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MEANING THEORY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE  
ACQUISITION OF A FIRST LANGUAGE

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**ABSTRACT**

The thesis begins by making two distinctions which are central to its methodology. The first is that between valid and invalid criticism, the second between philosophy of language and meaning theory. These distinctions combine to produce the methodology which informs the thesis, namely that a theory of meaning can be validly criticised in terms of its account, implicit or explicit, of first language acquisition and, conversely, an account of first language acquisition can be validly criticised in terms of its theory, implicit or explicit, of meaning. The thesis continues by testing the appropriateness of the methodology against the classical empiricist and rationalist accounts of meaning expressed in terms of Ideas, arguing that the majority of criticisms of these accounts misfire as they do not operate within the framework of the positions they purport to criticise. Such invalid criticism is replaced with that argued for here, the conclusion being that the classical accounts of meaning are to be rejected on the grounds that they make use of a phenomenon, language, whose acquisition they cannot, within the terms of their own position, explain. Modern, post-Fregean, empiricist and rationalist positions, those of Quine and Chomsky respectively, are then subjected to similar treatment. Both of these positions have explicit accounts of first language

acquisition and so the conclusion to this section of the thesis reverses that reached when discussing the classical positions, in that the explanations of first language acquisition given by modern empiricists and rationalists are based on meaning theories which, for a variety of reasons, do not justify their explanations of the phenomenon of first language acquisition.

In an attempt to move towards a more positive position two alternative accounts of meaning theory, the formal and the descriptive, are then examined. The formal account, Davidson's, is defended against those critics who produce attacks centering upon its meaning theory as being, in the sense described above, invalid. However, as it is then shown not to be able to account for first language acquisition, it is eventually rejected. The descriptivist account is identified by tracing the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy to support a particular interpretation of his later account of meaning as being a descriptive one and a defence is offered to a number of criticisms of that position. A poorly worked out experiential account of first language acquisition is then identified, and this is developed further by introducing the area of non-linguistics, where meaning can be given without words. The thesis concludes by suggesting that this area's account of first language acquisition, although having a number of difficulties with its implied meaning theory, can

be combined with the later work of Wittgenstein to produce what is at least a descriptively adequate account of both meaning and first language acquisition. Moreover, it points to an area of enquiry where philosophical techniques can be utilised to great effect so as to add new dimensions to work in the fields of both philosophy and linguistics.

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**SECTION I - INTRODUCTION**

By far the majority of work published in the field of first language acquisition is non-philosophical or, at best, indicates that there may be minor philosophical problems in the area which are of such little significance that they can safely be ignored. Thus a recent collection of papers on language acquisition has not one contribution by a philosopher, an omission made especially clear in the preface:

During the last ten years the human infant has become a major focus for scientific investigation. Psychologists, linguists, psycholinguists, speech pathologists and educators have been expanding the boundaries of their respective disciplines to include the study of the basic processes and structures of the human infant

(Schiefelbusch and Bricker 1981, p.ix),

whilst another collection opens with the identification of the epistemological dimension of language acquisition and then quickly moves away from examining this dimension in any detail (Levelt et al. 1978, pp.5-6).

Perhaps one reason for this strange omission is that the shift in emphasis in modern philosophy from mere linguistic analysis to descriptive metaphysics has not been taken sufficient note of in areas such as those listed by Schiefelbusch and Bricker. Indeed, Firth's definition of descriptive linguistics as "an autonomous group of related disciplines - such as phonetics, phonology, grammar,



lexicography, semantics and ... the sociology of language" (Firth 1950, p.37) is not too far from Strawson's conception of descriptive metaphysics as describing the actual structure of our thoughts about our world (Strawson 1959, p.9). The parallel can, of course, be taken further in that Strawson's rejection of revisionary metaphysics (a metaphysics which attempts to produce a better structure with which to explain our thoughts about our world) finds an echo in Firth's rejection of what might be called revisionary linguistics, although in the latter's case this is couched in terms of avoiding the reification of systematics (ib. p.42).

Another, and probably more important, reason for philosophy's absence from this area of inquiry is the fact that the problems of first language acquisition have, in the main, been seen in terms of "why and ... how" (Stork and Widdowson 1974, p.144), which assumes that philosophical problems concerning the nature of what it is that is acquired are of little or no relevance. The literature shows a clear and consistent bias towards the problem of acquisition itself, rather than to what this thesis will argue are logically prior problems, problems which cluster around assumptions about what it is that is acquired. This bias involves the important assumption that language is synonymous with the spoken word, which results in non-verbalized "language" being made unavailable, either as simple data or, more importantly, as a possible resolution

to problems concerning both the what and the how of first language acquisition. This is more than a matter of mere definition as to whether or not "language" should be narrowly defined as being only verbal communication or as something more. Young, for example, produces a very wide definition of language as being "any species-specific system of intentional communication" (Young 1978, p.177). Then, however, he proceeds to talk of the problems of language acquisition only in the much more narrow terms of "encoding and decoding" the spoken sound (*ib.*), although he does qualify this in places (for example, pp.184-185), even though his original definition would allow for much more than just the spoken word.

Another assumption which stems directly from this bias is the view that only linguistics, in particular that of Chomsky and his followers, can best deal with the field of first language acquisition. Thus, although Falk, for example, does see the central problem of this field as being the "what" of language, he rejects as directly relevant the first ten months of a child's communicating life as playing any "significant role in the acquisition of language" (Falk 1973, p.319), because his implicit definition of language is in terms of the spoken word, a definition which to a certain extent is forced upon him by his acceptance of Chomsky's transformational grammar. A similar move is made by Derwing and Baker who shift from using the wider definition of language, when they talk of children communicating by means

of "any device, linguistic or otherwise" (Derwing and Baker 1977, p.86), to the narrower definition, when they talk of the problems of identifying linguistic stages as being "the primary goal of language acquisition research" (ib. p.94), seen in terms of the structure of words (ib.).

This thesis, then, will take as its central problem the nature of what is acquired in first language acquisition; which is to say that meaning theory has much of importance to contribute to the field of first language acquisition. The relationship between these seemingly discrete areas of enquiry will be shown as being in the form of a two-way interaction, in that the fact that language is acquired is a piece of empirical evidence that philosophical theories about the nature of meaning have to accommodate, and a failure to do so adequately must throw grave doubts on their validity. Conversely, theorists in this field who believe that their accounts of the "why and how" of first language acquisition are in some sense free of philosophical difficulties will be shown that their work is, in effect, the detailed workings out of the consequences of a particular, often implicit, theory of meaning. If that theory of meaning is unsound then it is likely that there will be important difficulties with these consequences. With Platts, "the essential theoretical prelude to the First Word" is an explicit theory of meaning (Platts 1979, p.5) and such a theory, incorporating as it does "a view of the relation between language and reality" (ib. p.6), is

therefore of direct relevance to an area of enquiry that has, in the main, seen philosophy as being at best of only peripheral interest.

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The first three sections of the thesis consist of a critical examination of what might be called "standard" theories of meaning and their accompanying theories of first language acquisition. The fourth section identifies various psycho-linguistic theories and criticises them by concentrating on their implicit theories of meaning, thus revealing the interconnection between these areas of enquiry. The fifth section identifies two alternative theories of meaning and attempts to show how the fact that one of them allows for non-verbal communication to have meaning, to be a part of language, opens up an area that the assumptions of much work in the field of first language acquisition has forced theorists to ignore. In doing so philosophy's concerns are shown to include the non-linguistic area, where there is meaning without words.

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**SECTION II - THE CHAINS OF EMPIRICISM AND RATIONALISM**

He listened as a young infant listens,  
undiscriminating. Those born with eyes and  
ears must learn to see and hear ... to select  
meaning from a welter of noise.

(Le Guin 1966, p.109)

## 2.1 The Nature of An Acceptable Philosophical Criticism

A recurrent theme in this thesis is that of "valid criticism". Indeed, it can be read as a defence supported by a series of case studies, of a particular view of what is to count as acceptable criticism and is itself constrained by that view to make use only of certain kinds of criticism when dealing with various arguments. For this reason it would seem wise to begin by establishing quite why a particular methodology should be accepted as informing the thesis' concerns.

Some philosophers have not seen their methodology as itself part of their legitimate area of enquiry. Thus Hospers, for example, in attempting to produce "the" definition of philosophy lists its various subject areas (epistemology, ethics and so on) and concludes:

once the tangled meaning-questions have been adequately analysed, the philosophical enterprise ... will consist of a systematic and reasoned attempt to examine the ground or basis of belief in each of these areas

(Hospers 1953, p. 54).

The central problem here is that what counts as an "adequate" analysis is intimately bound up with what will count as an acceptable "basis of belief". This is not so much the problem of reflexivity, or self-referral (cf.

Mackenzie 1987, pp.119-120), as the problem of what might be termed categorial blindness. The assumption seems to be that there exists some sort of analysis which can be made to apply to all arguments' bases, which carries within it the further assumption that there is only the one categorial framework, for how else could such an analysis be made relevant? That is, if a particular methodology is seen as having as its context a particular "basis of belief", or categorial framework, then some argument is required to show that the methodology, and especially what it accepts as valid argument, will apply across contexts to other categorial frameworks. Such an argument is missing in Hospers' work, although a sine qua non for many philosophers of education, but its form would have to be transcendental, spanning, as it must do, particular frameworks.

In identifying one of his fundamental questions of philosophy as being the analysis of 'analysis' (Körner 1969, p.26) Körner in effect re-opened the debate concerning what was to count as philosophy, a debate continued in the journal Metaphilosophy whose title is appropriately defined as "the investigation of the nature of philosophy" (Lazerowitz 1970, p.91). In doing so he came to reject the validity of transcendental arguments and, as a necessary implication of dismissing such arguments, to accept the possibility of alternative categorial frameworks existing apart from his own (Körner 1974).

His rejection proceeds by identifying the necessary conditions which any transcendental argument must meet in order that it might be sound and by showing that all, or some, of these conditions no such argument can in fact meet (Körner 1967, p.330). Körner's arguments can be re-interpreted in order that they might identify what is to count as acceptable philosophical criticism. That is, Körner's arguments directed at establishing that any defence of a position can do no more than exhibit that position's categories (exhibition-analysis) are capable of being re-worked so as to show that any criticism of a position can do no more than either exhibit that critic's categories or, alternatively, the categories of the position under attack.

The first type of criticism is that which purports to be purely "objective" and refers to some criterion of objective truth to mediate between a philosophical dispute (see, for example, Wilson 1979, p.24). This is similar, if not identical, to Hospers' position and suffers from the same categorial blindness, for if the nature of truth is what is at issue between the disputants then that cannot be used as the criterion for resolving their dispute. Thus when Peters identifies certain principles which presuppose rational discourse (Peters 1966, p.165) he can be seen as identifying the criterion for rational discourse, a viciously circular argument (cf. Körner 1973, p.14).



Similarly, if a criticism proceeded by laying out various alternative positions and then compared one with another in order that the 'best' might be selected then this too would be circular. The criterion for selecting between alternatives would itself have to be defended and this could only take place if some agreement on such a criterion which spanned the alternative positions had already been reached. However, this is the very point at issue, for what identifies positions as alternatives is precisely such a lack of agreement (and this is to leave aside Korner's criticism that one could never be sure that all alternatives had in fact been identified).

The literature on indoctrination, for example, shows the circular nature of the argument to perfection. It is not that the various disputants evince different categorial frameworks, but rather that they supposedly identify alternative, uniquely identifying, criteria, for the concept of indoctrination (see Snook et al., 1972). This is done by comparing different criteria with the favoured one, which is to ignore the prior problem as to how the criterion for comparison is to be reached. Indeed, this particular debate moves from the first criterion offered to two alternatives and then back to the first, which shows the circular nature of the problem to perfection.

The third kind of criticism is one which operates from within a position so as to "enter into the thought of a

metaphysician as we enter into that of a writer of imaginative literature" (Walsh 1963, p.18). At this point one is examining the internal consistency of a position by reference to that position's own criteria. The results of such criticism would appear to be valid, for they operate from within the context they criticise. At one level they could be seen as mere tinkering in which the context is, so to speak, being fine-tuned (cf. Simons 1975, p.39) and for Körner at least, that is all they can do as:

Failure to distinguish between the merely internal incorrigibility of a particular categorial framework and its indispensability may lead to the sad spectacle of one philosopher accusing another of confusing the categories, when in fact they do not share the same categorial framework ... And this is not saying very much, even if it is said in a very superior tone of voice  
(Körner 1969, p.219).

Ignoring such a distinction, for example, leads Peters to criticise many of his critics for "misunderstanding" his position (see, for example, Peters 1967) when in fact they are working from within an alternative categorial framework which takes as problematic the assumptions that he takes as axiomatic (cf. Wilson 1967). A similar point is made in another context, closer to the concerns of this thesis, when Bennett points out that Quine's criticism of Chomsky's work fails to come to grips with Chomsky's arguments because "It is not clear to me how mentalism can be refuted by an argument which has behaviourism as a premiss" (Bennett 1976,

p.261).

However, if contra Körner, one could identify a phenomenon which alternative positions all made use of in their different ways then one would have recourse to a fourth kind of criticism. This would be as acceptable as the third kind, because it would be internal to the position under consideration, but would have elements of the first kind of criticism's objectivity without its failing of circularity, as it would apply across positions. Identifying such a common or shared phenomenon would still constitute internal criticism, provided it could be shown that the phenomenon concerned was a necessary feature of the various positions under consideration.

In this way, even if a particular theory did not deal explicitly with the 'common' phenomenon, if it could be shown that the phenomenon was an implicit part of that theory's concerns then its introduction (if necessary, by a careful elaboration of the theory so as to show that the phenomenon was indeed a part of the theory's concerns) would still allow for internal criticism of the theory. Whether or not a particular theory gave an explicit account of the 'common' phenomenon would not affect the internal status of the 'common' phenomenon, because what is at issue is whether or not it is possible to give such an account whilst remaining consistent to the other aspects of the theory under consideration. Of course, when the account is given

explicitly then it becomes easier to see whether the theory is internally consistent.

What this thesis offers as just such a phenomenon is that of first language acquisition. Given that all philosophical positions make use of language (except, perhaps, that of the extreme sceptic) - and this is a descriptive point rather than a transcendental one - then all, either implicitly or explicitly, would need to carry with them some account of language's first acquisition. If this account conflicts with other important aspects of their philosophy then it cannot be corrected by mere tinkering for, given the importance of what is at issue, the conflict is more than simply a matter of producing a neatness in the position. If it cannot within its own terms account for something central to itself, language, then the position is internally, and therefore fundamentally, flawed.

Put somewhat baldly, then, the view that only the fourth type of criticism, combined with the third, can apply to alternative philosophical positions is both a methodological constraint of this thesis and a tool for criticising alternative positions; other criticisms are, as will be shown, either circular or trivial. Moreover, as the position which will eventually be defended begins by trying to resolve the problem of first language acquisition, rather than assuming its resolution, then this is to attempt a

methodological consistency throughout the thesis.

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Another, related, methodological preliminary is to point to an important distinction, albeit a somewhat blurred one, to be made between philosophy of language and meaning theory. The more general term, philosophy of language, identifies a meta-inquiry into fundamental presuppositions of the discipline of linguistics, in particular the concepts of meaning, reference, facts, truth, symbol, assertion and the various ways in which these concepts relate one to another. It thus raises important questions about the nature of language qua language, so stepping back from linguistics' more immediate concerns with aspects of particular languages such as English or Urdu. It is, then, to be seen as "an attempt to get clear about the basic concepts we use in thinking about language" (Alston 1964, p.ix).

Meaning theory, however, is the more specific term, being that part of the philosophy of language which, traditionally, has been seen as examining "the very essence of language" (Black 1968, p.206), the ways in which language, defined as a collection of linguistic units, allows communication to occur. This traditional view of meaning has important limitations, which will be discussed

later, but it does at least allow one to see that the more general term, philosophy of language, is on this account similar to Rorty's definitions of the term (Rorty 1980, pp.257-258), in that traditionally its subject-matter has been approached from an epistemological perspective ("impure" philosophy of language), but now it is dealt with from a logical perspective ("pure" philosophy of language), for reasons that will become obvious.

This distinction makes more than a mere verbal point. With Popper, "words are significant only as instruments for the formulation of theories" (Popper 1960, p.28), and the theory that the general/specific distinction is here meant to produce is that traditional and modern philosophers of language are not necessarily dealing with problems of meaning per se, for one could be a philosopher of language and not feel oneself to be directly concerned with meaning theory. Of course, because the one is subsumed under the other, it is possible to winkle out a theory of meaning from the shell of arguments concerned with other aspects of the philosophy of language. It should, however, be noted that the theory of meaning which is thus brought protesting into the light can all too easily be criticised as offending against the assumptions of an alternative philosophy of language without realising that these assumptions actually generate the theory of meaning. This is to say no more than a criticism of a theory of meaning operates on two levels. The first is a matter of internal consistency; the second,

more drastic and problematical, is a matter of presuppositional debate.

Much the same points can be made about theories of language acquisition. Such theories have the same relationship to the philosophy of meaning as it, in turn, has to the philosophy of language. Work produced by a labourer at one end of this chain of generality can be re-presented in terms of the other end of the chain, but the links must connect for criticism to be seen as relevant. That is, an account of language acquisition (LA1) can be produced by, or produce, a theory of meaning (MT1), which in turn can be produced by, or produce, a philosophy of language (PL1), such that one has the chain:

A) PL1<-> MT1<-> LA1

If, however, the philosophy of language was different in important respects at a later time then one would initially have the chain:

B) PL2<->MT1<->LA1

which, for consistency's sake would either revert to 'A' or, eventually, become:

C) PL2<->MT2<->LA2

The temptation might then be to criticise one aspect of 'A', for example its meaning theory, from the standpoint of 'B'. In effect this would be to assert that the chain PL2<->MT1<->LA2 was inconsistent, an assertion which misfires as a criticism as one would have to show that either PL1 or/and LA1 were not consistent with PL2 or/and LA2. Such categorial debate is, to say the least, unlikely to reach a clear conclusion as the very terms that might frame such a conclusion are themselves a part of the debate, being an example of the circularity alluded to earlier (p.12ff). This is to run counter to Körner who, correctly, identifies the problem in terms of competing categorial frameworks being "incorrigible if viewed from the inside and corrigible if viewed from the outside" (Körner 1974, p.14), but then posits the supposedly categorial-free mediating concept of "information" (ib. pp.63-64). Information (such as 'x is dead') is itself category-dependent and, as such, in Körner's own terms cannot bridge category frameworks (cf. Kuhn's (1962) incommensurable paradigms).

Thus the theory that philosophy of language and theory of meaning are distinguishable, although not discrete, areas of enquiry allows one to see the nature of the debate which exists within those areas. Moreover, by suggesting that there is here a move from formal to substantive concerns further justification is given for including linguistic and psycho-linguistic concerns within a philosophical thesis. This is because if substantive matters such as theories of



language acquisition are connected to a philosophy of language, then those linguists and psycho-linguists who see themselves as dealing with what they might naively term a purely empirical matter are, at some point, cashing in their philosophy of language's promissory note. In fact, as will now be shown, the nearer one moves to the substantive issues in this area the more difficult it is to perceive competing theories as categorially distinct, although superficially, at the formal level, they may well seem incommensurate one with another. It is as if the chains 'A' and 'B' diverged at one end, their philosophy of language, but converged to the same anchoring point, the phenomenon of communication. As this phenomenon must somehow be first acquired then further support is given to the view that first language acquisition is something which, at the risk of being seriously flawed, any philosophy of language must allow for.

