather than duplicitous, with me. This leads to the presumption of common ontology because in presuming that whatever they say is 'meant-as-true,' and then I must attempt to discern the sense in which that statement becomes 'taken-as-true.' This presumption of honesty requires that I adopt an attitude of openness to the other in any communicative enterprise. In order to take this next step, of finding the place in a puzzle where a particular communicative piece fits, I must presume that this piece is not intentionally distorted.

This requirement is further highlighted by the cooperative nature of any genuinely communicative endeavour. It could be objected that I am demanding more of Davidson than is necessary for the theory to work. One could claim that all that is needed for the cooperative enterprise to succeed is merely that both parties want it to succeed and plan their actions accordingly. The speaker chooses words they believe the interpreter likely to understand, while the interpreter assigns meanings to terms in a

manner consistent with their beliefs about the intentions of the speakers. To my mind this does not fully address the radical nature of Davidson's interpretative program. We must start, in Davidson's work, from the position where nothing uttered by either party would be immediately comprehensible to the other. In ordinary circumstances, benevolence can be seen as merely a coincidence of self-interests. In radically interpretative circumstances, where nothing is known beforehand, we must use charity to tie down enough points of contention so that we can begin to make things known. If a party is actually communicating, they have entered into a cooperative enterprise with another, and the other must reciprocate in that cooperation. The cooperation requires them to adopt a presumption of honesty that may not always be necessary in less radically interpretative scenarios.

The presumption of honesty depends for its success on each of the parties to the communicative act 'take-as-true' any utterance made by an other. As it is founded in the presumption of truth, the presumption of honesty requires that we keep an open mind about the beliefs of our partners in the cooperative enterprise. Davidson requires us to presume that "a person intends to express a truth in uttering a sentence without having any idea *what* truth." (RI 135, italics in original) That 'taken-as-truth' must be a mutual property is a point Davidson feels compelled to address. He defines 'truth' in *Radical Interpretation* as "a single property which attaches, or fails to attach, to utterances." (RI 134) This property, he claims, is "more apt to connect with fairly simple attitudes of speakers." (Ibid.) By this, Davidson means that most people do not treat truths as the complex concept of the philosophers. Because Radical Interpretation intends to address the communication of sophisticated and unsophisticated speakers, it should presume that

an utterance is 'meant-as-true' despite the certainty that this will, on occasion, give rise to ambiguities and apparent contradictions from the ambiguous and contradictory things people often believe.

In the end, this question of whether the principle of truth is founded on the principle of honesty is resolved by recognizing that the presumption of truth is founded upon charity, which seems to contain, then, the presumption of honesty. The presumption of honesty is only underpinned by the presumption of truth in the sense that honesty requires an open-minded approach to what the other party 'takes-as-true.' To do this I must first presume that the person is expressing beliefs that are 'taken-as-true,' which is what the principle of charity explicitly requires. This apparent circularity is hinted at when Davidson points out that his application of the principle of charity was not simply more thorough than Quine's, but was applied "across the board." (RI 136n) While Quinean charity was limited to particular speech acts after the bedrock of semantics had already been secured, Davidson's uses of charity go deeper, and precede any attempt to work out the grammar of an unknown language. Our common understanding of 'taken-as-truth' can, with experience, lead to greater trust in a communicative relationship, but it must nonetheless be built from a preexisting presumption of honesty. In this sense, the principle of honesty is more fundamental to the principle of charity, and must be taken into account when developing a theory of 'taken-as-truth' in the manner Davidson suggests. It is through this attitude of presuming the honesty of the other, and the genuineness of his/her commitment to the common enterprise, that alterity starts. We begin to orient ourselves towards the other by presuming that she is orienting herself towards us; an understanding necessary for the

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beneficence implicit in the presumption of honesty.