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## 2.2 Traditional Empiricism and Rationalism

Given the distinction between philosophy of language and theory of meaning it becomes clear that what might once have been seen as a simple re-vamping exercise by modern empiricists and rationalists of their forbears' more traditional positions, such that they could all be identified by the blanket terms empiricism and rationalism (for example, Gilroy 1974), should now be taken as distinct positions, at least at the formal level, hence the sub-title above. There are certainly connections, as Chomsky for one has made clear (Chomsky 1966), but this is to ignore the fact that he is primarily concerned with language acquisition and his forbears with the philosophy of language. To identify both concerns' theorists as, for example, rationalists is to overload the term with ambiguities.

Traditional empiricist and rationalist philosophies of language were, in effect, implied by their respective epistemologies. Given that these epistemologies, and thus their metaphysics (Hospers 1956, p.349), were different and, indeed, sometimes developed in part as a result of a criticism of the alternative position (for example, Leibniz's claim that he intends "to add something to what he (Locke) has given us" so as to clear away "some difficulties which he had left in their entirety" - 1704, p.367), then

one might expect two distinct chains leading to two distinct accounts of language acquisition. Such an expectation might lead one to suggest that empiricism would be an example of the previously described chain 'A' and rationalism an example of chain 'B' and, on a purely formal level, this at first seems satisfactory. Formally, traditional empiricism (TE) would then be identified thus:

TE

WORLD structures KNOWLEDGE given via IDEAS within the INDIVIDUAL

whereas traditional rationalism (TR) would be represented thus:

TR

INDIVIDUAL has IDEAS which structure his KNOWLEDGE of the WORLD

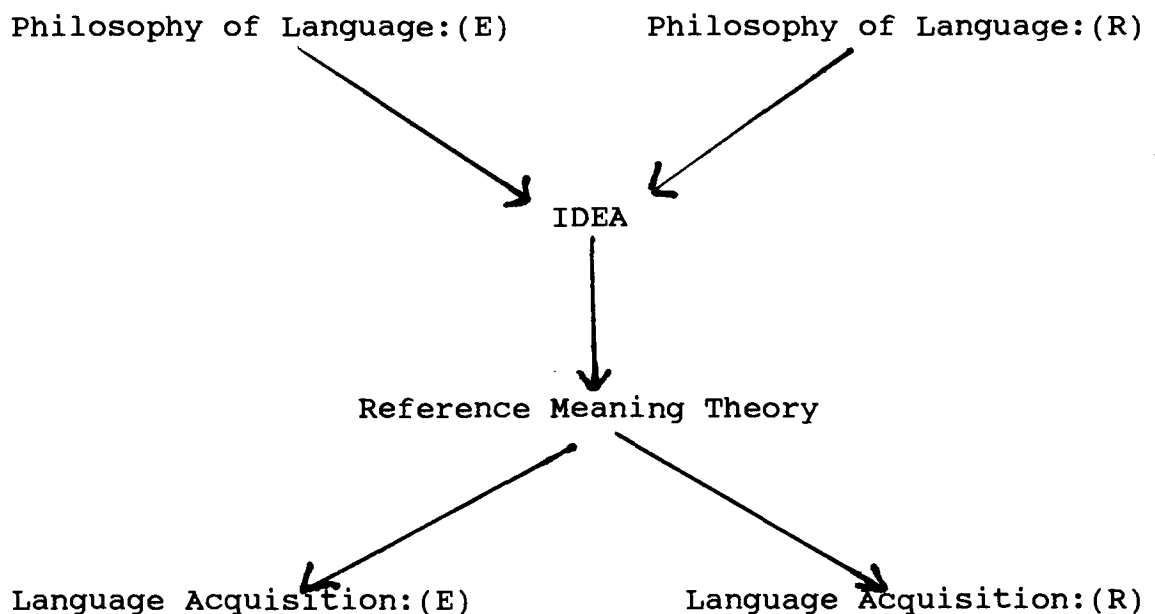
Although much simplified such formal identifications allow one to see that both positions were concerned to give an account of knowledge which would confound the skeptic (cf. Hamlyn 1970, p.23), the emphasis for the empiricist being laid upon the world of experience and for the rationalist upon the individual's own mental structuring ability. Selective quotations might also seem to support these formal identifications and the clear distinction they appear to make between the two positions. Hume's claim, for example,

that "nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions" (Hume 1938, p.71), where 'perception' and 'sensation' are hopelessly intertwined (cf. Hamlyn 1961, pp.116-130) might be cited as giving substantive support to the formal identification of traditional empiricism (TE), and Descartes' attempt to "call away all my senses" which allows him to produce certain truths without reference to "the images of corporeal things " (Descartes 1641a, p.107) could well be used as substantive support for the formal identification of traditional rationalism (TR). However, as will be shown, these formal identifications tend to break down when related more directly to the thinkers they purport to describe.

Before leaving the formal level, it is worth noting that there is one other benefit in talking in terms of TE and TR, in that it allows one clearly to see how each has a philosophy of language and thus a theory of meaning and of language acquisition. The philosophy of language of TE is concerned to relate its various elements, in particular the concept of truth, to the world, thus making truth synthetic, whereas that of TR emphasises reason and thus makes some truths a priori. Their theories of meaning, even at this formal level, are far less discrete however. This is because of the fact that it is not the world or the individual, with TE and TR respectively, which give language (for the traditionalists this means a collection of individual words) its meaning, but rather Ideas (a term

which is examined below). For both positions language has meaning because it accurately reflects the individual's Ideas, so both are reference theories of meaning and both positions share the same referent, the individual's Ideas. They diverge, then, when seen as propounding philosophies of language and converge when seen as meaning theorists. One might expect them to remain together when one generates a theory of language acquisition from their shared meaning theory, but at this point they diverge again (at least on the formal level).

These movements can be represented thus, where 'E' represents empiricism and 'R' rationalism respectively:



This divergence is surprising, given what was agreed earlier (pp.12ff) about the difficulty of categorial disagreements, as it seems to be a prima facie case of such disagreement operating satisfactorily, the two categorial positions sharing the arena of Ideas. At this point one needs to look at the substance of each position and here one immediately runs up against the problems of opening up what has been aptly termed "this Pandora's box of a word" (Ryle 1933, p. 17), Idea.

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Locke's claim that experience is where "all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself" (Locke 1690, p.89) seems to support the selective quotation of Hume given earlier (p.15) and so provide some plausibility to the formal account of traditional empiricism. However, he then immediately examines the source of the content of thought, concluding that there are two sources, "the objects of sensation" and "the perception of the operations of our own mind within us" (ib. p.90). Admittedly this "internal sense" is not quite on a par with sensory knowledge ("This source of ideas ..., though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects" - ib.), but nevertheless "All our Ideas are of the one or the other of these," (ib. p.91). It follows that some knowledge is produced from an area which is not, strictly speaking, the physical world, namely "the actings of our own minds" (ib. p.90).

To a certain extent this weakening of the empiricist position is forced on Locke by his insistence on accounting for "common received opinions" (ib. p.88), for we do talk about having knowledge without necessarily having a direct experience of the 'object' of that knowledge. More important, however, is his use of the term Idea which is variously defined, one such definition being "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks", it being

asserted as a commonplace fact that "everyone is conscious of them in himself" (ib. pp.66-67).

Locke was well aware that the term committed him to what we would now call a doctrine of privacy (as when he remarks "the scene of ideas that makes one man's thoughts cannot be laid open to the immediate view of another" - ib. p.443) and was quite happy to accept that language was public, for "to communicate our thought ... signs of our ideas are also necessary ... words" (ib.). It is clear, then, that his philosophy of language makes use of both the public and the private world (this is facilitated by the ambiguity of 'object' in the phrase "object of understanding"), whereas his theory of meaning involves only the private world of Ideas. For Locke "words ... stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them, ... ideas ... collected from the things which they are supposed to represent" (ib. p.259).

This is, in a sense, a double-translation reference theory of meaning in that 'Things' are the referents of Ideas and Ideas are the referents of Words. However, Locke is still drawn towards the referent 'Idea' as providing "clear and distinct knowledge", for if "we accustom ourselves to separate our contemplations and reasonings from words" then and only then is error avoided (ib. p.353). Such an argument, taken to its logical conclusion by Berkeley and Hume (and, in a slightly different context, the early



Wittgenstein), would make the physical world irrelevant as a referent, so producing a simple unitary translation reference theory of meaning (cf. Bennett 1971, p.1), where words would have meaning by being connected to their referent, Idea.

Thus Berkeley accepts from Locke the view that man can avoid the "delusion of words ... by considering his own naked, undisguised ideas" (Berkeley 1710, p.111), but draws the new conclusion that it follows, apparently logically, that "all other real things ... which compose the world ... we should not ... pretend to affirm or note any thing of them ... you can only distinguish between your own ideas" (Berkeley 1713, p.263). Objectivity, of course, is provided within the reference theory's ideational framework by this account through recourse to God and his perceptions.

Hume, however, as an atheist cannot make use of this move. Consequently, he attempts to redefine Idea, such that those "perceptions ... as they make their first appearance in the soul" are to be defined as Impressions and those which he describes as "the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning" are Ideas (Hume 1738, p.11). Ideas, then, have as their referent Impressions (they "represent" them - ib. p.16) and words, even those which seem to identify general referents, in fact "raise up an individual idea" (ib. p.28).

Here the double-translation meaning theory returns, but under a slightly different guise. We have Impressions of the world and, in turn, Ideas which are the referents for words. It follows that we cannot use language to speak directly about Impressions, but we can only give "instances which are analogous" to the way they act upon the mind (ib. p.30). On this account, as Hume himself realized, there cannot be an Impression of the self "without a manifest contradiction and absurdity" (ib. p.238), only a "collection of different perceptions" (ib. p.239). This is a basic fault, even in his terms, for his philosophy of language and theory of meaning as, without a unitary self, there could be no repository for Impressions and Ideas. Because Hume's empiricism is so vigorous what was only implied by Locke and Berkeley is now made explicit and the self within which Ideas (or Impressions) reside and which thus is crucial for explaining meaning (for these philosophers at least) is "finally splintered ... into myriad shards that can never be conjoined" (Hacking op.cit. p.169).

This is a far more pertinent criticism of the traditional empiricist theories of meaning than the standard refutations because it operates within the traditionalists' own framework. The standard criticism, that of attacking their private referent as being irrelevant to an explanation of public language (see, for example, Parkinson's one-paragraph dismissal of such theories along these lines in a collection of papers on meaning where not one paper represents this

position - Parkinson 1968, p.4), fails to bite as it is privacy which is, for these thinkers, all important for meaning. Indeed, as Berkeley showed, by making meaning depend entirely on Ideas then the logic of the position is such that Ideas by definition cannot be caused by the world, but only by some transcendent "person" having transcendent Ideas, or by our selves.

This may well not be perceived as a problem for the traditional empiricist in that, given the terms of the philosophy of language he is working within, he has no way of perceiving it as a problem (although Reid - 1788 - is a possible exception to this point). However, in addition to what they do see as a problem within their philosophy of language there is another difficulty that only Locke, of the three traditional empiricists examined here, attempts to deal with directly. At this point the divergence away from traditional rationalism (see pp.15-16) is most clear, even though Berkeley and Hume's position has to be teased out from what they say about meaning, the point of divergence being the account given of language acquisition.

Given the reference theory of meaning held by these thinkers (and, in spite of Hacking's remarks to the contrary - op.cit. p.52 - they do have a theory of meaning, where meaning is irreducibly private) then their account of first language acquisition is going to consist of an explanation of how their referents, Ideas, are acquired (one half of the

translation account) and a further explanation of how the Ideas are associated with their appropriate word (the other half of the translation account). The clearest explanations given of the acquisition of the double-translation account of meaning is that given by Locke.

Locke, consistent in his opposition to the doctrine of innate Ideas, asserts:

He that attentively considers the state of a child at his first coming into the world will have little reason to think him stored with plenty of ideas

(Locke op.cit. p.91)

and continues by arguing that as "there appear not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in" (ib. p.97) then it follows that it is these sensory Ideas which "the mind seems first to employ itself in" and on which it is eventually able to reflect and so produce knowledge from within itself. This, of course, is to rely on some sort of associationist psychology, in which by dint of continued exposure to "outward objects that are extrinsical to the mind" (ib. p.98) impressions are forced on the mind and these, presumably, become Ideas, the referents that give words their meaning.

Leaving aside problems that we may have with this psychology (for, after all, what else could the empiricist turn to?) it is clear that, as meaning is Idea-dependent, then language is to be first acquired by developing Ideas, presumably by

allowing the mind to be bombarded with sensory impressions. Within its own terms of reference this account is doubly unsatisfactory. First, it implies that the mind has some way of allowing impressions to become Ideas, of allowing all the impressions that the senses "convey" in to the mind to be distinguished one from another. This cannot be merely a passive biological ability that the child possess, for on Locke's own account the mind is active in sorting out its sensory input.

In order to avoid slipping into an account that requires children to possess some innate Ideas which provide the basis for their sortal abilities to function (which is to contradict a central element of Locke's position) Locke would have to respond by making use of the associationist psychology which underpins his account of learning so as to defend the view that the mind has the innate ability to structure the sense impressions which it meets (as, indeed, he does when he speaks of the mind as being "fitted to receive the impressions made on it" - *ib.* p.98). At this point he is moving away from a theory of meaning to some sort of neurological account of the biology of man and he would require empirical evidence to support what is in effect a hypothesis forced on him by his theory of meaning. Until such evidence is forthcoming little more can be said about the hypothesis.

The second line of attack, however, is less easy for the traditional empiricists to rebut by appealing to neurological hypotheses. Given the Idea-dependent structure of their argument, Ideas are necessarily the fount of word-meaning (that is, meaning is Idea-dependent). It follows that first-language acquisition, the first correlation of meaning to Ideas, consists in correlating Ideas to Ideas. This, however, leaves unanswered the question of how Ideas are first correlated to meaning, unless Ideas are again referred to (as, within the Idea-dependent structure of the argument, they must be).

In this way an infinite regress is generated which effectively prevents an explanation being given of the creation of the first Idea. Within the context of first-language acquisition the traditional empiricists thus have the problem of explaining how the first Idea, the first intimation of meaning, can arise in the child without at the same time either generating a debilitating regress or abandoning the Idea-dependent structure of their argument altogether.

There is a parallel here with Plato's Third Man argument, which shows that the Platonic theory of meaning generates an infinite regress of Forms, where Forms explain the meaning of Forms and so on. The regress can only be halted in Plato's case when his Forms meet a physical world which, within the structure of his nominalist argument,

middle-period Plato explicitly rejects. Alternatively, Plato can (and possibly does in his later Theaetetus) abandon the theory of Forms which creates the regress.

Locke at least saw no problem here, but both Berkley and Hume realised that a full-blown Ideational theory implies some form of scepticism, for if the physical world is acquired by means of Impressions and Ideas then in an important sense there are for us only Ideas and Impressions of that world. Berkley attempted to halt the regress that his Ideational theory of meaning generates by an appeal to God (which, of course, simply transfers the problem to the Deity rather than resolves it), whereas Hume accepted the scepticism without halting the regress.

Within the context of the problem of first-language acquisition the traditional empiricists can be seen as having the problem of explaining how, within the terms of their empiricism, their theory of meaning can account for the child's first relating a meaning to an Idea. To do this they would seem to have to move away from the view that meaning is Idea-dependent, otherwise they appear to be left with an infinite regress of Ideas; yet such a move would radically alter their theory of meaning and, by implication, their empiricism. Indeed, Locke and Berkeley can be seen as attempting to halt the regress by introducing neurological and religious considerations respectively into a philosophical argument, whilst Hume has to accept that his

attempt to halt the regress has the unfortunate result of destroying the conception of a unitary self which is necessary for the self actually to have Ideas and Impressions.

Thus the double-translation theory of meaning of the traditional empiricist produces two problems for their theory of language acquisition, leaving aside problems such as that of privacy which certain modern philosophers have, illegitimately, levelled against them. These problems are conceived in the terms of their own categorial framework and force them into accepting either some aspects of the rationalist's account of meaning, or an infinite regression of explanation. As they are consistent in avoiding innate Ideas it follows that they must accept the regression identified above. Thus their philosophy of language suffers from the crippling disability of being unable to account for a phenomenon which is crucial to its meaning theory, the acquisition of language.

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Traditional rationalists certainly have a philosophy of language which is distinct from that of the traditional empiricists. Truth, for Descartes at least, was to be identified in terms of "what was presented to my mind ... clearly and distinctly" (Descartes 1637, p.17), this being made analogous to the truths of logic and mathematics, and so being, in some sense, a priori and divorced from the sensory world. Thus the cogito (ib. p.29), for all of its problems, was seen as a necessary truth, a foundation for all other truths, but was explicitly not derived from the external world. Indeed this philosophy of language makes the human mind paramount over the physical world, at least as far as truth is concerned, for:

the idea which I possess of the human mind  
... is incomparably more distinct than is the  
idea of any corporeal thing  
(Descartes 1641a, p.127),

where 'distinctness' is the criterion for certainty. Spinoza's construction of a hierarchy of knowledge, based on the assumption that true knowledge is defined in terms of logically necessary propositions (Spinoza 1677, pp.186-187), is consistent both with Cartesian methodology and in the down-grading of the status of sensory 'knowledge'. Similarly, Leibniz's distinction between truths of fact and truths of reason is, in effect, a distinction between contingent and necessary truths (Leibniz 1702, p.359). Both of these philosophers differ from

Descartes in a number of important ways, but superficially at least their philosophy of language, in particular their conception of truth, is certainly within the same tradition and in opposition to that of empiricism: they would accept as the centre of their conception of philosophy that "the trustworthiness of the senses is inferior to that of the intellect" (Descartes op.cit. p.178).

The formal representation of these positions (p.24) asserts that they converge at the term Idea, and this can be clearly seen when individual rationalists' work is examined. Descartes, for example, stresses the importance of simply using "the power of conceiving" (ib. p.185) in order to ascertain whether or not there is, or is not, an Idea of something. Spinoza's definition of Idea is more complex and certainly less ambiguous than Descartes', for he wishes to use it to establish a novel form of the coherence theory of truth (cf. Hampshire 1951, p.87 - for Spinoza "to say of an idea that it is true must be to state its relation to other ideas in the system of ideas which constitute God's thinking"), but on the surface at least is almost identical, Idea being "a conception of the mind which the mind forms" (Spinoza op. cit. p.144). Leibniz explicitly tightens up Descartes' use of the term, but still talks of "ideas lying in our mind as the statue of Hercules is dormant in the rough marble" (Leibniz 1684, pp.289-290). All three rationalists' accounts of Idea, then, identify it as a necessary feature in their meaning theory, in some sense a

referent, as it was for the empiricists, and so their meaning theory now needs to be made explicit.

Descartes' meaning theory is hidden by the ambiguity of his referent, Idea. At one stage he makes what seems to be a straight-forward point about meaning which is, to all intents and purposes, identical to Locke on meaning, namely:

I cannot express anything in words, provided that I understand what I say, without its thereby being certain that there is within me the idea of that which is signified by the words in question

(Descartes 1641, p.227)<sup>(1)</sup>.

This would make an Idea a referent of a meaningful word, although the fact that Idea can mean, amongst other things, either "an act of my understanding ... or ... what is represented by this act" (Descartes 1641, p.229)<sup>(1)</sup> makes the way that the word refers equally ambiguous (cf. Kenny 1967, p.229), although it is the former use which is truly rationalist. Spinoza avoids the correspondence theory implied by the latter use of the term by arguing for an Ideational theory which is very like Berkeley's (see, for example, his claim that "when we say that the human mind perceives this or that thing we say nothing else than that God has this or that idea" - Spinoza op.cit. p.155). However, with Hampshire (op.cit. pp.91-94), Spinoza's account of truth allows him to accept that our ordinary language's referents are of "inadequate and confused ideas" (Spinoza op. cit. p.181) because these are related to our minds, whereas adequate Ideas "exist in God" (ib. p.180) and

are to be discovered, as with middle-period Plato, by the use of the understanding.

There are, then, for Spinoza two kinds of language, ordinary language with its corresponding referents and a second kind with its referents which is necessarily true (ib. p.187), and it is to the first kind of language that words belong. Leaving aside the second kind of language, his description of ordinary language can be seen as making use of a reference theory in which:

when we hear or read certain words, we  
recollect things and form certain ideas of  
them similar to them.

(ib. pp.186)

Leibniz's theory of meaning gives a foretaste of Kant's compromise between empiricism and rationalism, as his metaphor of Ideas lying within the mind suggests. Experience is needed to chip away the superfluous pieces of marble so as to reveal what was inherent within it (Leibniz 1704, p.373), but it is not sufficient to explain what was already within the marble (ib. p.369). However, his philosophy of language is such that this compromise is not developed. Instead he perceives language as "primarily a social instrument" (ib. p.449) which allows us to understand one another's Ideas, again allowing for him to be identified as holding a reference theory of meaning.

It should be noted at this point that the rationalists' meaning theories are, on one level, identical with the empiricists' in that they involve some sort of translation account of language. On another level, however, they are to be distinguished in that as Ideas are seen as being, in some sense, caused in the mind by God then theirs is not a double-translation account, only a single-translation one. In this respect at least Berkeley is closer to the rationalists than the empiricists.

Given this meaning theory it becomes possible to see how their theory of language acquisition differs from the empiricists'. The most important difference, of course, is that the referent is, in some sense, innate and so first language acquisition consists of making use of these innate referents. Thus Descartes accepted that "the power of thinking is asleep in infants" (Descartes 1641b, p.212), whilst also accepting the Idea of oneself and of God are "innate in me" (ib. p.125), although Leibniz was at pains to reject the view that these Ideas were "naturally imprinted, because not known to children" (op.cit. p.400), replacing it with the view that only necessary truths are innate. Indeed, even the truths of experience can only be "assured of ... forever ... through the reason" (ib. p.403), which is to make, in places at least, the operation of the mind (what he calls "a disposition, an aptitude, a preformation" - ib.) innate, rather than its particular content. Spinoza's account of ordinary language is also operational in this

sense, a point confirmed by his claim that to think otherwise is to suppose "an idea to be something dumb, like a picture on a tablet, instead of being a mode of thought" (op.cit. p.189).

For the rationalists a consequence of accepting the single-translation account of meaning is that, unlike the empiricists, they can, if they so wish, make use of the physical world in helping to make innate Ideas operational (as Leibniz and Spinoza - op.cit. p.169 - do explicitly and Descartes does by ambiguity). First language acquisition, on this account, consists in effect of actualizing a potential, breathing life into otherwise dormant Ideas. Again, privacy is not seen as a problem for these thinkers (Spinoza, for example, describing this "problem", uses it to distinguish between subjectively different meanings of the same perception - op.cit. p.169), so modern criticisms along such lines fail to bite again.

What does produce a pertinent criticism is an argument which attacks the basic presupposition of their position, namely that the empiricists' regression of Ideas (which, as argued earlier prevents them accounting adequately for language acquisition) can be halted by an appeal to God as the source of necessarily true Ideas (that is, Ideas which do not require further Ideas to give them meaning). Without going into the details of their attempts to avoid such criticism (see, for example, Descartes' replies to Gassendi, op.cit.

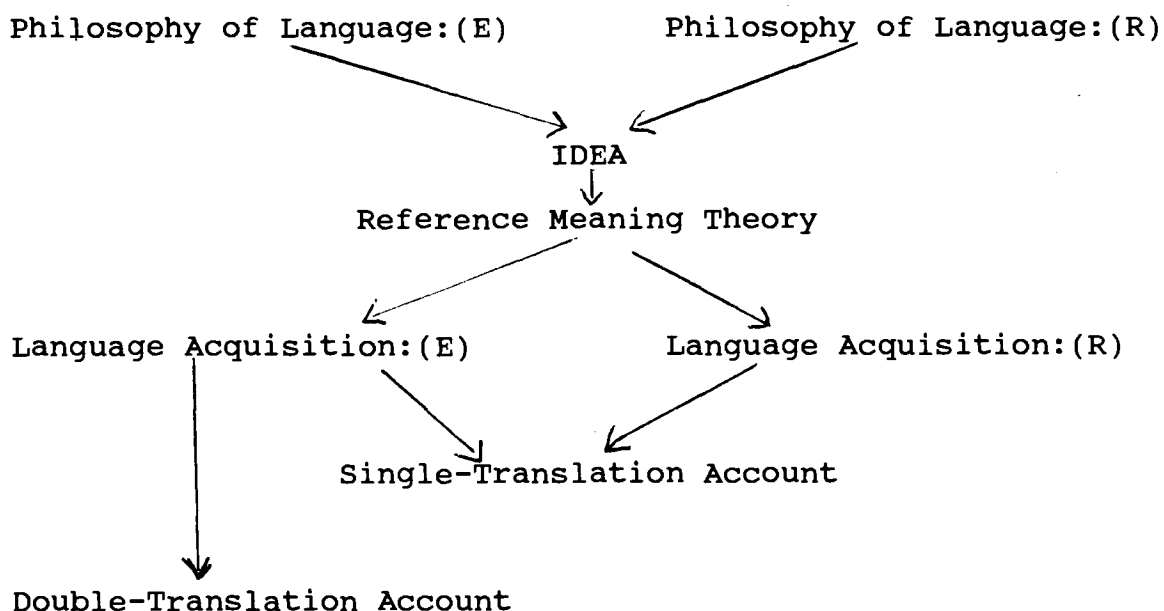
p.226ff) it is perhaps sufficient to point out that their theory of knowledge is such that one can only have a meaningful Idea of an Idea by reference to another Idea - meaning is Idea-dependent. It would follow that to have the meaning of the Idea 'God', as Idea-free is simply to assert something which in the terms of their theory is meaningless. Thus the traditional rationalist philosophy of language has to be seen as accepting a theory of meaning which, in its own terms, cannot meaningfully account for the phenomenon of language acquisition, a phenomenon which it accepts as existing.

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There are further problems with empiricism and rationalism per se which are best examined at the conclusion of this section. What has been argued here is that, although traditional empiricist and rationalist philosophers were not primarily interested in elucidating a theory of meaning it is possible to deduce such a theory from a close examination of their philosophy of language, in particular their respective accounts of truth. The theory of meaning so derived can, in turn, be used to identify an explanation of how language is first acquired and this explanation of first

language acquisition can be turned back upon its meaning theory and philosophy of language in order to provide a criticism which is valid in the terms of the presuppositions of these traditionalists. This validity is a function of avoiding any criticism couched in the modern terms of privacy, using instead the assumptions the traditionalists accepted, in particular that of the nature of Ideas and also the fact that language (in the sense of individual words) is indeed acquired.

The formal representation of their positions (p.24) now needs adding to in the following way:





This representation is meant to indicate that as one descends from the purely formal level of the traditionalists' philosophies through their theory of meaning to the substantive level of their accounts of language acquisition divergencies and convergencies become clear and represents, in effect, a map of this section's arguments. In the terms of the traditional positions, then, the problem of the acquisition of a first language is fundamental, not because they cannot give such an account but because in doing so they cast into doubt the remainder of their position.

The next section moves away from these traditional positions and examines the philosophies of language of modern empiricists and rationalists. As will be seen, there are clear links with the traditional positions, both with their philosophical assumptions and with their weaknesses. However, their meaning theories do not have to be squeezed out from some other aspect of their philosophy of language, for what distinguishes the traditional and modern positions is the latter's direct concern with meaning. Consequently their theories of language acquisition are equally clear and, once again, will be used as a way of criticising the positions from within their own frameworks.

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SECTION III - MODERN EMPIRICISM

The perfect use of language is that in which every word carries the meaning that it is intended to, no less and no more.

(Connolly 1938, pp.39-40)

### 3.1 Introduction

A number of points have been made in the preceding sub-sections which carry over into this section, in that they explain the distinction being made on the formal level between traditional and modern empiricism and rationalism. Although other ways of distinguishing the old and the new will be mentioned in due course perhaps the most important is that the traditionalists were primarily concerned with developing a philosophy of language, which accounts for their emphasis on epistemology, whereas the moderns are concerned with more substantive issues, in particular the problem of language acquisition.

For this reason it is to be expected that instead of having to generate a meaning theory and its corresponding account of the acquisition of language from an explicit philosophy of language, this section of the thesis may well have to reverse the process. In so doing it will, again, attempt to avoid the kind of invalid, cross-categorical criticism described previously, in that pre-suppositional debate will be avoided (as much as it can ever be) and criticised where it does occur, being replaced with questions concerned with the internal consistency of each position.

In this way, this section of the thesis will not work from an explicit philosophy of language to an implicit meaning theory and account of language acquisition, with criticism proceeding via debate concerning the relationship between the two implicit areas to their explicit base. Instead it will be typified by its movement from a base provided by an explicit account of language acquisition towards a meaning theory and philosophy of language that this base supports, once again examining the nature of the relationship between the specific and the general components of each particular position.

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### 3.2 Frege

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the traditionalists and the moderns is the abandonment of the former's key concept 'Idea'. This difference is intimately connected with the replacement, by Frege in particular, of the private, mentalist, interface between language and 'the world' with an interface which is public and shared.

Frege was struck by the fact that "one can hardly deny that mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another" (Frege 1892, p.212) and yet this public aspect of language is not catered for by a

philosophy of language resting upon ideational presuppositions. In the words of a more recent philosopher, there is a distinction to be drawn between "traditional epistemology with its concentration on ... knowledge in the subjective sense (the second 'world' of knowledge)" (Popper 1972, p.110) and "the objective third world of actual and potential theories and books and arguments ... of language" (ib. pp.117-118), these two being easily confused because ordinary language has no natural way of distinguishing between them. It is this public aspect of language which is missing in the traditionalists' theories of meaning and language acquisition, but it is an omission which is not seen by them as important, partly because of their emphasis on the philosophy of language and partly because, as some argue, they "did not have a theory of meaning ... (they) had a theory of ideas. That is a theory of mental discourse" (Hacking 1975, p.52).

What impressed Frege about the public nature of language and, after him, philosophers like Popper, was of no consequence to the traditionalists partly because of their own interests and presuppositions and partly because of the limitations of ordinary language. Frege made a three-part distinction (not, as if often supposed, only a two-part distinction), a significant move which had the consequence of allowing the theory of meaning to become a dominant aspect of modern western philosophy. This distinguished between Vorstellung (Idea, or Conception), Sinn (Sense) and

Bedeutung (Reference).

Ideas/Conceptions he defines as "the direct experiences in which sense-impressions and activities themselves take the place of the traces which they have left in the mind" and as "an internal image" (Frege op.cit. p.212); as such they are synonymous with the traditionalists' Idea. 'Referent' is defined as "the object itself" (ib. p.213), "perceivable by the senses" (ib. p.212), and 'Sense' as being "the common property of many and therefore is not a part or a mode of the individual mind" (ib.). This last "is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language" (ib. p.210) and it "has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language" (ib. p.211).

The relationship between these three aspects of language is neatly summarized thus:

The referent ... is the object itself ...;  
the conception, which we thereby have is  
wholly subjective; in between lies the sense,  
which is indeed no longer subjective like the  
conception, but is yet not the object itself.  
(ib. p.213).

It is this last which allows for the transmission of thought and which, for Frege and those who came after him, justifies the absence of any "further discussion of conceptions and experience" (ib. p.214). Having introduced the private/public dichotomy modern philosophy's emphasis moves away from the former and onto the latter, in particular the relationship between sense and Referent, between denotive

meaning<sup>(1)</sup> and its object.

A second, and equally significant move, was the consideration of the "entire declarative sentence" (ib. p.214) as containing meaning, as opposed to the traditionalists' view that individual words, linked to their Ideas, were the units of meaning. These two moves are connected, of course, in that the Referent of a sentence is not an Idea, or collection of Ideas (themselves representations of objects), but rather

Every declarative sentence concerned with the referents of its words is ... to be regarded as a proper name, and its referent, if it exists, is either the true or the false .... the truth value of a sentence is its referent ... From this we see that in the referent of the sentence all that is specific is obliterated.

(ib. pp.216-217)

Difficulties with this particular modern referential theory will be dealt with in a more developed form of the theory later in this section. The point that is being made here is that Frege is without doubt "the first analytic philosopher", such philosophers' major concern being defined as producing "a comprehensive theory of meaning" (Sluga 1980, p.2): as such he represents the watershed for traditional and modern empiricism and rationalism, in that he abandons Ideas as vehicles for meaning and words as significant units of meaning, constructing an explicit meaning theory based on public language.



Various tributaries lead off from Frege's insight, many eventually leading back to some form of traditional empiricism. Thus Russell's Logical Atomism, whilst still being a theory of meaning, abandons Frege's identification of meaning with Sense, replacing it with Reference in order that it might, so he thought, deal with three puzzles (Russell 1905, pp.484-488). Leaving aside the question as to whether or not Frege's original theory of meaning could have resolved Russell's puzzles, the immediate result of Russell's meaning theory is to re-introduce some form of Idea, but now termed "sense-data". This reproduces, as Russell himself saw, the very privacy that Frege was at pains to remove from language, but perceived by Russell as a strength of his meaning theory, not a weakness, for

It would be absolutely fatal if people meant the same things by their words. It would make ... language the most hopeless and useless thing imaginable, because the meaning you attach to your words must depend on the nature of the objects you are acquainted with and since different people are acquainted with different objects, they would not be able to talk to each other unless they attached quite different meanings to their words.

(Russell 1918, p.195)

It also, of course, produces an account of first language acquisition which is couched in the traditionalist's terms of ostension where 'this' and 'that' serve as a temporary way of identifying a sense-datum (ib. p.203) and where one first acquires language by direct acquaintance with words and their corresponding sense-data referents (cf. Russell 1912,



pp.25ff). This position has already been criticised (see above, pp.27-30) and so need not be examined again here.

Another tributary would be that provided by the Logical Positivists, in particular A. J. Ayer<sup>(2)</sup>. Again, this can be identified as being, at heart, a form of traditional empiricism. Although he is at pains to distinguish himself from the "psychological theories of empiricists" like Hume (Ayer 1936, p.181) and to make it clear that the concept 'sense-datum' is ambiguous, especially when the relationship between the datum and its supposed object is considered (Ayer 1956, p. 127), his account of the verification of a statement in terms of "the existence of the experience" (ib. p.21) is, although linguistically based, on a par with the traditionalists' approach.

There has to be, for Ayer, a

natural terminus to any process of empirical verification; and statements which are descriptive of the present contents of experiences are selected as the most worthy candidate.

(ib. p.54)

In context the preceding quotation reads as if it is not Ayer's own position, but rather some form of Russell's (see especially p.52-53). However, in an earlier paper, he quite clearly accepts the notion of these basic propositions, but translated into a linguistic, rather than a sensory, mode, when he claims that

the sense in which statements like 'This is green' ... can be said to be indubitable is that, when they are understood to refer only to some immediate experience, their truth or falsehood is conclusively determined by a meaning rule of the language in which they are expressed. To deny them in the situations to which they refer is to misapply the language.

(Ayer 1950, p.121)

Basic propositions are here defined as those "whose truth or falsehood is conclusively established, in a given situation, by a meaning rule of the language" (ib. p.123). In this way Ayer can be seen as attempting to avoid the private aspect of "sensory predicates" (ib. p.122) by emphasising the public nature of his meaning rules.

There is, in effect, a double reference implied, one to private experience, the other to public rules of meaning, and it is the assumed connection of the latter to the former that reintroduces the traditionalists' problems. This is especially obvious when Ayer defines meaning rules as those which "correlate certain signs in the language with actual situations ... The rules are learned ostensively" (ib. p.120), so forcing his theory of first language acquisition into the traditionalists' mould, with all of the traditionalists' attendant problems. This reversion to traditional empiricism is a result of accepting that at some stage the child would have only knowledge of "actual situations" which it would then, via ostension, have to perceive as corresponding to basic propositions, a clear-cut

translational model of both meaning and language acquisition theory.

What is required of a thoroughgoing modern empiricist is an explicit theory of first language acquisition and meaning coupled with a philosophy of language, the whole of which does not depend upon some variant on the concept 'Idea' or on the view that meaning is atomistic: this is a requirement which represents no more and no less than a plea to remain consistent with aspects of Frege's original work. Such an empiricist is W.V.O. Quine, and it is to his work that I will now turn.

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Given both the quantity and the nature of Quine's work it is helpful to attempt to identify certain recurrent themes in his philosophy, especially as these interconnect in a particularly intricate way. This thematic circle has the following four points on its circumference:

1. The nature of an acceptable empiricism
2. An account of first language acquisition
3. A meaning theory
4. A philosophy of language,

with the first and fourth overlapping so as to produce a seamless philosophy.

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### 3.3 The Nature of an Acceptable Empiricism

Quine's work is an explicit development from Frege's, producing a chain of publications whose links move from a critique of Frege's conception of the analytic nature of mathematical truths (1936), to a discussion of empiricism and the synthetic/analytic distinction (1951) and then an unpacking of this last to include points 2, 3 and 4 above. This is not to say that he accepts Frege's work in its entirety, only that it clearly influences his philosophy, and this influence is particularly noticeable when one considers the account he gives of his modern empiricism.

In a paper which sets out to identify two connected "dogmas of empiricism" he distinguishes what he calls Pragmatic Empiricism from the empiricism of the traditionalists. He claims to have avoided both traditional empiricism's first dogma (that there is a hard-and-fast distinction between analytic and synthetic truths) and its second (the reduction of meaning to "immediate experience") as a result of accepting an holistic approach to language. This holistic approach stresses the fact that "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experiences not individually but only as a corporate body" (ib. p.41).

He rejects the first dogma, partly by arguing that the distinction has yet to be made in a way which is not, in some sense, circular and partly by rejecting as "nonsense and the root of much nonsense" a split between the linguistic and the factual elements of any separate statement (the analytic and the synthetic respectively). This rejection is based on the grounds that "taken collectively, science has its double dependence upon language and experience; but this duality is not significantly traceable into the statements of science taken one by one" (ib. p.42).

For this same reason he rejects the second dogma, replacing "the impossible term-by-term empiricism of Locke and Hume" and that of the statement-by-statement empiricists with the view that the "unit of empirical significance is the whole of science", where "science" is defined as "the totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs". However, he breaks with the traditionalists' conception of knowledge, by claiming that knowledge is "a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges" (ib.).