D. The Ontological Requirements of Charity

It is in the second stage of developing a theory of interpretation that the ontologies of the various parties come into play most clearly and Grice's epistemic justification maxim seems of more value. In order for us to come to terms with what is 'taken-as-true,' even with a beneficent principle of honesty, we still need a shared view of states of affairs for Davidson's triangulatory approach to work. To return to my puzzle analogy, I must require both that the piece not be distorted, but also that this piece is a part of a greater, consistent whole – the puzzle that is analogous to the world-view of the other. The second stage of building an interpretative theory, when seen in light of the maxim of quality, requires that parties to a communicative act use states of affairs as a basis from which to develop that theory of interpretation. This requires that we come to terms with the other individual's views of states of affairs, which can often be seen in how they use limiting phrases like indexicals. Indexicals are phrases that are "sometimes held true and sometimes held false according to the discoverable changes in the world." (RI 136) Sentences with indexicals are those which make reference to a particular state of affairs but which are interchangeable between states of affairs. For example, the phrase 'it is raining here,' is true under some circumstances and false under others, depending on whether it actually is raining under the circumstances indicated by 'here.'

However, in order to discover the truth-conditions for the statement 'it is raining here,' we must not only know about how indexicals work in general but also about the world-view of the other participant to the communicative act. After all, if we are to know about truth or falsity of the use of 'here' we must also know that the thing referred to as

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'raining' is, and also must attempt to deal with the ambiguity of the word 'it.' If I were to step out of a café with a friend who said, 'es regnet hier,' I would be unclear about what 'hier' meant until I understood that 'regnet' was a reference to the precipitation and that 'es' was simply a clause addressing the immediate factuality of the following words. It would help my understanding if I knew that my coffee-companion was from a dry region of the country who had come to my city for one day and was surprised by the rain, but this only illustrates that sophisticated understanding requires a far more sophisticated appreciation of the other's world-view. Even a minimal understanding of how an indexical works requires one to appreciate its place in the sentence and the place of the rest of the sentence in the language of an other. Our ability to understand indexicals relies not only on our understanding of the logical relationships among the concepts discussed, but of the underlying world-view of our fellow communicator. Without a grasp of the other's world-view, understanding indexicals and logical relations may be impossible.

Part of the problem with understanding the meaning of indexicals, among other kinds of phrases, is with the mental nature of communication. While Davidson recognizes this need to incorporate internal elements into his interpretative framework, he must also accommodate the external requirement of fallibility: recognizing when a word has been misused, which is a difficulty for many internalist views of meaning. At one point he "emphasize[s], following Grice, the central importance of intention to communication." (SP 112, see also NDE 468) It is clear to Davidson that we need to talk about how speakers mean to use words rather than simply the words they use. This is, however, more difficult with some words and concepts than others. Some words, like 'money,' are social kind terms that depend on intention for their existence, let alone for

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their linguistic reference. Simply put, without someone thinking that a piece of paper has a particular value, and another party's agreement to exchange that paper as payment for goods and services, there is no such thing as money. Other words, like natural kind terms and words for basic features of communication like indexicals and logical relation terms, are mind- or representation-independent terms. Davidson recognizes that while some things necessarily depend on their social context, others do come already divided up for our system of representation (See SCR throughout). Distinguishing between when to apply one set of criteria is, of course, the difficulty that naturally arises, but which Davidson will resolve in a soft realist manner following, I argue (below), on the work of Saul Kripke.

In fact, in the case of 'raining here' and other possible examples, indexicals may not be the ideal starting point. After all, there are a multitude of problems when dealing with adjectives like colour and with possibly social constructs like 'raining.[15] However, this is consistent with what Davidson says. He holds that indexicals would be the second step in establishing an interpretative framework. The first stage, for Davidson, is coming to an understanding of the other party's logic. This is distinct from Quine, who simply presumes, with Wittgenstein on one reading, that individuals using other logics would not be comprehensible (WO 59-60, PI s.2). However, while some logical principles would be

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[15] 'Raining' might not seem like a social construct, but when compared with the more scientific class 'precipitation' which includes both 'rain,' 'drizzle,' 'mist,' 'fog,' as well as 'torrents,' 'storms' and other categories of climatic wetness, affixing the label 'rain' to a meteorological situation may be seen as a social construct. Newfoundlanders certainly would appreciate the difference between ordinary dampness and '"really" raining;' it's our 'snow.' In part this may simply be an issue of dialect, but for the purposes here it serves as an example of how understanding the use of a social kind term will require a more sophisticated appreciation of the other's world-view than grasping the use of a natural kind term.

more difficult than others to work around, like the principle of non-contradiction, others seem more flexible, and, as Grice's central argument observes, conversation follows its own rationality that need not always accord with formal languages.

However, even the elements of logic, which Davidson takes as foundational in establishing a theory of truth for the purposes of interpretation, seem to also rest on a certain underlying ontology. When Davidson claims that we must first uncover the speaker's logical apparatus he is talking about the logically necessary qualities of speech: things like identity, predication and other elements of speech that I discussed earlier in the context of a problem with English. Davidson here puts "matters of logical form" first because it is only through knowing about things like identity, connection, predication, quantification and other logical elements that we can come to understand the operation of sentences. However, these elementary parts of speech nonetheless depend on a certain ontology to make sense. Recognizing that a referent is the same as an observed thing first requires the recognition that it is a thing, as opposed to a part of another thing or an accumulation of other parts that is not recognized as a unity (imagine explaining Robin Hood to a culture with the concept of 'tree' but no concept of 'forest'). Likewise, the recognition that a relation is one of predication rather than identity also requires an awareness of the quality predicated, the subject of which it is predicated and, to make the language work, the kind of subjects about which certain properties are a category mistake. In the famous example from Ryle's work on mind-body dualism, the claim that a university was a building rather than a social institution exposes an underlying confusion not simply about language but also about ontology (CM 16-21). It is not simply that the visiting student misspoke; rather, he/she does not understand what kind of thing a

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university is. Consequently, while identity and predication may work in similar ways across cultures, in order for us to be able to determine whether a relationship is one of predication or identity we may need to know about the objects involved in the relationship in addition to knowledge of the relationship itself.

The distinction between how we come to learn a term and our use of that term, which impacts on how we can develop interpretative theories for those terms, can be partially resolved by recourse to the epistemic/ontological divide established by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. In this work Kripke shows, among other things, the plausibility of the concepts of contingent *a priori* and necessary *a posteriori* statements (NN throughout, esp. at 35-40). This divide is made possible by recognizing that whether something is necessary or contingent is a statement about its ontological quality, while a thing's *a priori* or *a posteriori* status is a statement about its epistemic status. Simply because we learn about things in social contexts and through the meaning of words like 'gold' and 'Madagascar' – two words whose meanings (both connotation and denotation) have changed over time and across cultures – this does not necessarily mean that those things depend for their continued existence on the actual epistemic criteria through which they are learned (PNI 311). This is, in some sense, what Kripke means when he discusses the importance of recognizing the difference between how we come to know a term and the ontological status of that term's referent. The fact that gold necessarily has the atomic number 79 does not mean that we are able to know this fact *a priori* (NN 138). In fact we only come to know this fact because of other facts like an atomic theory of the elements.

While Kripke presents this distinction in the context of an argument against the descriptive theory of proper names, the distinction of epistemology and metaphysics is an

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important one for many other parts of philosophy, including Davidson's approach to Radical Interpretation. This divide shows that whether we learn about specific things like corn or pigs in one social context or another does not change the fact that underlying this epistemic story is an unchanging thing from which an interpretative scheme could be developed. The fact that language is a social institution and that we are often unacquainted with how a person comes to know a concept does not mean that we are not entitled to understand that they use the concepts in a familiar way. We could have the same sense of necessary and contingent as a foreign speaker, but it is only through the application of charity that we can come to make such a presumption. This distinction may allow us to come to know what a person means and their epistemic justification for that reference, without necessarily following the same learning process as the speaker. This seems to be reflected in Davidson's approach to how we come to develop a theory of 'taken-as-true' and the role of ontology in developing that picture. It is this kind of common ontology that seems to underlie the construction of a theory of 'taken-as-truth,' which may in turn ground the principle of charity and show how that charity may depend on alterity.

E. Common States of Affairs and Alterity

Apart from its role in explaining how we develop a theory of 'taken-as-truth,' Radical Interpretation seems to require a common ontology all on its own, as I mentioned early in the prior section. This is best shown through the triangulative formulation Davidson uses to explain how Radical Interpretation will work. This formulation requires that we have two fixed points – 'taken-as-truth' and states of affairs – from which we can triangulate the meaning of an utterance (RI 130). One of the two

fixed points, 'taken-as-truth,' we have already discussed in detail. It seems to imply, even if it does not explicitly rely on, a common ontology. However, the second fixed point through which meaning can be triangulated is the state of affairs in the world that must, in order to be a fixed point, be shared between the two parties to the interpretative act. In order to make this possible the principle of charity seems to require not simply the fact that we trust the other person is telling a 'taken-as-truth,' but also that the parties share a common ontology. The common ontology required here is an ordinary, working kind of ontology – ontology as unexamined world-view – rather than a philosophically rigorous version of the concept. It does not need to be entirely consistent or perfectly predictive, but must be coherent enough to allow a person to function in their world.