This metaphor is a useful one in helping to clarify quite what his empiricism involves. It is a strange cocktail of both correspondence and coherence theory, with the addition of a dash of pragmatism. At certain specific and limited points some of our knowledge (which is possessed by both the individual and his community) is created by sensory

experience, hence the relevance of a correspondence theory, but the rest of the "fabric" holds together in that it coheres with itself. However, the former type of knowledge is not beyond correction, nor is the latter; neither are purely synthetic nor purely analytic, for they interconnect such that an alteration of the border of the fabric requires the cloth as a whole to alter, and vice-versa, these alterations occurring for pragmatic reasons.

Thus in rejecting reductionism he is led to reject not only the "naive mentalism" of the traditionalists (Quine 1969a, p.97), but also the arguments of Kant and others concerning the supposed distinctions between analytic and synthetic statements, which purport to steer a middle path between classical empiricism and rationalism. As he neatly puts it

Empiricism of this modern sort ... comes of the old empiricism by a drastic externalization. The old empiricist looks inward upon his ideas; the new empiricist looks outward upon the social institution of language ... the idea itself passes under a cloud.

(ib.)

This is not, however, some simplistic form of linguistic relativism (pace Harrison 1979, pp.110-111), for he believes as an "unassailable" truth that the "stimulation of his sensory receptors is all the evidence anybody has had to go on, ultimately, in arriving at his picture of the world" (Quine 1969c, p.75).

As will be shown in a moment, "ultimately" is here to be read not as indicating a return to some form of reductionism, but rather as referring to the edge of the man-made fabric of knowledge, although whether this so-called truth will hold is another matter. In a recent paper his empiricism's development is conveniently charted as being a shift of focus from ideas, to words, to sentences and finally to "systems of sentences" (Quine 1981b, p.70), two inevitable implications being, first, a rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction and, second, a rejection of the first philosophy/natural science distinction. Such a galloping holism allows one accurately to identify Quine's empiricism as being Holistic Empiricism, in that he has "rescued and restored ... the fundamental doctrines of empiricism by taking the unit of empirical significance to be language as a whole" (Harrison op. cit. p.111).

Leaving aside, for the time being, whether or not this is an acceptable form of empiricism it is, nevertheless, recognisably empiricism. Moreover, it has three further implications which are of importance for this thesis. His claim, qua holistic empiricist, that "statements do not have their private bundles of empirical consequence" (Quine 1969c, p.82) brings with it accounts of how such statements are first acquired, of meaning and of the philosophy of language. It is to the first of these three that I will now turn.

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### 3.4 Holistic Empiricism and First Language Acquisition

One might expect that a modern empiricist's account of first language acquisition would make use of the work of psychological empiricists, in particular that of Skinner. This would follow the same pattern as the traditionalists' accounts already examined which were heavily dependent upon, amongst other things, an associationist psychology. This is not to say, of course, that such psychological work is philosophical, only that it provides a framework within which a certain kind of philosophy, empiricism, is at home. This distinction is of some importance, if only to deflect philosophers' criticisms of psychological behaviourism as being, for example, "ninth-rate philosophy" (Williams 1972) and reintroduces the problem of categorial criticism, a point that will be taken up later. This expectation is one Quine satisfies, although it is mediated through his holistic empiricism.

The behaviourism that he accepts from Skinner, what has been termed Quine's "hard core behaviourism" (Davis 1976, p.141), he himself describes as the "same old pattern of reinforcement" (Quine 1960, p.82). Although a footnote shows that he is well aware of Chomsky's powerful criticisms of Skinner (ib.) he still believes that operant conditioning is the only acceptable way of explaining how a child acquires the first few words in his language (ib. pp.80-81).

Thus he consistently argues that "conditioned response does retain a key role in language-learning. It is the entering wedge to any particular lexicon" (Quine 1969a, p.96) with this conditioning being "within the scope of standard animal training (Quine 1974, p.72).

Despite this apparently extreme behaviourism, which deliberately echoes Skinner (for example, compare Skinner's definition of verbal behaviour as being "behavior reinforced through the mediation of other persons" - 1957, p.14 - with Quine's account of how "the stimuli to saying 'Mama' which continue to be reinforced are ... the seen face and the heard word" - 1960, p.81), the holistic nature of Quine's empiricism rescues him from the consequences of accepting that this is all that is necessary satisfactorily to explain both the learning of the first few words and the vocabulary that follows from them (pace Skinner op. cit. p.31).

This is accomplished partly by accepting the fact that, "whatever we may make of Locke, the behaviorist is knowingly and cheerfully up to his neck in innate mechanisms of learning readiness" (Quine 1969a, pp.95-96), and partly by giving an extended account of the acquisition of more and more abstract aspects of language to support his holistic contention that we do not learn each new word in isolation from other words, but rather that in learning the first "few dozen words, there will be no further word in the language that has not already been anticipated in its entirety"

(Quine 1960, pp.88-89).

There are two kinds of "innate mechanisms" which are, pace Mohanty, not both "basic concepts" (Mohanty 1979, p.35). The first, which is basic, in the sense of being a necessary requirement for language learning to begin, is the concept of "a sort of pre-linguistic quality space" (Quine ib. p.83), which allows us to order "our episodes as more or less similar" (Quine 1974, p.19). The second is basic in a quite different sense, in that it allows language learning to continue from the start provided by quality spaces and conditioning so as to enable the child to surmount "this great hump that lies beyond ostension" (Quine 1969a, p.97). For Quine there is only one basic (that is innate and pre-linguistic) assumption, namely that we have to be able to "space" our sensory stimulations. Mohanty, then, is mistaken in listing a set of supposedly distinct basic concepts which are, in context, for Quine merely sub-divisions of the basic concept of 'quality space' (Mohanty ib. p.27).

Quine's next move is to mix this innate hypothesis with Skinnerean behaviourism and his own brand of empiricism to produce his explanation of how language is first acquired. This is achieved by the identification of two kinds of sentence, Occasion and Observation Sentences.

Occasion Sentences are the more general term and are defined as being those which command "assent or dissent only as prompted ... by current stimulation" (Quine 1960, p.36), unlike Standing Sentences, which do not require such promptings (an example of the former would be, "I am in pain", of the latter "Yes, I was in pain then"). The assent or dissent, however varies from occasion to occasion (Quine 1977, p.39) and these Occasion Sentences are crucial for the modern empiricist's "linking of language to non-linguistic reality" (Quine 1977, p.156).

Quine argues that the child builds on these Occasion Sentences so as to develop those aspects of language which do not appear to link directly to "reality". This is achieved partly by arguing that even general terms are, at heart, object-based (Quine 1960, p.109), partly by using "analogy and extrapolation" from more obviously object-based language (*ib.*) and partly by leaning heavily on the interconnected nature of language (*ib.* p.122). Leaving aside the question as to whether or not this account of the development of the complexities of language is a sound one, what is of interest here is whether or not the account of the foundations of this development are secure. At this point attention turns from Occasion Sentences to a sub-set of them, namely Observation Sentences.

For Quine, as with other empiricists, there are "degrees of observability" (*ib.* p.42), but instead of couching these

degrees in terms of a distinction between Ideas and Impressions, or between knowledge by acquaintance and description, he distinguishes between Occasion Sentences whose stimulations vary considerably between people (those containing the word "teacher", for example) and those which vary hardly at all. These last are Observation Sentences<sup>(3)</sup> and are crucial for language to be acquired (as opposed to developed).

Observation Sentences are defined as:

an occasion sentence whose occasion is not only intersubjectively observable but is generally adequate, moreover, to elicit assent to the sentence from any present witness conversant with the language. It is not a report of private sense data; typically, rather, it contains references to physical objects.

These...are keyed directly to observation (via) conditioned response.  
(Quine 1975, p.73)

Such conditioning is "soft" in the sense that one does not as a child, automatically say "Mama" in the presence of one's mother, but will do so if asked. In this way it is to be seen as the acquisition of an appropriate habit, rather than of an appropriate reflex.

In an earlier paper Quine had examined what he called the "spectacular reducibility" of, for example, Carnap who attempted to analyse non-logical and non-mathematical expressions into expressions of logic, mathematics and "one 'empirical' primitive, representing a certain dyadic

relationship described as recollection of resemblance" (Quine 1936, p.268). Although he is opposed to such moves in the fields of logic and mathematics (in part because of his rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction), it is clear that the view of, amongst others, Whitehead, Russell and Carnap that there is a primitive base from which language (or, in Russell's case, mathematics) is "definitionally constructible" (ib. p.257) is one that has crept back in to his account of first language acquisition.

For Quine the primitive base consists of sensory stimulations which the child can 'space' and the base develops by the use of the concept of an Observation Sentence. This is a sentence

we can correlate with observable circumstances of the occasion of utterance or assent, independently of variations in the past histories of individual informants. They afford the only entry to a language ... (It is) situated at the sensory periphery of the body scientific, is the minimal verifiable aggregate; it has an empirical content all its own and wears it on its sleeve.

(Quine 1969c, p.89)

Their primitiveness, and therefore the way in which they are at one and the same time both verbal and yet referentially non-verbal (cf. Wittgenstein 1921, 2.15121), is brought out some five years after the previous quotation when Quine, addressing himself to the description of Observation Sentences, points out that "somewhere there have to be nonverbal reference points, nonverbal circumstances that can

be intersubjectively appreciated and associated with the appropriate utterance on the spot" (Quine 1974, p.37).

The "appropriate utterance" is, of course, an Observation Sentence. These sentences are primitive (in that they "are our introduction to language, for they are the expressions that we learn to use without learning to use others first" - Quine 1977, p.157). They are, qua sentences, clearly verbal, but at the same time they are non-verbally referential in that they link language to a non-linguistic reality (ib. p.156).

In effect, they are forced upon Quine by his abandonment of the traditionalists' Idea in favour of the sentence, a point he recognizes himself (ib. pp.155-157). As the concept of Idea drops out as irrelevant and that of Observation Sentence takes its place as the bridge between sensory stimulants and language then, as an empiricist, he has to talk in terms of them being "in closest causal proximity to the sensory receptors" and of their truth-value being determined only by "the sensory stimulation present at the time" (Quine 1969c, p.85), this last being intersubjectively checked by community agreement (ib. p.87). Once Observation Sentences have been acquired through "direct conditioning" (Quine 1974, p.42) then the child has the means to develop a language which can move further and further away from such sentences. In a very real sense, then, language is constructed from Observation Sentences, hence the similarity

to the position he was criticising in 1936. This means, in effect, that Quine's theory of first language acquisition depends upon his account of how these sentences are themselves acquired.

That account attempts to avoid the privacy problems that Quine sees as being relevant to the traditionalists' accounts of the matter. Despite his acceptance of Wittgenstein's criticism of ostension, he still relies on ostension to trigger the innate quality spacing mechanism by claiming that the pointing finger, for example, emphasises a section of the visual field, so allowing this kind of sentence to be learned (ib. pp.41-45). As he says, the "learning of an observation sentence amounts to determining ... its similarity basis ... the distinctive trait shared by the episodes appropriate to that observation sentence" (ib. p.43). This "innate sense of perceptual similarity" (ib. p.19) has been described earlier as "quality spacing", but here Quine emphasises that, although it is subjective, it also has "a degree of objective validity" (ib.) in that natural selection "will have fostered perceptual similarity standards in us" (ib.).

Thus we are biologically predisposed to recognize certain perceptions as being similar. This predisposition is encouraged through ostension and conditioning to elicit Observation Sentences which can then be used to construct Occasion Sentences and Standing Sentences. The whole



process is facilitated by the way in which the interlocking nature of language leads the child from linguistic primitives to complexes via "contextual learning" (Quine 1960, p.93).

It was argued earlier (pp.17-18) that the traditional empiricists had a double-translation theory of meaning. Here, however, there is a double-translation account of the acquisition of language, in that sensory irritations are translated into Observation Sentences which, in turn, translate into the rest of language. This, then, involves a particular meaning theory and it is one that Quine makes quite explicit.

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### 3.5 Quine's Empiricist Meaning Theory

It has been said of Quine that his meaning theory is non-existent, in that

in Quine's theories of language acquisition and use, the meanings of sentences play no role. An utterance is a response to verbal or non-verbal stimulations. No meanings intervene. Hence, there is no reason to give an account of how children learn the meanings of sentences.

(Davis 1976, p.150)

Even if that interpretation were correct it would be, of course, itself a meaning theory. However, Quine himself talks of his "verification theory of meaning" (Quine 1969c, p.81). This involves something called "empirical meaning" (ib.) and differs from the traditionalists' ideational reference theory by stressing the fact that "statements largely do not have their private bundles of empirical consequences" (ib. p.82). The meanings of sentences do play a role, contra Davis and Hacking (1975, pp.178-180), but the distinction drawn between different types of sentence is crucial here.

Quine's holistic empiricism is again in evidence, for he argues that the coherence of one sentence with another is what gives most sentences" (ib. p.81 - my emphasis) their evidential base, their meaning, but Observation Sentences

are specifically excluded from this conclusion, for these are stimuli-dependent. As has already been shown (ib. pp.68-81), "the keying of sentences to shared stimulation" (ib.) is, for Quine, a necessary condition for Observation Sentences to have meaning, another being the stress he places on the conditioned learning that explains how "keying" occurs. This contrasts with the traditionalists, who would have replaced "shared stimulation" with "the individual's Ideas", but that there is a meaning theory here is beyond doubt.

This meaning theory is very similar, if not identical to, the traditionalists' reference theory, for Observation Sentences at least (and, perhaps, by a reduction of the rest of language to such sentences, for language as a whole too - a point that will be returned to later). The definition of these sentences as being "precisely the ones that we can correlate with observable circumstances of the occasion of utterance", as being "where meaning is firmest" and as having "an empirical content all (their) own" (ib. p.89) shows that meaning is here being used in the sense of empirically verifiable. This empirical verification proceeds by means of a two-way referential connection, from sensory stimulus to Observation Sentences and vice-versa and is mediated by the linguistic community itself (cf. Quine 1969b, p.28).

It is, in effect, what might be called a Stimulus meaning theory (cf. Quine 1960, p.32), offered as an account of how one aspect of language, its first steps, have meaning. On its own, however, it does not constitute a meaning theory for the whole of language, this being derived from the holistic, or coherence, relationship described earlier.

Quine's attempt to elucidate Observation Sentences by the use of the metaphor of their being "the anchor line" between public experience and language (Quine 1977, p.157) suggests another analogy here. Quine's two meaning theories are comparable to two aspects of ship-building. The first, his Stimulus meaning theory, applies to the building of a ship's keel. This has to be laid first, and all that follows depends upon it. The second, his Coherence meaning theory, applies to the rest of the ship. Without the former, the latter would never develop; without the latter, the former would not be a developed craft. Occasionally Quine stresses the latter (for example, when he says that "meanings are meanings of expressions" - Quine 1981a, p.44) and, on its own, such statements do support the interpretation that Davis and Hacking, for example, suggest. However the primacy, both temporal and logical, that he gives to Observation Sentences shows that such an interpretation is only a part of the story and that these sentences do have "their separable empirical meaning" (Quine 1981b, p.71), which is explicable by the use of his stimulus meaning theory.

These two meaning theories, and in particular his referential meaning theory, presuppose a philosophy of language, as does his account of first language acquisition. In fact, as will now become clear, to examine his philosophy of language is to do no more than continue the examination of various aspects of his holistic empiricism, especially its epistemological and metaphysical position, and so brings the description of his work full circle.

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### 3.6 Quine's Philosophy of Language

It was pointed out earlier that Rorty's distinction between impure and pure philosophy of language might help to distinguish traditional empiricism from what followed it (pp.15-16). However, it is clear from Quine's work that the three aspects of his philosophy already considered combine to produce an epistemological position which is certainly not "pure" in Rorty's sense of that term. Admittedly, Quine is not primarily concerned with refuting epistemological skepticism, as were the traditionalists, and his rejection of their key concept 'Idea' also marks a break with their work.

Nevertheless, he produces an epistemology which has been "naturalized", in that his holistic empiricism leads him to reject the traditionalists' view that knowledge consists of "private bundles of empirical consequences" (Quine 1969c, p.82); his account of language acquisition leads him to emphasise both the individual's innate abilities and conditioning as helping to create knowledge; and his theories of meaning to reiterate the "impossibility of an epistemological reduction" (ib.) and to stress the importance of the individual.

This produces a summary of his epistemological position which shows that, for Rorty at least, it remains as 'impure'

as that of the traditionalists

The old epistemology aspired to contain, in a sense, natural science; it would construct it somehow from sense data. Epistemology in its new setting, conversely, is contained in natural science, as a chapter of psychology.  
(ib. p.83)

Indeed, this is a viewpoint of Quine's work that Rorty himself accepts (Rorty 1980, p.299). Moreover, this naturalism is taken still further by Quine, again as an inevitable consequence of his theories of language acquisition and meaning, in that he believes that epistemology, perceived of as a part of psychology, might well advance by identifying evolutionarily valuable knowledge, and, perceived of as a part of linguistics, might be able to identify "perceptual norms ... taken as epistemological building blocks, the working elements of experience" (ib. p.90).

It can be seen, then, that traditional empiricists started with an epistemological concern from which it is possible to generate an account of language acquisition and meaning theory, whereas for Quine the reverse appears to be true, in that his epistemology is consistent with a holistic empiricist account of language acquisition and meaning theory. His metaphysics is also no more than consistent with what has gone before and hinges on both aspects of his holistic empiricism, on 'holism' by stressing that individual words have a referential meaning only within the language as a whole, and on 'empiricism' by the

"stimulations" that produce the referents for Observation Sentences. It is not that knowledge requires no referents, for that would be to concentrate on his coherence meaning theory alone, but rather that some knowledge claims are sensory based, these being expressed through the medium of Observation Sentences.

This account of reality (which locates meanings in language and to which the child accommodates as it first acquires language) is presented as a thesis concerning the indeterminacy of translation. Given (as a result of his holistic empiricism) that there are no "objective references of terms" (Quine 1960, p.79), no "fact of the matter" (Quine 1977, p.167) to appeal to which might decide between two competing translations of a newly-discovered language, then such translations are indeterminate in that neither can be compared to the original meanings of native speakers. There is, moreover, a similar "empirical slack in our own beliefs" (Quine 1960, p.78), in that the further one gets from "sentences with visibly direct conditioning to non-verbal stimuli" (*ib.*) the more indeterminate one's meanings are within one's own linguistic community (Quine 1974, p.83).

In effect Quine's problems of translation are problems of reference for that aspect of his philosophy which stresses the coherence of language as a system of mutually supporting meanings. If these problems are incapable of resolution then it would be impossible for a child to acquire language,



as he would have to start (and, at the same time, end) by acquiring the whole of language. Indeed, Quine makes a similar point when he warns against the "gratuitousness of ... imputing our ontology" to the first words that a child utters (ib. p.82).

As has already been shown he avoids this impasse by identifying a "referential part of language" (ib. p.84), the Observation Sentences. Ordinary language is "loosely referential .... loosely factual" (Quine 1977, p.168) and the tightly referential and factual aspect of language which is necessary for the beginnings and continuation of language is, of course, to be found in Observation Sentences. At this point Quine accepts that he is a physicalist (ib. p.169), for his concern with such sentences is with their public stimulations upon the subject's sensory apparatus, rather than with the object itself (whatever that might be) or whatever is occurring subjectively within the subject's neurological apparatus (Quine 1960, p.31).