Furthermore, this common ontology is a dispositional rather than an actual commonality; it is, like 'taken-as-truth' in *Radical Interpretation*, an approach to the other's world-view for the purposes of communication. One need not agree with the other's worldview; one must simply acknowledge its relevance for the other. Indeed, most philosophical discourse depends on people with wildly differing world-views being able to dispute those views through an underlying effort to approach the issues by using words and concepts in a manner consistent with how the other party uses them. Since Radical Interpretation seems to require a common ontology, and this common ontology is something the two parties must presuppose of one another rather than something they must actually agree upon, the requirement of common ontology is a dispositional consideration. It does not sound like charity as Davidson discusses it, though it is consistent with Grice's use of the cooperative principle. This presumption of a common ontology, then, seems to imply a deep form of cooperation upon which, if Radical

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Interpretation is correct, the possibility of communication depends.

Davidson is clear that Radical Interpretation is a triangulative approach, requiring two fixed points in order to establish the third unknown point with some certainty. It is to allow this triangulation that the state of affairs must be fixed. Furthermore, the state of affairs must be held in common between the two participants. Without this intersubjectivity the stability required by the triangulative approach would not be possible. Because of the need for intersubjectivity and the need for fixation to allow stability of states of affairs, Radical Interpretation seems to require a common ontology. If two parties were not able to come to an understanding that they were talking about the same kind of thing, let alone the exact same thing, interpretation would fail. In the Rylean example, one would think they had shown another the university while the other was probably becoming impatient with all the detours. It is only when the latter – the interpreter in that context – comes to understand that a university is an abstract rather than concrete noun that successful interpretation will be possible. It becomes possible because an understanding of the kind of thing discussed has become shared through a concerted effort to come to appreciate what the other is saying, literally in their own terms, and as a part of their own worldview.

Both the need for a common ontology and the difficulty in establishing one are demonstrated through numerous examples of interpretative situations, not the least of which is Quine's Gavagai scenario. This story, from Quine's discussion of Radical Translation, involves a field linguist's encounter with an unknown tribe. In this tribe, whenever someone encounters a rabbit, they seem to use the word 'Gavagai' to refer to that kind of thing. However, as Quine points out, "who knows but what the objects to

which this term applies are not rabbits after all, but mere stages, or brief temporal segments, of rabbits?" (WO 51) In this way, an observer of our own language could be confused by the caterpillar-butterfly identity. We have two different words for one organism at different stages of its lifetime to such an extent an observer might not know that we recognize them as the same lifeform. In another way, Quine says that 'Gavagai' might apply to all the parts of a rabbit when they are not dismembered. This leads to the recognition, unfortunately framed in behaviouristic terms, that "when from the sameness of stimulus meanings of 'Gavagai' and 'Rabbit' the linguist leaps to the conclusion that a gavagai is a whole enduring rabbit, he is taking for granted that the native is enough like us to have a brief general terms for rabbits and no brief general term for rabbit stages or parts." (WO 52) While Quine is on the right track here, he goes too far by requiring certainty of a theory of communication (used to include translation and interpretation). The presumption that the native and the linguist are 'speaking about' the same thing is justified by presuming a common ontology. Indeed, that we do make such a leap is an integral part of the possibility of communication.

What the Gavagai example illustrates is the need for a common ontological picture. It seems that without this commonality interpretation and communication would be impossible. Unfortunately, we cannot know that we share an ontological system with another person apart from through communication. As a consequence, before we communicate we must adopt an attitude of commonality. To be effective communicators, we must take the stance of placing ourselves in the headspace of the other in order to develop an appreciation of their understanding of the world and, via this understanding, the meaning of terms in their language. This attempt to view the

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world through the ontological glasses of others is the first stage towards an alterity that is beyond what was meant by Davidson's stated approach to charity. It requires us not simply to trust that the other person is speaking 'taken-as-truths,' but to develop empathy, an understanding of how they see the world, upon which more sophisticated discussions can be built.

Quine's example deals with a primitive tribe and a sophisticated linguist. In this case, the primitive tribe may be unable to step outside their culture; after all, the ability to understand other cultures requires that one experience other cultures, which will be less likely a reality for isolated peoples in abstract thought experiments. Consequently, in Quine's example, the onus of alterity is placed on the party in a position to fulfil this requirement: namely, the interpreter or field linguist. However, in other examples and most actual speech, the onus will rest on both parties. Communication requires that both speaker and audience act in such a way as to facilitate what Grice called the cooperative enterprise. Nonetheless, this example illustrates that the cooperation required by communication can only function according to a quasi-Marxist approach; each must attempt to understand the other according to their abilities and consistent with the needs of the common enterprise.

This ontology problem also plays a role in Grice's implicature example. Grice, when talking about implicature, requires his conversation partners to act in such a way as to ensure the other person can understanding what he/she says (LC 35-39). In the case of A and B's discussion of C's non-jailed status, they share a number of common understandings, not the least of which is a common language. When they discuss C they recognize this as the proper name of an actual person, but they place him in the

hypothetical context of going to jail. They consequently recognize the distinction between an actual C who is not in jail and the hypothetical C who is in jail. Underlying this seems to be the whole of modal logic, with its introduction of necessary and accidental characteristics. Implicit in this implicature is an essence to C that is not reflected in his accidental property of 'not being incarcerated yet.' What Grice's implicature example illustrates here is that sophisticated forms of communication, like fiction and sarcasm, require a more sophisticated ontology and also that this ontology, again, be shared by the parties. This type of communication requires that the shared ontology be sophisticated, but even the most basic kind of thought-conveyance requires a presumption of shared ontology. Both parties to the communicative act must understand that they are dealing in non-actual situations involving actual people. While Quine's field linguist may never reach this understanding, may never come to appreciate the sarcasm of the Guinean natives, if he were to do so it would only be possible because they shared a common view of what things were actual and what were hypothetical. Again, this points towards a heightened requirement of alterity in the sense that we must not only have more sophisticated ontological world-views, we must also presume and comprehend the sophistication of others when we come to have reason to. The more sophisticated our communication, the more sophisticated our alterity must become.

However, sophistication, deception and sarcasm should not be the default when entering into a communicative situation. The example of ontological confusion arising from the naming of 'Canada' deals with what happens when we presume we are working with more abstract concepts than necessary. In other words, in addition to emphasizing the need for a genuine alterity, rather than a mere presumption of likeness, this example

illustrates why a certain kind of realism should be our default ontological presumption for the purposes of interpretation. The Algonquins had a word, pronounced 'kanata' which referred to 'village' or 'settlement' in contemporary English (Rayburn 13-14). When they encountered early explorers, they invited these guests to their village. Unfortunately, the explorers were more focused on encountering another nation than visiting the village, and they interpreted 'kanata' to refer to the land occupied by the aboriginal people, among whom they were also slow to recognize sub-divisions. Because of this, the explorers reported back to France, and thereby Europe, that the name of the new land was 'Kanata.' If the explorers had understood that interpretation must start from simple elements and grow through these into sophisticated compounds they might not have made the error they did. They did not take this genuinely alteristic approach, and as a consequence I now live in a country named by mistake.[16] Furthermore, when we do not presume a certain simplicity upon beginning a communicative relationship, we are prone to errors of this sort. We may begin making references that the other party does not understand because they are not privy to the same background and network as we are. Correspondingly, they will also recognize this fact and attempt to interpret our speech in a manner consistent with their perception of our world-view. This will, in turn, bring about an understanding between the two people involved. It will increase the possibility that they actually develop a shared world-view, if only for the purpose of their cooperative communication. Alterity requires that communication begin from a simple standpoint and progress to a more sophisticated ontology from there.

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[16] Much like those who live in Madagascar. See also: Kripke, NN 163; Gareth Evans, CTN; and Searle, PNI 309.