It can be seen, then, that his philosophy of language is neither purely nominalist nor purely realist, but a unique combination of these two which quite consistently reflects his holistic empiricism. It is in this respect that he can be further distinguished from the traditionalists, for they were more simply orientated towards some form of naive realism<sup>(4)</sup>. It now remains to show whether or not his empiricism is sound; that is, whether or not it produces an

adequate account of the fact that the vast majority of children do acquire language.

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### 3.7 Critique

As before, what constitutes an acceptable criticism of a system such as this must be couched within its own categories. This point is made, by implication at least, against Quine by Bennett when he says of his critique of some mentalist theories of meaning

It is not clear to me how mentalism can be refuted by an argument which has behaviourism as a premiss; and I can imagine a mentalist accepting Quine's argument and using it contrapositively, as a reductio ad absurdum of the behaviourist approach to meaning  
(Bennett 1976, p.261).

In fact there seems to be some ambiguity here with the concept "mentalism". Quine uses it to identify those meaning theories which posit "mental objects" as referents for terms (for example, Quine 1960, p.165), whereas Bennett seems to think that it refers to what he calls "the mental realm" (op.cit. p.80), which then allows him to talk of "mental items as theoretical entities" (ib. p.3). The position that Quine is criticising, as has already been made clear, is a mentalism which talks of mental items as real entities, namely Ideas, a point that Bennett appears to ignore. This apart, Bennett's comment is a fair one in that, if Quine were attempting external criticism of Bennett's conception of mentalism this would indeed be invalid. Such criticism would, in a similar way, misfire if

levelled against Quine's position. What has to be identified, as with the traditionalists, is some sort of internal inconsistency, which would include an inability to account for the fact of first language acquisition.

It is probably fair to say that the vast majority of published criticism of Quine's work has concentrated on his philosophy of language, in particular his arguments concerning the indeterminacy of translation. Bennett, for example, believes that he can refute the thesis by suggesting that we have far more evidence than Quine allows to construct an adequate translation of a tribe's language (ib. p.261). However, this further evidence is nothing more than what Quine already allows. What counts for Bennett as "abundant behavioural evidence" (ib.) is itself necessarily ontologically based. Quine could thus easily meet Bennett's criticism, either by including Bennett's "evidence" under the assumptions he already accepts for such translation to proceed, or by showing that it predicates Bennett's ontology upon the natives.

Another critic, Blackburn, appeals in a similar way to the fact that "indeterminacy may afflict the bleak physicalist outsider looking at me, but to me and to my fellow-speakers there is no shadow of indeterminacy to be seen" (Blackburn 1984, p.281). As a matter of fact this does not seem to be the case, for such shadows are cast upon many of our concepts (cf. Gallie 1956). Moreover, it is important to

recognise that Quine's argument works on two levels: the outsider suffers from a radical indeterminacy when looking in at another linguistic community, but as an insider to his own community he suffers from a weaker indeterminacy, both kinds being resolved by reference to the appropriate Observation Sentences. Blackburn appears to have ignored the two kinds of indeterminacy as well as the manner in which Quine proposes they should be resolved.

The way in which Quine is able to deal with such critics well illustrates the difficulty of treating aspects of Quine's philosophy of language in isolation from his work as a whole. However, the common factor in the replies suggested above is clearly his meaning theory, which in turn depends upon his account of first language acquisition, and criticism of this aspect of his work is less easy to meet.

Harrison, for example, is correct in linking a criticism of Quine's indeterminacy thesis to his accounts of meaning theory, when he argues that there is an indeterminacy for Observation Sentences in radical translation, in that they do not allow the translator to perceive the connections that exist beyond such Sentences (Harrison 1979, p.116). Quine, however, could defend himself by arguing that there is indeed only a "significant approximation of stimulus meanings" (Quine 1960, p.40), not a perfect synonymy, and so radical translation proceeds in a halting, if not lame, manner.

Nevertheless, there are internal weaknesses in Quine's account of first language acquisition and its corresponding meaning theory and these hinge on the concepts of reference which he employs. As has already been shown (pp.68-71) he uses two meaning theories, both of which are, in a sense, reference theories. The first involves a straightforward reference of Observation Sentences to their stimuli, the second the holism of the remainder of language "referring", or cohering, with itself. Of these two theories the first is the more basic in that the second can only develop once the first has produced Observation Sentences. The question then arises as to whether or not the referential meaning theory for the anchor line of Observation Sentences is a sound one, for if it is not then the holistic reference theory is left, as it were, free-floating.

The basic problem that Quine must deal with concerns the nature of the relationship between the linguistic Observation Sentences to the stimuli they are supposed to report. Quine talks about three distinct areas, words, stimulations and things (Quine 1960, p.26), but the last is connected to the first in that there is "talk of things" rather than, presumably, things themselves. How, then, are words connected to stimulations?

One answer that he gives, for Observation Sentences, is in terms of conditioning. This psychological account, unlike

the psychology assumed by traditional empiricists, is open to criticism for Quine is aware of Chomsky's attacks and deals rather poorly with them. For example, he accepts that there is an innate base to his empiricism (Quine 1969a, pp.95-96) and seems to think that such an acceptance is a sufficient answer to Chomsky's criticisms. However, leaving aside Chomsky's conception of the nature of language for the moment, one major problem that Chomsky identifies for those who accept Skinner's categorisation of language is that the detail of Skinner's system is too ambiguous to be meaningful, for

if we take his terms in their literal meaning, the description covers almost no aspect of verbal behaviour and, if we take them metaphorically, the description offers no improvement over various traditional formulations

(Chomsky 1959, p.51)

This ambiguity is as true of the key terms "stimulus" and "response" (ib. p.31-36) as it is for the term "reinforcement" (ib. pp.36-37).

I have argued elsewhere (Gilroy 1980) that Chomsky's claim that these terms are "empty" and have "totally lost whatever objective meaning" they had (ib. p.37), is a sound one and so will pass over the detail of Chomsky's criticism. The point is that merely to accept that there is an element of innateness in empiricism is not enough to meet these claims of ambiguity within the psychological framework explicitly accepted by Quine.

It is, however, possible that Quine could hygiene out these ambiguities and produce a set of definitions which would make Skinner's terms more healthy. Such a move would then focus attention on another, related, answer that he gives to the question as to how Observation Sentences are linked to their stimulations.

Quine claims that there is a "keying of language to external stimuli" (Quine 1969c, p.81), for it is the point at which these sentences can be "correlated" with their stimuli (ib. p.89), and so be related directly to their "nonverbal reference points" (Quine 1974, p.37). These non-verbal referents are certainly not Ideas and so, he believes, the standard criticisms of sense-data do not apply to his thesis (ib. p.41).

However, two such criticisms, suitably re-phrased, do seem to pose a problem for his theory. The first would be that if meaning is stimulus-dependent then it should be possible to relate a particular stimulus to its meaning, a non-linguistic referent to its linguistic label. Quine does attempt something like this when he talks of "ocular irradiation" as being what he means by 'visual stimulation' (Quine 1960, p.31), so that one could observe the stimulation of a sense-organ, in this case the eye, and correlate it with what was uttered.



The difficulty here, of course, is in being sure that any particular stimulation is even logically necessary for the utterance, let alone logically sufficient. Furthermore, this difficulty is compounded when, as is usually the case, more than one sense-organ is stimulated at a given time. In fact Quine recognizes that as soon as the other senses are brought in then combinations of stimulation are possible which are not physically observable on the organs themselves, and it is a great pity that he decides to "pass over the detail of this" (*ib.* p.33), as a closer examination of this aspect of his account might have led him to realise that even at the level of Observation Sentences there is more to meaning than mere stimulus.

To put this criticism another way, from Parmenides' Way of Seeming to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, the problem of linking non-linguistic referents to their linguistic expressions has recurred almost, as it were, as a sine qua non of their reference theories of meaning. Given these two categories something more than a device drawn from the categories themselves must be used to link them. The category-bridge that is usually posited, ostension, leads to the second criticism of his thesis.

As has been shown, Quine is heavily dependent upon ostension for both his meaning theory and his account of first language acquisition. He is, of course, well aware of Wittgenstein's criticisms of ostension (Quine 1974, p.44),

but seems to believe that these can be met by suggesting that the pointing finger, for example, heightens "the salience of a portion of the visual field (ib.) and that mistakes do occur when learning "the pointing custom" (ib. p.45).

In order to avoid the criticisms of ostension that Wittgenstein advances Quine requires an account of ostension that would make it in some sense an innate, unlearned, biological ability. As such it would be a member of neither of the two categories it purports to bridge as it would be neither a non-linguistic referent (that is, some sort of "external stimuli" - Quine 1969c, p.81) nor a linguistic expression, but rather a biological "given" that allows for the "correlation" or "keying" of language to the stimuli (op. cit.). If he could provide such an account of ostension then, as it would not have to be learned (and so would not necessitate some further explanation of what was required for it to be learned), it might well provide the basis from which learning begins.

Quine clearly wants to accept that pointing is necessary to enable the first stages of language to occur. However, he also accepts that ostension is itself a "custom" and, as with all customs, it has to be learned. As such it cannot be used to account for what precedes learning as its acquisition post-dates the first steps of learning. It would follow that nothing he has said will allow ostension, in

itself, to bridge the category-gap between non-linguistic referents and their linguistic expressions for, qua custom, it is itself a part of the latter, linguistic, category.

Quine is attempting to argue, in effect, that Observation Sentences are keyed to their referents by an aspect of language which is neither an Observation Sentence nor a referent, but a "custom", a part of the coherence meaning theory he accepts for the rest of language. If, however, customs are in some sense a part of the category of Observation Sentences then he would seem to have fallen prey to a similar regress that affected the traditionalists (p.26), a direct result of his double-translation account of language acquisition (p.67). If stimuli are the fount of Observation Sentences' meanings then first language acquisition consists in keying stimuli to Observation Sentences (and then linking Observation Sentences to the remainder of language). If, however, the "keying" is itself part of the category of Observation Sentences then either there is no account of the way in which these sentences gain their meaning, or the account given is couched in terms of Observation Sentences themselves. That is, in the same way that the traditional empiricists' meaning theory generated a regress of Ideas Quine appears to be generating a regress of Observation Sentences (where Observation Sentences provide the meaning of other Observation Sentences and so on), a regression that only becomes clear when one concentrates on his account of first-language acquisition.

It can be seen, then, that the modern empiricism that Quine advocates has, within its own terms, a debilitating problem of accounting for the initial acquisition of language. This problem infects his meaning theory and, through his philosophy of language, his empiricism itself, for once the account he gives of the initial acquisition of Observation Sentences is cast into doubt, then their use as a means of resolving the problem of the indeterminacy of translation and of naturalizing epistemology is also cast into doubt. In effect he is left with a holistic theory, but without its empirical base in Observation Sentences. Such a theory necessitates that language be first acquired, but cannot, within its own terms, account for that acquisition. It remains to be seen whether modern rationalism can deal any better with this problem.

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**SECTION IV - MODERN RATIONALISM**

Either then he has at some time acquired the knowledge he now has, or he has always possessed it.

(Plato, Meno)

#### 4.1 Introduction

Perhaps the best-known representative of modern rationalism is Noam Chomsky whose work has recently been identified as providing "one of the intellectual landmarks of the twentieth century" (Matthei and Roeper 1983, p.67). For this reason alone one would be justified in examining his account of first-language acquisition: moreover, in doing so, one is examining psycho-linguistic theories of language and its acquisition, and so considering material which is relevant to this thesis in its own right.

As will become obvious, Chomsky's non-philosophical background is very apparent and causes confusions for the philosopher-reader and, indeed, within his own work. For example, there are positions he adopts concerning the absence of a priori assumptions in rationalism and the existence of innate knowledge in children and adults which are supposed to distinguish his thesis from Quine's (Chomsky 1966, pp.109-110, footnote 114). These positions, however, have been dismissed as being no more than "tossing out a shoal of red herrings" (Cooper 1973b, p.158), and as "an incoherent thesis" (Cooper 1975, p.88) or, at best, as an aspect of philosophy he "often mis-states ... and hardly ever gets ... into sharp focus" (Bennett 1976, p.158). These criticisms, and others, will be examined later, but it

should be noted that philosophical naivety and incompetence are not necessarily synonymous.

However, this said, Chomsky's apparent ignorance of much modern work in the fields of philosophy of language and meaning theory relevant to his own concerns and, crucially, Frege's (in particular the way in which Frege allows one to operate with an Idea-free and holistic philosophy of language), gives his rationalism a very traditional emphasis. This becomes obvious when he criticises Quine's empiricism, for he talks of it<sup>(1)</sup> as being "narrowly Humean" (Chomsky 1969a, p.53), which indicates a lack of appreciation of the modern, post-Fregean, movements towards the kind of philosophy of language identified above, as does the praise he heaps on Cartesian linguistics (1966).

Modern empiricism's requirements, then, as identified earlier (pp.53-54), are not quite paralleled by Chomsky's rationalism, the divergence being, as will be shown, as important as it is slight. Moreover, because its "global and systematic character" (Searle 1971, p.10) is located firmly within Chomsky's background in linguistics, the direction of travel on the common thematic circle must be reversed (see p.54) so that one begins with an examination of his philosophy of language and ends with an account of what he takes to be an acceptable rationalism.

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#### 4.2 Chomsky's Philosophy of Language

As Quine's philosophy of language is, for Rorty, "impure", Chomsky's too is "explicitly epistemological" (Rorty 1980, p.258), although not in the same way as Quine's is. Despite his concern with epistemology, Chomsky might with some justice argue that his is actually a form of "pure" philosophy of language, in that instead of attempting to deal with "problems about how to systematize our notions of meaning and reference in such a way as to take advantage of quantificational logic" (*ib.* p.257), which is Rorty's definition of pure philosophy of language, his programme consists of taking advantage of advances he pioneered in linguistic theory, in particular his work on transformational grammar, in order to make comments about meaning and reference in the context of first language acquisition.

The question of its level of purity is of some interest for, if Rorty is correct, the greater the level of purity the lesser the chance of contamination with epistemological problems. The answer to this question hinges on how close quantificational logic is to transformational grammar, a point that Chomsky himself somewhat belatedly raises some twenty years after his first publications and which he in fact restricts to surface representations of his grammar



(Chomsky 1980, pp.147-148). This, however, is a problem which will be dealt with in detail later, although it should be noted that the epistemology which does intrude into his work appears, superficially at least, to be perfectly consistent with that of the traditional rationalists and their talk of innate ideas and knowledge. Again, though, it must be stressed that this is perceived from the perspective of linguistics, as is everything he writes which seems philosophically exciting.

Chomsky's philosophy of language is, in effect, a theory of grammar which contains an implicit philosophy of language. There are four staging posts to this destination and, like much of Chomsky's work, they are interconnected.

#### 1. Grammar

For Chomsky, grammar is a "fundamental aspect of linguistic behaviour "(Chomsky 1957, p.15), in that it is "a device that generates all of the grammatical sequences (of a language) ... and none of the ungrammatical ones" (*ib.* p.13). The apparent circularity here, of defining "grammar" in terms of itself, "grammatical sequences", is only avoided by giving "grammar" a technical, meta-use. There is an important ambiguity in the term, such that it can refer to the various rules of a particular language that allow its separate parts to be conjugated (Chomsky 1959, p.56), but it can also refer to something far more basic,

being "essentially a theory of the sentences of a language" (Chomsky 1961, p.120).

It is this second, meta-aspect, of the term which supposedly avoids the charge of circularity, for it is, in effect, a definition of the language-generating device, rather than of that device's products. This becomes clear when, in later publications, he speaks of grammar as being "a system of rules that determine a certain pairing of sound and meaning" (Chomsky 1968, p.125), this being distinguished from a "sentence's ... other grammatical properties" (*ib.* p.150 - see also 1980, p.65). There is, then, a linguistic dualism proposed here, such that a language can be seen as operating using its particular rules of grammar, but the use of these rules and the rules themselves are a function of a 'grammar' which defines an individual's language. Thus when Greene defines Chomsky's understanding of 'grammar' only in terms of the generative device (Greene 1972, p.34) she misses a dualism which, as will be shown, is fundamental to both his philosophy of language and his theory of first language acquisition.

## 2. Creativity

A feature of children's language which has obviously struck Chomsky as being of great significance is the fact that they can produce more than they hear. It is this feature which, amongst other factors, leads him to reject Skinner's explanation of children's language learning which is couched solely in terms of environmental feedback (Chomsky 1959, p.42). Chomsky's conception of language is identical to his identification of the "fundamental contribution of ... 'Cartesian linguistics'" to modern linguistics, namely "that human language, in its normal use, is free from the control of independently identifiable external stimuli or internal states" (Chomsky 1966, p.13). It is, he claims, only this freedom that allows one to account for the observable fact that a child's "knowledge of the language ... goes far beyond the presented linguistic data" (Chomsky 1965, p.33).

For Chomsky this "creative aspect of language is its essential characteristic" (Chomsky 1964, p.51), the "central fact to which any significant linguistic theory must address itself" (ib. p.50). Skinner's account ignores the astonishing difference between the limited input to a child and the child's resulting almost limitless variety of output of language (Chomsky 1967, pp.122-123), whereas Chomsky's deals explicitly with what he sees as a purely empirical matter. He does this by connecting his identification of

the creative aspect of language to the dualism of his conception of grammar; more simply, if language is to be seen as grammar-dependent (see pp.91-92) and an individual's use and understanding of it is virtually limitless in its possibilities, then it follows that this creative aspect of language requires an account of grammar which will not be, so to speak, input-specific.

### 3. Surface and Deep Language Structures

Chomsky's dualism of grammar, coupled to his conception of the creativity of the language user (and, it must be said, his training as a linguist), produces an inevitable dualism of language expressed in terms of the surface and deep structures which all grammatical sentences are supposed to possess<sup>(2)</sup>. Ordinary grammars (the so-called phrase structure - 1957 -, constituent structure - 1961 -, taxonomic - 1965 -, or surface structure grammars - 1968) are minimally acceptable as a way of structuring ordinary language, but fail to be completely acceptable for a variety of reasons, in particular in that they are "extremely complex, ad hoc, and 'unrevealing', that certain very simple ways of describing grammatical sentences cannot be accommodated ..., and that certain fundamental formal properties of natural language cannot be utilized" (Chomsky 1957, p.34).

For these reasons Chomsky claims that such grammars, and their attendant linguistic theory, are "fundamentally inadequate" (ib.). This is, in brief, because they are "intrinsically incapable of yielding the systems of grammatical knowledge that must be attributed to the speaker of a language" (Chomsky 1965, p.54). He uses a host of examples to make this point about their inadequacy, all of which hinge on the fact that only to examine the surface level of a sentence, its actual words, is to miss the vitally important ways in which the sentence gains its meaning from elements which are "present" on a deeper level (see, for example, Chomsky 1968, pp.36-37), those "deep" elements being common to other, similar, surface sentences which they generate.

The deep structure of language was originally described in terms of "the kernel of the language", to which "every sentence of the language will either belong ... or will be derived from ... by a sequence of one or more transformations" (Chomsky 1957, p.45). This developed into talk of "base Phrase-markers ... regarded as the elementary content elements from which the semantic interpretations of actual sentences are constructed" (Chomsky 1965, p.117), but the detail of this argument need not be developed here.

The point is that Chomsky is clearly accepting dualism, but for him this is a dualism of language. He expresses this in terms of language having surface and deep structures, his

variation on the cartesian pineal bridge between these two aspects of his work being that of transformational rules. These rules are the necessary link between the deep and surface structures of language, in that

one major function of the transformational rules is to convert an abstract deep structure that expresses the content of a sentence into a fairly concrete surface structure that indicates its form ... The transformational component is solely interpretive

(Chomsky 1965, pp.136-137)<sup>(3)</sup>.

Thus the monistic phrase structure grammars which he criticizes as inadequate are to be replaced with a dualistic transformational grammar which includes both phrase structure and transformational rules, the latter providing the necessary bridge from the deep to the surface representation of language.

#### 4. Linguistic Universals

Chomsky asserts that "the main task of linguistic theory must be to develop an account of linguistic universals" (Chomsky 1965, p.28), and he distinguishes, as he must to be consistent, between substantive and formal universals. The former "concern the vocabulary for the description of language", whereas the latter "involve rather the character of the rules that appear in grammars and the ways in which they can be interconnected" (ib. p.29), an example of the latter being the existence of transformational rules, of the

former that every language must contain ways of distinguishing between the first and the third person.

As is to be expected, given that his concern is with linguistics, he sees the task of a theory of language as being, at heart, the identification of the "deep underlying similarities ... that are attributable to the form of language as such" (ib. p.35). This is, in effect, a linguist's Occam's Razor, in that particular features of languages do not have to be repeatedly described for each language but can, instead, be "reduced to universal properties of language" (ib. p.36). In fact Chomsky actually defines "explanatory adequacy" in terms of the discovery of linguistic universals, a discovery which he sees as an empirical, rather than an a priori, matter (ib.), for the discoverer is simply extrapolating an hypothesis about a specific language's grammar and the testing of it against the data of other languages. If it holds then this hypothesis can be abstracted from the particular language and applies to "language in general" (ib. p.46) and at that point has reached the status of a linguistic universal.

Chomsky clearly finds it difficult to separate talk about language from talk about grammar, such that it appears to be the case that these two terms are practically synonymous (for example, to learn a language is, in effect, to construct a grammar - Chomsky 1959, p.57). Indeed, this assumed synonymity is one of the basic criticisms that will

later be levelled against him, but it does make clear that what has so far been called a philosophy of language is, for Chomsky, a philosophy of grammar. It is still a meta-inquiry into the presuppositions of language (cf. pp.2-3), but whereas Quine, for example, can be seen as having a philosophy of language which uniquely combines nominalism and aspects of realism (cf. p.75), Chomsky's philosophy of grammar is less easy so to categorize.

He himself identifies it as "a rationalist conception of the nature of language" (Chomsky 1967, p.127), but he does so for a reason that does not fit particularly well with what has gone before. He claims that seventeenth century rationalist philosophers identified, in effect, his transformational grammar as a way of dealing with the three central aspects of linguistic competence (the creative use of language, founded on an abstract deep structure which is universal - ib. p.126). It is far from clear that this is what the traditional rationalists saw themselves as doing (see pp.30-42 and Cooper 1972), but even if Chomsky's reply to this were that it is clear (see Chomsky and Katz 1975, pp.78-79) it requires some further explanation as to why a transformational philosophy of language is necessarily rationalist.

To put this point a different way, traditional rationalism can be formally identified as a thesis concerning the status of our knowledge of the world (see p.21), whereas Chomsky's



thesis deals primarily with our knowledge of the grammar of language, a distinction that he blurs when he equates "a rationalist conception of acquisition of knowledge" with his account of the particular acquisition of grammar (Chomsky 1967, p.127). What, then, is his philosophy of language?

The answer to this question is one that a combination of the four issues identified earlier (pp.91-97) makes clear. The creativity aspect of first language acquisition and his distinction between language's deep and surface structures, combine to produce a theory about the nature of language's "universal properties" (Chomsky 1965, p.35). This theory is couched in terms of "formal" linguistic universals (ib. p.30) which are connected to the non-universal surface structure of particular languages by the operation of transformational rules which "generate" the appropriate surface structure of a language (Chomsky 1961, p.129).

This is, he claims, "a rationalist conception of the nature of language" (Chomsky 1967, p.127), although the reason that he gives for this attribution, the emphasis placed upon innate schemata rather than on experience, is singularly inappropriate. What actually identifies his position on language as being rationalist is not so much the weight given to innate mechanisms as opposed to experience (indeed, Quine has made it clear that empiricists accept that innate mechanisms are an integral part of their position - Quine 1969a, pp.95-96), but rather its opposition to nominalism.

It is clear that the conception of language just sketched is some form of a realist one in that the identification of linguistic universals is supposed to identify the underlying structure of language, such realism having a grammatical base. In one sense at least this follows a long tradition of linguistic realism - as Palermo remarks, "we had accepted the Platonic notion of forms as soon as we had accepted the idea of deep structure as basic to language" (Palermo 1978, p.175) - and this is a point that Hook also raises when he attempts to argue that the acquisition of such universals requires an acceptance of Plato's doctrine of recollection (Hook 1969, p.162).

However, Chomsky would be right to reject one Platonic interpretation of his work, that it requires "some sort of representation of what we mean that is outside the realm of the words that we choose to express it" (Matthei and Roeper 1983, pp.81-82), for deep grammar is, in principle, expressible using the surface structure of language, as are the 'ideas' that Matthei and Roeper refer to, whereas Platonic Forms are inexpressible. Attempts to identify similarities between Chomsky and middle-period Plato require careful qualification, for the matching of the surface structure (cf. the world of senses) to the deep structure (cf. the world of forms), is not a simple matter of one-to-one representation. This said an element of Plato's realism can be discerned in his work<sup>(4)</sup>, in that the

existence of grammatical universals is supposed to give meaning to the contingent expression and use of language, as Plato's Forms were supposed to give meaning to the sensible world.

The question as to whether or not Hook is right to argue that such universals require a doctrine of recollection will be dealt with later. A modern (that is post-Fregean) rationalist philosophy of language, conceived of as a study of language qua language (cf. p.2), could well be a philosophy of grammar and could also consist of isolating universals of language in much the same way that Kant, Strawson and Quinton have, in their different ways, attempted to identify synthetic a-priori universals. Chomsky's work, then, could indeed be seen as a further example of such universal metaphysics, although his own emphasis on innate structures (rather than mine on grammatical universals) does not help such a modernist case. However, this aside, it now remains to see what theory of meaning develops within such a philosophy of language.

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#### 4.3 Chomsky's Theory of Meaning

Given the dualist nature of his philosophy of language one might expect that his meaning theory would be some sort of translation account of how language's deep structure generates its surface structure's meaning. In fact Chomsky shifts his position slightly on this topic.

He begins by claiming that "grammar is autonomous and independent of meaning" (Chomsky 1957, p.17). This fits badly with his philosophy of language in that, as a philosophy of grammar, it is explicitly excluding questions of meaning from its remit and so appears to leave unanswered the question of where meaning is in fact to be located. In fact the context of this claim makes it clear that he wants questions of grammar to precede those of meaning, which is to remain consistent with the philosophy of language already identified. He is, in effect, making meaning (the semantic aspect of language) dependent upon grammar (the syntactic aspect of language), rather than the reverse.

This becomes clear when he later claims that part of understanding (that is, attributing meaning to) a new sentence consists of "determining the process by which this sentence is derived in this grammar" (Chomsky 1959, p.56), rather than deriving a grammar from the meanings one already has. Here "grammar" is meant to refer to the deep structure

of language, so that:

the meaning of a sentence is based on the meaning of its elementary parts and the manner of their combination ... the grammatical relations expressed in the abstract deep structure are, in many cases, just those that determine the meaning of the sentence

(Chomsky 1965, p.162).

It is interesting, however, that his listing of what will constitute an adequate theory of linguistic structure makes no mention of meaning, only of grammar, which again shows the synonymy he assumes between "deep" grammar and meaning, and which is quite consistent with his philosophy of language (ib. p.31). In fact his interpretation of Descartes' conception of an Idea indicates that meaning is indeed deep-structure dependent (Chomsky 1966, p.98, footnote 70), and is communicated in discourse "because of the virtual identity of this underlying system in speaker and hearer" (ib. p.71). This is a view shared by, amongst others, H. and C. Cairns, when they define an individual's linguistic competence in terms of the ability "to encode his own thoughts into understandable utterances and to decode the speech of others" (Cairns and Cairns 1976, p.187). It is, however, not a position that Chomsky retained (pace Bennett 1976, p.252).

It is not clear why Chomsky felt the need to replace his translation account of meaning with an interactive one, for the philosophy of language which provides its base does not

alter. He still wishes to retain the view that it is grammar which "determines a certain pairing of sound and meaning" (Chomsky 1968, p.125), and not the "conditions of use, linguistic context, frequency of parts, etc." (ib. p.150). What alters, however, is the new stress on the way in which:

both deep and surface structure enter into the determination of meaning. Deep structure provides the grammatical relations ... that enter into the determination of meaning. On the other hand, it appears that matters of focus and presupposition, topic and comment, the scope of logical elements, and pronominal reference are determined, in part at least, by surface structure

(ib. pp.110-111).

It is as if Chomsky has a dualistic conception of meaning which parallels his dualistic philosophy of language or grammar. The first elements of meaning are the "surface", concrete, aspects of language and these can be specific to a language: the second element, however, is the "deep", abstract aspects of language, which are universal and upon which surface meanings, via transformational rules, ultimately depend. Meaning, however, is still grammar-dependent (Chomsky 1980, p.59) and, deep-structure's universals are logically and empirically prior to surface-structure's actual, concrete, language.

Either of these two meaning theories are very similar to the conception of logical form which identified the work of both Russell and the early Wittgenstein, although strangely

enough Chomsky himself resists equating his deep-structure with logical form (ib. p.147). They involve either a one-stage or, in 1980 (ib. p.145), a two-stage "mapping" of meaning from the abstract to the concrete level of language (Hacking 1975, p.90), the two-stage account being neatly described as a "dog-legged theory" (Blackburn 1984, p.43).

There is a real danger, however, that Chomsky might generate a regress of mappings within either his one or two-stage theory. Blackburn correctly emphasises that, to avoid this problem, Chomsky requires "a manner of representation which is guaranteed, whose mere presence ensures that it also represents the right thing. There must be a medium which carries its own interpretation with it" (ib. p.44), this being achieved by "positing interior mental objects" (Chomsky 1980, p.13).

It should be noted that, although he occasionally uses the term 'Idea' to refer to such "objects" (for example, 1966, p.98, footnote 70, or 1967, p.128), he prefers to talk about sentences having a "mental representation" (Chomsky 1969b, p.58) which is "part of the innate condition" (ib. p.63), and so appears to avoid a straightforwardly traditional Ideational theory. What he requires is a term to identify the abstract "internalized system of rules", which are synonymous with knowing a language (Chomsky 1968, p.27), which are akin to the traditionalists' Ideas (Chomsky 1966, p.40), but which are distinguishable from them in that they

are "in the mind" (Chomsky 1980, p.91) and are not acquired from the external world. As he says, they are, as the rules of transformational grammar, "represented in the mind as a 'real object'" (ib. p.120). Such a term might well be transformational representations, so producing a meaning theory which could be typified thus:

Language has meaning  
via the interaction between the  
universal deep and the particular  
surface languages' structures  
mediated by universal transformational rules

or, more simply:

UDS	+ UTR	+ PSS	= LM
Universal Deep Structure	Universal Transformation Rules	Particular Surface Structure	Language's Meaning

where UDS and UTR are seen as being the transformational representations of meaning" (ib. p.65), the mind's real objects.

This appears to be an atomistic theory of meaning, in that "the meaning of a sentence is based on the meaning of its elementary parts and the manner of their combination" (Chomsky 1965, p.162). It is, however, more complex than Dale, for example, has suggested. Although there is some truth in asserting that, for such a theory, "the meaning of each word is a collection of basic elements of meaning"



(Dale 1976, p.172), Chomsky does talk of sentence meaning and also adds the mediating factor of transformational rules. Dale's account is that of a traditional referential meaning theory, whereas Chomsky's, as has been shown, has a subtlety provided by his transformational representations.

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#### 4.4 Chomsky's Theory of First Language Acquisition

His account of the acquisition of language is perfectly consistent with his philosophy of language-as-grammar and his transformational representation variation on a translational meaning theory, and is in opposition to that of empiricists, in particular Skinner and Quine (see Chomsky 1959 passim and 1964, pp.80-81, respectively). As he says, "The child who learns a language has in some sense constructed the grammar for himself on the basis of his observation of sentences and non-sentences" (Chomsky 1959, p.57), this being the "extremely complex and abstract" grammar of deep-structure (ib.).

Given his philosophy of language this assertion is not so much a "fact" as a logical consequence of what has gone before and requires some further explanation of the operations of this "hypothesis-formulation activity of unknown character and complexity" (ib.). This is provided by his transformational grammar (Chomsky 1964, p.62), which allows the child to construct language using his "tacit knowledge of ... (linguistic) universals" (Chomsky 1965, p.27).

Given Chomsky's definition of "language" the child's tacit knowledge of deep-structure universals is inferred as a necessary precondition for having a knowledge of language,

and so Davis' criticism that he cannot ascribe such knowledge of linguistic universals to the child (on the grounds that a condition for such a description is that the child must be able to tell us of them - Davis 1976, p.82) misfires. The detail of his "strong ... claim ... about the innate concept-forming abilities of the child and the system of linguistic universals that these abilities imply" (ib. pp.30-37), is given in terms of a language acquisition device (ib.), which is an "innate human faculté de langage ..., an empirical hypothesis" (ib. p.37).

Thus, for Chomsky, the real problem of language acquisition is that of describing the innate ability which will accommodate the existence of linguistic universals without at the same time forcing a universal account onto the obvious variety of the surface structures of languages (ib. p.58). That is, the problem of language acquisition is, in effect, the problem of making universals particular, of making "one's innate ideas and innate principles" actual (ib. p.59). It is, then, a matter of being "genetically programmed" to acquire language (Aitchison 1976, p.32), although Aitchison's definition of language as "biologically controlled behaviour" (ib. p.88) is certainly not one that Chomsky would accept.

It should be noted at this point that the creative aspect of language which so impresses Chomsky (for example, 1968, p.166) is accounted for here. A child's "innate

interpretive principles" (Chomsky 1966, p.62) function in such a way that they allow him to go far beyond the linguistic data that he might actually observe (Chomsky 1967, p.126), and this explains the creative aspect of language use.

In one sense, of course, there is no account of first language acquisition, for if the acquisition of the surface structure of language is dependent upon the deep structure of language then the problem of first language acquisition is, in effect, the problem of the acquisition of deep structure, a point that Chomsky himself makes (*ib.* p.125). However, he also wants to say that these "are not learned" (Chomsky 1966, p.59), or invented (Chomsky 1968, p.88), that "there is no more point asking how these principles are learned than there is in asking how a child learns to breathe ... they constitute an empirical assumption about the innate basis for the acquisition of knowledge" (Chomsky 1969b, p.64). At this point he is clearly making use of the remainder of his philosophy of language to give some substance to his view that the language faculty is some sort of mental organ, "analogous to the heart" (Chomsky 1980, p.39).

Another interpretation of the reason for such an account, however, is that, given what has gone before, in particular his theory of meaning, he cannot give an account of how deep structure is first acquired without positing an even deeper

structure to provide its base. This variation on Plato's Third Man argument is, in effect, an infinite regress which Chomsky has to halt by an appeal to something which is itself not learned (cf. Oksaar 1977, p.31). It follows that he cannot have a complete account of the acquisition of language (as he defines language), because one aspect is acquired, the other is assumed. This important problem will be dealt with more fully in what follows.

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#### 4.5 Chomsky's Rationalism

It is clear from Chomsky's work that he sees himself as a rationalist, but what is not so clear is quite what sort of a rationalist. His emphasis on "the contribution of the child to language learning" (Chomsky 1959, p.58) and the innate or tacit aspect of knowledge is certainly rationalist. Moreover, there are times when he appears to use the terminology of the traditional rationalists, with his talk of "the doctrine of innate ideas" (Chomsky 1967, p.128), "the mental representation of sentences" (Chomsky 1969b, p.58), of the mind as some sort of organ (Chomsky 1980, p.39), and with his attempt to show that the traditional rationalists were in fact modern rationalists in disguise (Chomsky 1966).

However, what identifies him as a modern rationalist is the emphasis he places on linguistics, which is consistent with the conception of a possible post-Fregean rationalist philosophy of language outlined earlier (pp.100-101). It is this emphasis which leads him to talk of "mentalistic linguistics" (Chomsky 1965, p.193, note 1) and of his "rationalist conception of the nature of language" (Chomsky 1967, p.127). Thus what has been called his "neo-rationalism" (Stern 1969, p.191) is to be distinguished from traditional rationalism by its emphasis on transformational linguistics rather than on mind, as Chomsky

(and, for that matter, Stern) claim. It is this Transformational Rationalism which leads him to criticise the extreme Empiricism of Skinner (Chomsky 1959) and the Holistic Empiricism of Quine (Chomsky 1969a) and both of which, incidentally, misfire in so far as they represent an external, rationalist, criticism of empiricist presuppositions.

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#### 4.6 Critique

Given this transformational philosophy of language, meaning theory, rationalism and account of first language acquisition it remains to show whether or not it can be criticised internally. Rorty's criticism of impure philosophy of language is difficult to apply here because, although Chomsky argues that there is an aspect of his theory which "maps directly onto ... logical form" (Chomsky 1980, p.147) and which is, presumably, purified of epistemology, the transformational aspect is, in part at least, an epistemological thesis. It is, therefore, a theory which mixes pure and impure philosophy of language (cf. p.95-96) and, for Rorty at least, is a mix of traditional and modern approaches to the subject (cf. p.17).

As will become obvious this cocktail is not necessarily one that is acceptable to all, although it does allow Chomsky to give some semblance of coherence to his various theses by shifting from a modern to a traditional account of his concerns whenever one will not bear the weight he places upon it.

As has already been shown, his philosophy of language depends upon four aspects of his account of language-as-grammar, and so a criticism of this aspect of his work is best developed by concentrating on each of these



in turn.

(i) Grammar

It was remarked earlier that there is a whiff of circularity in Chomsky's dualist account of grammar (pp.91-92), which is supposed to be dispelled by distinguishing two logically distinct concepts of "grammar". Abelson, for one, has argued that depth grammar "is itself an innate idea" and so can provide nothing more than a circular "support" of innate ideas (Abelson 1969, pp.218-219), which is a rather clumsy way of putting the same point. Indeed, Chomsky could easily refer to other aspects of his work which support the existence of depth grammar in isolation from any hypothesis about innate ideas and so slip Abelson's formulation of the problem.

The question is, given a distinction between surface grammar and that which generates it, deep grammar, is it possible to define one independently from the other?