Alterity's requirements are synthesized in a less sophisticated but nonetheless plausible communicative enterprise like the one in Davidson's discussion of his friend Kurt's utterance 'Es regnet.' Davidson recognizes some of the requirement of a common picture needed to understand Kurt. He explains that in order to evaluate the truth or falsity of Kurt's statement we must presume that the German is talking about a particular time and a particular place. 'Es regnet' should not, according to the principle of charity and, more specifically, the cooperative principle's maxim of relation be interpreted to refer to a general metaphorical state of affairs about the world; it is Kurt we are talking to here, not Kafka. Nonetheless, to know that 'regnet' refers to the action of raining rather than to water or inclement weather in general we must have some underlying appreciation of how Kurt navigates his world. While earlier I discussed raining as a social construct, here Kurt is using it as a natural kind term. Provided Kurt shares the basic elements of our world-view we should be able to come to a shared understanding through a presumption of common ontology and a presumption of truth. We must develop an appreciation of the factors that caused Kurt to say 'es regent.' To get to that level we must have some understanding of the way he functions in our common world.

What all these examples show, which is crystallized in Davidson's example, is that communication seems to require a deeper form of alterity than simple honesty. This alterity is broader than anything discussed by Grice or Davidson in their work on cooperation and charity, but nonetheless seems implicit in that work and may be required by their project of establishing the conditions of the possibility of communication. What this alterity involves is a presumption that the other party to the communicative act is attempting to develop an understanding of the interpreter's ontology, their view of how

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the world is structured. In the case of sophisticated forms of communication, like the discussion among friends in their shared native language in Grice's implicature example, this ontology can also be highly sophisticated but it must nonetheless be shared. In the case of purer interpretative situations, like Quine's field linguist and Davidson's traveller, the ontological starting point must be a more minimalist ontology consistently adopted by everyday thought and upon which the communicative structure of sophisticated philosophies are built. Communication requires an attitude of accepting the ontological pictures of others, and this alterity may require, particularly in the most radical interpretative scenarios, a certain minimalism as a starting point.

This is certainly a broader version of charity than either Grice or Davidson conceived. Nonetheless, alterity is consistent with, and may be required by, their views on how charity is needed to make communication possible. As discussed in section one, when Grice to focuses on the requirements of the audience as well as the speaker his theory looks a lot like Davidson's approach to Radical Interpretation. However, if Radical Interpretation is a legitimate theory of how communication works, it seems to need an even more thorough application of the principle of charity/cooperative principle than either author intended. In developing his maxims, Grice applied his cooperative principle to the speaker. When it is applied more broadly one can see how it aligns with Davidson's views on the role the principle of charity has in establishing a fixed point of 'taken-as-truth' between parties. Davidson's views on 'taken-as-truth,' in a sense, mirror Grice's approach to the Maxim of Quality. However, the requirement of 'taken-as-truth' exposes a deeper dispositional condition of the possibility of communication. Davidson's explanation of how we establish a common definition of 'taken-as-truth' demonstrates

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the need for a common ontology, which is exposed more clearly in the ontological requirements of the second part of Davidson's triangulative formula. Communication requires not only a common view of truth for the purposes of interpretation, but that we have a common view of states of affairs in the world in order to triangulate meaning. This is, however, a dispositional problem rather than a metaphysical one. We do not need to know that the other person actually has the same ontological picture as us, rather we must attempt, as far as possible, to come to a presumption that we share theirs for the purposes of the common enterprise. To do so requires alterity. The level of alterity required depends on the exact conversational situation. Sometimes, particularly when dealing with primitive people and primitive language situations, we should adopt a simplistic ontological picture as a dispositional presumption. When in more complex communicative situations, we will naturally require more complex ontologies but this complexity must nonetheless be built upon a presumed to be shared view of reality. The principle of charity may imply, even if Davidson and Grice did not recognize this, a sort of alterity – an attempt to orient oneself favourably toward the other – that goes far beyond the basic presumption of charity and cooperation they rely upon.

In this section I have shown how the requirement of charity or cooperation, necessary to the function of both Grice and Davidson's approaches to communication, may be far broader than either conceived. Alterity not only incorporates a fairly basic principle of trust, presuming that the other party in a communicative act will speak and interpret in good faith. It requires, both through the principle of truth and the need for fixed, common states of affairs that the speaker and the interpreter attempt to approach a

communicative act with a presumption of common ontology. This requirement, in turn, may push the parties into an alteristic situation; they must attempt to view the world as the other does. The central claim of this research, then, has been to explore whether alterity as advanced form of empathy may be a condition of the possibility of communication.

Conclusion

This project attempted to uncover what Donald Davidson and Paul Grice require of participants to a communicative act, and therein to assess the conditions of the possibility of communication. In Part I, I assess the plausibility of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Davidson's Radical Interpretation to serve as theories of the mechanics of communication. Grice's view is valuable because it stresses the role of intention in communication, a necessary consequence of any attempt to understand the problems associated with the kind of non-literal word usage common to irony, fiction and art. With this in mind, I examine Davidson's take on interpretation, which, while Grice focuses on the role of the speaker, further develops the role of the listener in a communicative act. I conclude that while Radical Interpretation's triangulative formulation – deriving meaning from the fixed points of presumed truth and states of affairs – is a valuable candidate for understanding the mechanics of how communication works, it requires a robust version of charity. In Part II, I examine the dispositional requirements of parties to a communicative act – how they must act toward the other party in order for a communicative enterprise to succeed. The principle of charity, in both Davidson's formulation and in Grice's Cooperative Principle, requires both a presumption of truth and a presumption of common ontology. In part, the presumption of truth leads, through an attempt to understand the nature of truth for the other, to the principle of common ontology. This presumption of common ontology, which is not explicitly linked to charity in Davidson or Grice, is nonetheless required by the second fixed point of the Davidson's triangulative formulation – the requirement of common states of affairs – and

underpins any attempt to pin down truth for the purposes of interpretation. In turn, the dispositional requirement of presuming common ontology requires a deep alterity; it requires that participants to a communicative act not only trust that one another is being honest, but also that each tries to understand the position of the other as much as possible in order to understand not only the words the other uses but the intention behind those words. It is this requirement of alterity buried deep within Davidson and Grice's approach to communication that is an unexpected finding, but nonetheless seems to be a condition of the possibility of communication.

The main reason why I felt a study into the conditions of communication might be valuable is the ubiquity of communication in the human condition. Consequently, understanding how communication is possible might illustrate something about what it is like to be a person; a core question at the core of philosophy's quest for wisdom. Indeed, the view that people are essentially communicative, in the sense that without the capacity to communicate a thing could not be human, seems to underlie almost any discussion of the other suggestions about what people are 'essentially like.' Aristotle's formulation of humanity as *zoon logon*, in any of its interpretations, presupposes a communicative being. Whether our species is characterized by its social, political, logical or rational nature nonetheless implies that we are communicative. In the case of social and political views of humanity, the role of communication is clear; without it the kind of coordination seen as fundamental would not be possible. In the case of logic and rationality the link with communication is subtler but nonetheless inescapable. Even if logic is taken in its most robust, realist sense – logic as part of the nature of the universe – our understanding of it is generally done in a collective enterprise. The delusions of the solitary madman go

unchecked without encounters with saner minds limiting what they can and can't get away with thinking. Likewise, even if reason is taken as a permanent construct closely allied with logic, it cannot be developed or understood in a human context aside from through its role in helping humans navigate through a necessarily social world. Rationality requires a social element because without the presence of others we have no need for the kind of self-consistency that is foundational of all approaches to reason. The irrational person can go unchecked until encountering a rational person, which may make staying irrational difficult should the two enter into any cooperative enterprise requiring alterity.

Given the social nature of the human condition, communication is inevitable. What I have attempted to do in this work is examine what communication entails. It seems impossible to conceive of a kind of communication – apart from some sort of telepathy – that would not require a principle of charity; that would not require us to assume a benevolent attitude toward other parties to a communicative act. To presume anything less than honesty and a common sense of reality, particularly at the outset of a communicative relationship, would seem likely to inevitably doom a necessarily cooperative relationship to failure. When Kant discusses how we cannot will lying to be a universal maxim he recognizes this point. If everyone is lying we cannot simply invert their speech to achieve discourse; lies are random and have many possibilities, while the truth comes from a much narrower list of possibilities. However, because of the cooperative nature of communication, we cannot simply trust that the other person will say something true. We must also attempt to interpret their utterance into something that could make sense as true for us. This reciprocity, the cornerstone of Grice's Cooperative Principle, requires an attitude of benevolence toward the other from which a the kind of

alterity I envision here can spring.

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