This problem, which is analogous to the problem of identification facing those who accept a duality of body and mind, is not one that Chomsky seems to think important. Yet if these grammars are not clearly distinct then some form of what might be termed linguistic materialism could result (see p.100) and the same problem crops up again when he deals directly with the two types of structures. Suffice it

to say that if his philosophy of language can be shown to be monistic, rather than dualistic, then the remainder of his work loses its dualistic flavour too. For the time being, given how little he says on this part of his subject, it is probably best to assume that there is a distinction so as to see where the argument leads. Notice, however, that the existence of such a distinction is assumed by some of what follows, rather than argued for and, moreover, produces a similar distinction for the concept of "language" (in that, if grammar is the "fundamental" aspect of language and there are two distinct grammars then, presumably, there are two distinct languages).

#### (ii) Creativity

This term is certainly far from fixed in its meaning and its slipperiness lends support to Chomsky's use of it. Amongst other things it can be used to indicate the obvious fact that a child's language does go beyond the actual instances of language he observes. In this sense as a speaker the child avoids merely parroting what he has heard already, creating new sentences for himself. Similarly he is no mere computer, able to understand only the sentences he has been programmed to understand<sup>(5)</sup>, for his understanding is of new sentences as well as old.

There is, then, a creativity of language, in terms both of the output and the input of the child's linguistic universe. This is certainly one aspect of the concept that Chomsky uses, but on its own will clearly not support the weight he wishes to place upon it, as he recognises in arguing that such creativity produces a suspicion, rather than confirms a hypothesis, about the nature of a child's language use (Chomsky 1967, pp.122-123). A second aspect of the concept is thus required, that which make linguistic creativity "knowledge-dependent".

The second interpretation of the concept makes the point that the child can "produce and understand instantly new sentences that are not similar to those previously heard ... nor obtainable from them" (Chomsky 1965, pp.57-58). It also builds in the view that this understanding requires some sort of "knowledge" of these sentences' grammar (as both the production and understanding of a new language qua grammar is a production and understanding of a new grammar). Creativity, in this sense, is a creativity of grammar, an important point that Chomsky does not make explicit.

There is, than, a dualism involved again here. The first use of "creative" could be explained in terms of a child's operation of language's surface grammar: the second, however, requires the use of deep grammar, a 'requirement' which is no more than an assumption of this particular interpretation of the concept (cf. Cooper 1975, p.104). So

the apparent connection between the language user's creativity (an empirical fact) and his knowledge of deep grammar (a linguist's fiat) is no more than the result of a conceptual ambiguity. Both are a linguist's fiat once it is recognised that creativity, in its second sense, is being given an interpretation which matches it to the particular conception of language-as-grammar Chomsky advocates.

Thus the acceptance of the view that a child uses language creatively does not necessarily lend support to the case he wishes to make about the nature of language. This criticism of a central aspect of Chomsky's work is made the stronger by being generated from within his own presuppositions. The particular interpretation of "creative" which Chomsky gives the concept does indeed appear to support his thesis concerning the deep structure of language, but this is only an appearance, based as it is upon a definition of "creative" which assumes the thesis it is meant to support. Platts is probably right to suggest that "creative" should be replaced with "boundless" or "novel" (Platts 1979, p.46), as this reduces the apparent force of Chomsky's claim about knowledge, although Chomsky could build in a similar epistemological component to these replacements and so reintroduce the fallacy of petitio principii. However, it is clear that this aspect of his philosophy of language either states an obvious fact about language use, or assumes a view of language which is, to say the least, contentious. In either case it adds little weight to his thesis

concerning the philosophy of language.

(iii) Surface and Deep Structures

As has already been shown, the necessity that Chomsky accepts as supporting his positing the existence of deep structure is a linguist's necessity, based as it is upon a particular view of grammar (pp.94-95). It has been argued that this is, at best, a weak necessity, for some linguists claim that they can make the surface structure of language provide all that deep structure is supposed uniquely to produce (for example, Braine 1963). Even if such claims were to be found unsound the empirical "necessity" of his concept of creativity has just been shown to be, in effect, the necessity of tautology. This leaves only a thesis concerning the nature of language-as-grammar, in essence that "linguistic usage can only be fully explained by a two-level theory" (Greene 1972, p.190).

It may well be the case that, contra Braine, a grammatical analysis of language does require a two-stage theory and it certainly would then seem to follow, if grammar and language were virtually synonymous, that an analysis of language would require a similar dualism of analysis. Two questions immediately raise themselves: are grammar and language virtually synonymous and, if they are not, does an analysis of language require a two-stage theory?

Unfortunately, Chomsky's assimilation of these two aspects of linguistic use (grammar and what it is a grammar of) is not clearly stated, but rather assumed. That is, for Chomsky, questions concerning aspects of language (for example, the question as to what identifies two sentences as being synonymous) are to be answered by an appeal to matters concerning grammar, but that court of appeal has yet to be identified as the relevant one. It might, for example, be better to identify other aspects of language as a means of explaining problems within language, rather than assuming that some sort of external grammatical analysis will resolve these problems. This assumption is further to be resisted as it produces the problem of identifying an explicit, underlying, grammatical "referent", for example, the single structure which makes two "surface" sentences synonymous (cf. Cooper 1975, p.89). As can be seen, the language-user is simply being defined as a grammar-user, with no clear support being given for this definition.

In fact the implausibility of this definition is recognised by Chomsky himself, who stresses that the ordinary language user does not necessarily have the grammarian-linguist's knowledge of either the surface or the deep structure of language (Chomsky 1969b, p.154). Such a claim seems to suggest that there is a distinction to be drawn between grammar and language, for if one can use language correctly without knowing of its deep and surface grammars then this

knowledge appears irrelevant for language use. To impute some sort of innate knowledge of these grammars to a speaker is to do no more than provide a linguist's structuring of one aspect of language: it does not appear to show that all aspects of language use are grammar-generated, only that some are grammar-descriptive. In effect, a tool for describing uses of language appears to be replacing that which it purports to describe.

Perhaps Chomsky could produce arguments to support the emphasis he wishes to give to grammar over language. Even if he could, however, there is another internal difficulty with this aspect of his work which concerns the nature of the need to link the deep and the surface structures of language. The analogy with Descartes' appeal to the pineal gland was made earlier (p.96) and it suggests that there is a similar internal weakness with Chomsky's thesis. Given that the deep and surface structures of language are irreducibly different in kind (after all, the former expresses that which the latter cannot, at an abstract rather than concrete level) then clearly they need to be linked in some way.

The problem is, however, that the transformational rules which provide the link are not a part of the deep structure of language, but operations upon them. Indeed, when

discussing what he terms the "creativity" of language Chomsky stresses that the fact that it is possible to move from a finite "input" of language to an infinite "output" of language supports his thesis that there must be an innate knowledge of the grammar required to link the deep and surface structures of language (Chomsky 1967, pp.125-126; Chomsky 1968, p.29). Leaving aside the question as to whether or not this is in fact a real difficulty which has to be faced or rather the result of an ambiguity in the concept of creativity (see above, pp.117-118), it would seem, given his dualism of language, to follow that descriptions of these rules would have to be couched in the expressions provided by either the deep or surface structure of language.

That is to say, the transformational rules which purport to link deep and surface structures of language can only find expression in one of the two exhaustive categories of language. If this were the case then it would seem to be a category mistake to use as a link that which can only be explained in terms of one of the two categories concerned.

Moreover, this suggests that it might be better to see language in monistic terms and so avoid the problems that have bedevilled dualistic conceptions of language, a point that will be developed later. Plato's Forms and Chomsky's deep structures, therefore, share an important, internal problem in that, on their own terms, they are divorced from



that which they are supposed to explain, sensible or surface meanings. An appeal to grammatical operations upon deep structures does little to assist that explanation, except pile confusion upon confusion.

#### (iv) Linguistic Universals

Given what has gone before it should be clear that Chomsky's acceptance of linguistic universals is in fact no more than an acceptance of certain grammatical universals (p.96ff). Thus what at first reading appears philosophically significant can be seen on closer analysis to be no more than an "imposition of universals through translation" (Cooper 1975, p.178), for a particular view of grammar is being used to translate other, surface, grammars into its own particular structure. Various languages may well share a common grammatical deep structure, but this is more a comment on the linguist's original starting point than on the languages themselves. In fact Chomsky appears to recognise this point when he asserts that his discovery of linguistic universals is an empirical one (p.120), although quite how universal an "empirical universal" could be is another matter (cf. Cooper 1975, pp.165-166 on the "bizarre uses of the term"), especially as he accepts that "universals of grammar 'tolerate exceptions'" (Chomsky and Katz 1975, p.85).

The problem here is clearly still internal to his thesis and so grips that much more tightly. If he could show that there were universals of language then, given the disparate nature of languages, this would support the view that languages had some universal, and thus common, base of sorts. The existence of such universals would then, in turn, support his conception of creativity, rescuing it from the level of straightforward fallacy.

However, if all that he has succeeded in doing is to indicate that a linguist's particular grammatical framework can be made to apply to most languages then on its own this conclusion does nothing to support his concept of creativity and, at best, indicates that there may be a universal sortal tool for languages. There is clearly no need for a language user to have knowledge (of whatever sort - cf. Cooper 1975, pp.58ff) of this tool to be a competent language user. There is an obvious distinction to be made between the way in which languages are used and how they are to be sorted, a distinction which Chomsky blurs. This is not to say that such a distinction means that "no coherent principles underlie language" (Matthei and Roeper 1983, p.154), only that to claim that the only kind of "coherence" is a two-stage grammatical one is of nothing like the same status as the claim that the coherence in question is one provided by linguistic universals.

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This so-called rationalist conception of language (p.99) is, then, in many important ways better described as a rationalist conception of grammar. It is, however, less persuasive than it might at first appear because if its four elements are themselves internally weak, then the result of their combination (p.99) is also weak. If Chomsky is involved in a search for some sort of synthetic a priori knowledge (pp.110-111) then the apparent contradiction of using contingent empirical work to produce non-contingent a priori conclusions is one that he should at least comment on. Finally, as will now become evident, the weaknesses identified in this philosophy of language carry through to the other aspects of his work under consideration.

His meaning theory is, as has already been shown, a translational one (p.102ff), from deep to surface grammars. However, given the problems already identified with this duality of grammar then it is to be expected that there are also problems with language's meaning being explained by reference to grammar's deep structure.

One important difficulty is the "pineal problem" examined earlier (p.96 and p.102). If meaning is deep-structure dependent how does it bridge the gap to the surface of

language when the expression of the 'bridge' seems to be a part of language's surface structure? A second. A second, related, difficulty concerns the later version of his meaning theory (p.104), for if "grammatical relations" are merely ways a linguist describes languages, rather than parts of those languages' meanings, then it would appear that meaning is to be found in the surface of language and can thus easily be acquired at the same time as the concrete aspect of language is acquired. These difficulties combine to suggest that there is no need to go beyond the surface structure of language to account for either its meaning or its acquisition (hence the suggestion that his dualism could be seen as a materialist account of language - p.116).

Even if these points could be met the disguised referential theory which is at the heart of his theory of meaning is also internally weak. The transformational representations (p.106) are referents of meaning in the sense that, for Chomsky, they are the mind's "real objects" in acts of meaning. The similarity between them and the traditionalists' Ideas is, of course, one that Chomsky notes and, unfortunately, brings with it a similar problem, namely how to move from this mental category to the physical expression of its meanings.

An appeal to transformational rules is of little use here as these rules seem to be a part of one of the categories they

are meant to be escaping, not a bridge between them. Notice this is not the modern problem of privacy, which in any case is one Chomsky finds a "pseudo-argument" (Chomsky 1980, p.13); rather it is a disguised problem of a category shift.

In passing it is worth noting that this atomistic (or, at best, sentential) meaning theory tends to support the disguised category shift, by claiming that ordinary language is to be giving meaning by reference to something other than language. A more thoroughgoing holism, such as Quine's, points away from deep structures to the actual use of language in order that meaning might be identified.

It is one of the main theses of this work that a philosophy of language is only adequate, on its own terms, if it can account for the first acquisition of language. This account may be either implicit or, as is the case with Chomsky, explicit. The internal weaknesses already identified, however, make it clear that his theory of first language acquisition, and thus his philosophy of language, is seriously flawed.

If "language" is to be described in terms of "grammar" then, in a very real sense, Chomsky does not have an account of the first acquisition of language, only of grammar. Moreover, even if, in spite of all that has already been criticised, he still wanted to argue that the first acquisition of language depended upon the acquisition of grammar then, again, his attempt to avoid a "Third Man"

regress of grammars by introducing a grammar which is not itself dependent upon a further grammar might well halt the regress. Unfortunately the introduction of such a regress-free grammar results in Chomsky asserting that this deep grammar is already "on board", so to speak, which means, as he recognises, that it cannot be acquired (p.110). Consequently he does not, and cannot, account for the acquisition of deep grammar.

This crippling deficiency in his work is one that he attempts to resolve by talking of an innate language faculty, its existence being an "empirical assumption" (Chomsky 1969b, p.64). It should be clear by now that this is certainly not an empirical assumption, but rather a logical conclusion forced upon him by his philosophy of language and, in particular, by his meaning theory. As such it is logically valid, in that it follows from what has gone before, but its empirical validity is less easy to accept.

This is, in part, because empirically speaking its atomistic approach "isolates language acquisition from other areas of knowledge and from the socio-cultural environment of a child" (Oskaar 1977, p.139). As important, however, is the empirical fact that it is language which is in fact acquired by a child, rather than grammar (cf. Cooper 1975, pp.37-38), and this empirical point means that Chomsky's system forces him to address (and even then not deal with) the wrong question. Furthermore Chomsky cannot even consider the

"right" question, namely how language is first acquired, without inevitably translating it into another question, the acquisition of grammar. It is indeed "a serious dilemma if the most powerful and successful descriptive system provided by linguistics is one that cannot be learned" (Villiers and Villiers 1978, p.67).

The "dilemma" identified here is not merely an externally imposed one (that is, it is not simply the result of this thesis refusing to accept Chomsky's equation of "language" and "grammar"), for even the criticisms advanced here which are internal to his work show that on his own terms deep grammar cannot be acquired. It is not even that Chomsky has retreated to "innateness" to postpone the problem (Putnam 1967, p.116). Unless he accepts the doctrine of recollection (pace Hook 1969, p.162), and then satisfactorily resolves the regress of recollections which that involves, he can only attempt to speak of what Hook claims is unintelligible, of some sort of faculty "inherited with the germ plasm" (ib.).

It is this vagueness, incidentally, which leads to confusion concerning his use of the concept of "innate" (see, for example, Wells 1969). As interpreted here he means by this term biologically "innate", as opposed to epistemologically "innate" (another modern rationalist, Vendler, well aware of the ambiguity inherent in this term replaces it with "native" - Vendler 1972, p.140), although Chomsky's view

that the deep structure of language is in some sense an innate part of our genetic structure is, to say the least, a desperate way to make his form of rationalism attempt to account for the acquisition of language.

Lyons claims that the verdict to be returned on Chomsky's work is "not proven" (Lyons 1970, p.114). Given what has been argued here this is clearly too generous a verdict. There are serious internal difficulties with his philosophy of language and meaning theory. Even if these could be resolved<sup>(6)</sup> that resolution could not produce an account of the acquisition of a first language or, for that matter, of deep grammar without at the same time casting into doubt the rationalism within which it is couched. Modern Transformational Rationalism is, then, to be rejected on its own terms as incapable of accounting for a phenomenon, the first acquisition of language, that it recognises as of the first importance.

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SECTION V

**ALTERNATIVE THEORIES OF MEANING, THEORIES OF LANGUAGE  
ACQUISITION, AND THEIR PROBLEMS.**

You will usually find that the enemy has  
three courses of action open to him. And  
of these he will adopt the fourth.

(von Moltke)

Before moving on to the more positive side of this thesis it is worth pausing in order briefly to summarize what has gone before, the more so as the substantive points made in previous sections will here be used to develop a position which is intended to avoid the kinds of criticism that have been levelled against the empiricists and rationalists already examined.

The thesis was introduced in Section I by pointing out that the vast majority of work on first-language acquisition is produced by linguists and psycho-linguists, not philosophers, and that all three share the common un-argued, assumption that their data is propositional language (that is, verbal communication).

Section II developed the nature of valid criticism. It was argued that, given the nature of these presuppositional connections, attacks on them could only succeed if they were internal, working within the appropriate presuppositions. External attacks on the presuppositions themselves simply misfired. However, one phenomenon which all but the most solipsistic sceptic is forced to accept is that language is certainly acquired by the child. It follows that if it could be shown that a particular philosophy of language, theory of meaning or description of first-language acquisition did not, on its own terms, allow for language to develop this would constitute a valid and damning criticism

of the position. A less-worryingly destructive, and still valid, criticism would consist of showing that there was some internal inconsistency between the particular philosophy of language and its theory of meaning - less worrying because it could, presumably, be met by tinkering with one or other of those links in the chain leading to, or from, the account of first-language acquisition. However, if this tinkering resulted in loss of contact with that account then, of course, the more destructive criticism would be released to prey upon the position.

The second major point of this section was to defend my concern, qua philosopher, with this area by arguing that an account of first-language acquisition contains an implicit (or, in some cases, an explicit) theory of meaning which, in turn, can generate a philosophy of language, these last being properly the concern of a philosopher. So described one is moving from the specific to the general, but the connections are tight enough to allow for mutual implication, thus facilitating the alternative movement from the general to the specific, from the theoretical to the substantive. A second justification for the philosopher's concern with accounts of first-language acquisition followed in that, qua philosopher of language or meaning-theorist, he is, implicitly or explicitly, presenting an account of first-language acquisition. Thus one major point was established in Section II, that philosophers are properly concerned with accounts of first-language acquisition<sup>(1)</sup>.

Having established the nature of valid criticism, the validity of the philosopher's concern with first-language acquisition, and, in passing, the relevance of particular kinds of philosophical debate for linguistics and psycho-linguistics, Section II continued by applying the first two theses to traditional empiricist and rationalist philosophers in order that they could be substantiated. The general conclusion reached was that, contra the standard, post-Fregean criticism of the traditionalists' use of the concept "Idea", the only attack which they could not fend off was one directed at their accounts of first-language acquisition.

The two theses were then applied to the more subtle, post-Fregean, empiricist theory of Quine in Section III and to the modern rationalist, psycho-linguistic theory of Chomsky in Section IV. These, it was argued, both fail to account adequately for first-language acquisition, although for reasons peculiar to other aspects of their particular meaning theories and/or philosophies of language.

As a consequence of the arguments presented in the preceding four sections the position now reached is one which requires the development of a third thesis, namely, a philosophy of language and meaning theory which would allow for language to be acquired by the child (or, conversely, an account of

first-language acquisition which would rest upon a meaning theory and philosophy of language which were internally sound). Two possible candidates for this third thesis will now be examined, the first Davidson, the second Wittgenstein, and both will be rejected, one more firmly than the other. This will lead to von Moltke's fourth course of action, the development of a philosophy of language, a theory of meaning and an account of first language acquisition which will be based upon a different and, it is hoped, justifiable assumption about the nature of the data relevant to communication.

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SECTION Va - DAVIDSON

### 5a.1 Davidson's Formal Semantics

It is often useful to attempt to trace the influences on a philosopher's thought in order that the developed theory might be seen more clearly in its embryonic state. Given the complexity of Davidson's work this approach is particularly helpful. There are, in effect, three major figures who affect Davidson's thought in their different ways, Frege, Tarski and Quine (cf. Ramberg 1989, chapt. 3, passim).

Frege's influence can be seen in Davidson's development of the argument that "sense" (meaning) is public and is given holistically "in the context of a proposition" (Frege 1884, p.Xe). This results in a public referential theory of meaning where "the truth value of a sentence is its referent" (Frege 1892, p. 216), which has been examined above (Section III, pp.47ff) as a watershed in the abandonment of the centrality of the concept 'Idea' for meaning theory. In the context of Davidson's thought, however, Frege's work can be seen as first linking the concept of reference to the theory of truth, a link which Davidson opposes (that is, contra Frege, it is not reference but "truth ... (which provides) the bridge between

non-linguistic and linguistic concepts" - Ramberg 1989, p.37). With Frege, if understanding the meaning of a proposition consists of understanding how its truth-value, its referent, is determined then it would appear that the meaning of a proposition results from understanding the conditions which determine that proposition's truth-value. Moreover, this meaning must be context-free (that is, must not be dependent upon an individual's intentions or social context), otherwise the whole thrust of Frege's argument would have been deflected and "sense" would have reverted to the private referential domain. Thus two aspects of Davidson's formal semantics can be seen in gestation, the first being the connection made between a sentence's meaning and its truth value, the second being the formal, context-free, nature of truth.

Tarski's influence can be seen operating on the detail of the theory of truth, in that he identifies one condition that any theory of truth must satisfy. In context this is the result of a resolution of the liar paradox (Tarski 1944, p.58). Tarski's resolution hinges on the removal of the paradox's self-reference with the aid of a distinction between language and meta-language, this being achieved by making it clear that a sentence such as "'This is p.137' is true" is part of the latter, thus making truth not a part of the grammar of a sentence but a part of its semantics or meaning.



For Tarski, then, a sentence is true (and is so stated in a meta-language) if it is related to what is the case; but this is no crude correspondence theory, as he rejects talk of "facts" as being "misleading" (ib. p.71). Instead of connecting a sentence's truth to knowledge of a "fact" outside language he connects it with the aid of the concept of "equivalence" to the language itself, making epistemology irrelevant to this semantic conception of truth. So instead of the sentence, "This is p.164" being true if in fact this were p.164 Tarski produces the equivalence statement "This is p.164 is true if and only if this is p.164". On this account of truth, then, identity statements (equivalences) take over the role of the concept of truth<sup>(2)</sup>.

In so doing a criterion has emerged for a satisfactory theory of truth, the ability to replace sentences in a language with their equivalence statements. Thus, with Harrison, Tarski provides "a goal of analysis" where the production of equivalence statements would identify whether or not, for any given language's sentences, we could "understand their logical structure, and be in a position to state their truth conditions" (Harrison 1979, p.129). This, then, is a "criterion of success, or adequacy, for formal semantics" (ib.) and these "equivalences of the form(T)" (Tarski 1944, p.55) are at the very heart of Davidson's work.

Quine's work has already been examined in some detail (Section III) and so will only be mentioned here. His concept of radical interpretation, especially as it applies to a rejection of speakers' beliefs and meanings as explaining such interpretation, is an influence which finds expression in Davidson's "Principle of Charity". This "principle" is Davidson's basic tool for rejecting the intensional concepts that the alternative philosophy of language of Grice and Searle<sup>(3)</sup> rests upon and, crucially, for bridging the gap from the area of formal language which Tarski concentrated on to that of natural language. Indeed, it could be argued that without such a bridge Davidson's work is, in effect, merely a philosophy of formal language and is irrelevant to the concerns of philosophy of language per se. As will be shown this is a criticism that Davidson is well aware of and he uses his Principle of Charity to allow him, amongst other things, to make reference to the intensional concepts of belief and meaning which seem, at first sight at least, to be so much a part of language.

All three of these influences are acknowledged by Davidson (1984, p.xx) but there is one other which deserves mention as it is less clearly identified, yet helps explain his acceptance of aspects of the work of Frege, Tarski and Quine. An alternative theory of meaning to Davidson's, provided by "those who undertake to define or explain linguistic meaning on the basis of non-linguistic intentions, uses, purposes, functions and the like: the

traditions are those of ... Wittgenstein and Grice" (Davidson 1974a, p.143), is rejected on the grounds, amongst others, that the non-linguistic area is explicated in terms of meaning. Davidson claims that such an alternative is hopelessly flawed in that it makes use of the very concept, meaning, that it is supposed to be analysing. In reaction to this alternative he believes that what is required is an explanation of meaning which does not use intensional concepts and so presuppose meaning - such a theory must be "explicitly semantical in character ... a theory of truth in Tarski's style" (ib. p.149) and it is this which Davidson presents.

Having provided a framework for Davidson's work it now remains to describe that work with the triad of assumptions used before, to explain why it should be seen as a compromise between Quine and Chomsky and then to attempt an internal critique.

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### 5a.2 Davidson's Philosophy of Language

For Rorty Davidson has produced "a purified and de-epistemologized conception of the philosophy of language" (Rorty 1980, p.259) in that he, like Wittgenstein in the Tractatus, has attempted "to systematize our notions of meaning and reference in such a way as to take advantage of quantificational logic" (ib. p.257). Such a pure philosophy of language concentrates on "the inferential relations between sentences" (ib. p.259), "diagramming the relations among the sentences" (ib. p.308) and, for Rorty at least, avoids the infection of epistemology if only because it avoids reference to the specific contexts of language use.

The philosophy of language is "pure" in that there are logical questions which precede empirical questions concerning what is to "count as knowing a language" (Davidson 1965, p.7) and it is these which Davidson is concerned with. One could add that another factor in his work which would allow for the ascription of this epithet is his initial concentration on formal language which would inevitably bring Rorty's grail of purity that much closer.

Having said this, however, it is clear that Davidson is concerned with natural languages and so moves some distance from that grail. Thus Davidson, qua formal semanticist,

identifies the philosophy of language in two ways. Firstly, the philosophy of language defines "the formal properties" of expressions so as to pick "out the class of meaningful expressions" and, secondly, it specifies the meaning of every sentence" in a way that depends effectively and solely on formal considerations" (ib. p.8). Yet he subsequently asserts:

The main, if not the only, ultimate concern of philosophy of language is the understanding of natural languages ... interpreted formal systems are best seen as extensions or fragments of the natural languages from which they borrow life. The inevitable goal of semantic theory is a theory of a natural language couched in in a natural language.

(Davidson 1973a, p.71).

This apparent contradiction in his view of what is an acceptable philosophy of language can be resolved once it is realised that, unlike Tarski, he believes that it is possible to connect the formal to the natural (Davidson 1967, pp.27-28). This is to be achieved by redefining "the central problem of philosophy of language" (Davidson 1977b, p.219) so as to utilise Quine's holism and abandon "the concept of reference as basic to an empirical theory of language" (ib. p.221).

With Quine, Davidson is clearly not a realist, as he rejects any reference to reality (ib. p.225); on the other hand, again with Quine, he wants the inscrutability of reference to be a point about reference, not reality, so he is no pure

nominalist either, with the relativism that such nominalism would imply (Davidson 1979, p.234). It is as if the combination of holism and empiricism (although not Quine's brand of empiricism, for here it is a sentential, not sensory, empiricism of "finite ... semantical primitives" - Davidson 1965, p.9) inevitably produces a combination of nominalism and realism<sup>(4)</sup> which for reasons that will become clear, one might better term sentential empiricism. Given this philosophy of language a particular approach to meaning is generated.

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### 5a.3 Davidson's Theory of Meaning

Strictly speaking Davidson does not have a theory of meaning as classically conceived or, if he does have one, then it could be called a redundancy theory, for problems of meaning drop out of consideration, being replaced by problems concerning truth. This, of course, is an inevitable consequence of his philosophy of language and is produced by a unique aggregation of the work of Frege, Tarski and Quine.

The first intimation of a difference between his meaning theory and those provided by others is provided by the question he sets himself to answer. He does not see himself as dealing directly with the questions, "How do words mean?", or, "What is meaning?" which, as has already been indicated usually produce some form of reference theory. This kind of question is rejected on the grounds, amongst others, that "'Theory of meaning' is not a technical term, but a gesture in the direction of a family of problems" (Davidson 1977b, p.215). What Davidson sees himself as doing is identifying and dealing with the more important problems, summarised by attacking the question, "What is it for words to mean what they do?" (Davidson 1984, p.xiii).

The difference between this and the previous questions, is literally, one of interpretation, for he sees the answer to his question as being "a necessary feature of learnable

language" (Davidson 1965, p.3). However, the answer that he in fact provides is, to begin with at least, an answer to another question, "what it is for a theory (of meaning) to give an account" of how sentence meaning depends upon word meaning (Davidson 1967, p.17). This, then, is going to be a search for a "clear and testable criterion ... for a natural language" seen as identifying "reasonable demands that may be put on a theory of meaning" (ib. p.35), as opposed to what has gone before, a pseudo-technical inquiry into meaning itself.

There are, asserts Davidson, two demands that must be satisfied. The first is that any such criterion must "provide an interpretation of all utterances, actual and potential", the second that it must be "verifiable without knowledge of the detailed propositional attitudes of the speaker" (Davidson 1984, p.xii). In effect, then, these demands can be seen as a re-working of Quine's problem of radical interpretation. If "uninterpreted utterances seem the appropriate evidential base for a theory of meaning" (Davidson 1974a, p.142) then the problem, as Davidson sees it, is to explain the move from uninterpreted to interpreted speech so as to include all utterances (demand one, above) and to achieve this in a non-circular way (two, above). This would result in a semantic theory based upon "evidence ... described in non-semantic terms" (ib.).



It follows that if meaning is to be seen in terms of interpretation then it becomes necessary for Davidson to give an account of interpretation. This he does, at first with reference to "a necessary feature of a learnable language" (Davidson 1965, p.3) and later more directly when he deals with the theory of interpretation itself (Davidson 1973b). Of course this treatment of meaning as interpretation results in a confirmation of Davidson's whole approach to meaning theory, for the central problem becomes, inevitably, a matter of giving an account of sameness of meaning, of interpreted and interpretation<sup>(5)</sup>.

Given this as the problem which meaning theory has to resolve then it is clear that sameness of meaning cannot be explained by reference to meaning without assuming the point at issue. Davidson accepts that Frege has shown it is the sentence, rather than the word which, as a name, carries meaning, but Frege's "switch from reference to meaning leads to no useful account of how the meanings of sentences depend upon the meanings of the words ... that compose them" (Davidson 1967, p.20): in fact, of course, given Frege's argument that the basic unit of meaning is the sentence then he cannot, without inconsistency, go beyond that base to individual words.

Thus Davidson concludes that "meanings as entities" drop out of consideration in a theory of meaning because they cannot "give the meaning of every sentence in the language ... they

have no demonstrated use" (*ib.* pp.20-21). To provide such meaning one must go beyond the sentence to the context of the language itself, such holism being implicit in the suggestion that an adequate theory of meaning must entail all sentences of the form "'s means m'" (*ib.* p.22). However, this level of generality requires that "m" cannot be replaced by some sort of singular term, so Davidson replaces it with "that p", where "p" is a sentence in the language and, as such, is unable to name a meaning.

This still leaves the connection "means that" with all the problems of intensionality (especially circularity) that Davidson claims it brings. His "radical" way of dealing with the problem is to enlist the aid of Tarski's equivalence statements, for "s means that p" could, with the appropriate theory, replace "p" with a sentence equivalent in meaning to "s". The obvious candidate for equivalence is "s" itself (if "p" is part of the language of "s", or a translation of "s" into the language of "s" if it is not). The troublesome "means that" is then left for Davidson to "sweep away" (*ib.* p.23); "s" is given the predicate "is true" and "p" a "sentential connective", as opposed to an intensional one. The result is "s is true if and only if p".

This attempt at an extensional theory (one cannot add "of meaning" as this would be a contradiction in terms, an extensional theory of intensional "meaning") can, therefore,

be represented in the following way:

- 1 s means m (in a holistic context)
- 2 s means that p
- 3 s means s (where "p" is part of the language of "s")
- 4  $s = s$
- 5a s is true
- 5b if and only if p

so 6 s is true if and only if p

This, claims Davidson, allows for an explanation of the meanings of sentences as dependent upon the meanings of words in that he has provided a recursive definition of truth in that language (that is, he has provided a condition for such an explanation in the terms of a mathematical-style definition), which provides a way of testing the truth values concerned with certainty, the condition being in the form of Tarski's equivalences (T). So a test for "the adequacy of a formal semantical definition of truth", that it generates only true biconditionals of the form "s is true if and only if p" (which, in Tarski's case, is applied only to the formal language of mathematics), is here being offered as a test for an account of meaning in language per se.

His conclusion is that he has produced, in a "mildly perverse sense" a theory of meaning which makes no use of meanings and his summary is worth quoting at length:

There is no need to suppress, of course the obvious connection between a definition of truth of the kind Tarski has shown how to construct, and the concept of meaning. It is this: the definition works by giving necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of every sentence, and to give truth conditions is a way of giving the meaning of a sentence. To know the semantic concept of truth for a language is to know what it is for a sentence - any sentence - to be true, and this amounts ... to understanding the language.

(ib. p. 24).

It follows that whereas Tarski's equivalence statements analyse truth in terms of meaning (where "is true" is virtually synonymous with "means"<sup>(6)</sup>) Davidson has "the reverse in mind" as he is taking "truth to be the central primitive concept ... detailing truth's structure, to get at meaning" (Davidson 1984, p.xiv). An example he uses makes this point well. He is only concerned with identifying a theory which entails the following and all other, trivial sentences, "'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white" (Davidson 1967, p.25, footnote 9). It is, he claims, Tarski's theory which is successful in entailing such sentences, where "a theory of meaning takes the form of a truth definition" (ib. p.27).

Complex though all this seems it does appear to have three "desirable characteristics" (Davidson 1970, p.57), namely:

1. it accounts "for the meaning (or conditions of truth) of every sentence by analysing it as composed in truth-relevant ways, of elements drawn from a finite stock"
2. it gives "a method for deciding, given an arbitrary sentence, what its meaning is" and
3. it does so in a non-circular way (Davidson 1970, p.56).

The first and second characteristics meet the two conditions laid down earlier (p.144), the third characteristic adding to the second condition. These are "desirable" in that by explaining "how an infinite aptitude can be encompassed by finite accomplishments" (Davidson 1965, p.8) the theory allows for language to be learned, and by giving in a finite way its infinite meanings the theory allows for language to be understood. Moreover, it does all this without circularity.

However, this is only described so far in terms of translating "s" and "p" within the same language which, superficially at least, lends support to his rejection of intensional concepts, for within a language one can easily explain meaning sententially by finding straightforward synonyms. The acid test would seem to be in retaining an extensional account of interpretation when explicating the

phenomenon of translation from one language into another.

Davidson, of course, is well aware of this problem arguing that unlike the previous case, the test as to whether the theory of meaning for the alternative language is correct is no longer trivial. The goal is the same, the "infinite correlation of sentences alike in truth" (Davidson 1967, p.27), but there is no "direct insight into likely equivalences" (ib.). By maximising both the foreign speaker's self-consistency and our agreement with him, this being the Principle of Charity, one is then able to map what sentences the foreigner holds true onto what oneself holds true.

This system is, as can be seen, identical to the more obvious, internal-translation, case but it makes clearer the way in which the intensional concepts are being excluded from consideration. The mapping proceeds by assuming that the logical form of the foreigner's language is identical to our own, so allowing for Convention T to apply "as a grid to be fitted on to the language in one fell swoop" (Davidson 1973b, p.136) and continues by addressing those aspects of language which are not clearly held to be true or false.

Such an approach is intended:

to solve the problem of the interdependence of belief and meaning by holding belief constant as far as possible while solving for meaning ... by assigning truth conditions to alien sentences that make native speakers right when plausibly possible, according, of course, to our own view of what is right.  
(ib. p.137)

The consequence of this process is that one creates a "partially interpreted theory", producing "very thin evidence"<sup>(?)</sup> to support the first mapping move. Given the nature of Convention T, such evidence is in effect all that is needed to minimise Quine's indeterminacy, for once the core of true statements is mapped the rest of language is generated from it, a useful function of the holistic approach to truth.

Davidson puts this point a different way when criticising conceptual relativism. He argues that we cannot begin to interpret without making assumptions about beliefs, but such assumptions can only be valid as a consequence of interpretation, so we must "assume general agreement on beliefs" (Davidson 1974b, p.196) and then assign truth on the basis of agreement in shared true sentences (in our own language) or with a contrived theory of truth (for another language). This "foundation ... in agreement" is his Principle of Charity and is "a condition of having a workable theory ... Charity is forced on us" (ib. p.197).

A theory that, as his does, "reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory" ensures communication between different languages. It does this by providing a bridge between them, the Principle of Charity, which operates by the translator assuming the correctness of "holding truth constant between the languages" (Ramberg 1989, p.76). For Davidson, the concept of truth underpinning interpretation is an absolute one and it is only the expressions of truth which are, with Tarski, relative to a given language. In this way Davidson's Principle of Charity is not merely some sort of "pragmatic constraint on choice between different interpretations, but a precondition for interpretation" (*ib.* p.77): as such it "is forced on us...if we want to understand others" (Davidson 1974b, p.197) and so has to be applied across the whole of language (Davidson 1973b, p.136, footnote 16).

Moreover, this approach to meaning goes beyond Tarski's own strictures concerning the non-application of Convention T to natural languages, which of course Davidson is well aware of (Davidson 1967, pp.27-29). His response to this problem is to criticise the assumption that there are two discrete kinds of language, formal and natural. The phenomenon of language can be treated in differing ways, depending upon one's "interests and methods"(Davidson 1970, p.59). It would follow that attempting to provide a "formal theory of truth for a natural language" (*ib.* p.55) is, contra Tarski, not in some sense a hopeless task. Indeed, at the level of



providing a formal theory of truth for a language, elements of a natural language can be seen as being part of a formal system, especially as the formal theory is necessarily couched in the natural language's terms and, for those who understand it at least, is a part of the natural language under consideration (cf. Davidson 1967, p.29).

In these two ways, then, Davidson believes he has avoided Tarski's basic criticism that to apply Convention T to natural language is to transform ordinary language. There is no transformation of language, only an explanation of the precondition for interpretation, running alongside the view that there is no hard and fast distinction to be made between natural and formal languages.

This, as he recognises, is a re-working of Quine's meaning theory (Davidson 1973b, p.136, footnote 16). That aspect of Quine's theory that makes mention of observation sentences (what has been termed here his Stimulus meaning theory - p.73), where "meaning is firmest" (Quine 1969c, p.89), finds its parallel in Davidson's "grid" of Convention T<sup>(8)</sup>: that aspect which explains the rest of language (Quine's Coherence meaning theory - ib.) is paralleled in Davidson's Principle of Charity<sup>(9)</sup>. Thus, instead of arguing for a theory of meaning which eventually rests upon the foundation of shared sensory experiences, Davidson argues for a foundation constructed from truth conditions. As he says, "What I have added to Quine's basic insight is the

suggestion that the theory (of meaning) should take the form of a theory of absolute truth" (Davidson 1977b, p.225)<sup>(10)</sup>.

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5a.4 Davidson's Account of First-Language Acquisition

Given these accounts of the nature of philosophy of language and meaning theory it is possible to identify an account of first-language acquisition although, unfortunately, it is more implied than developed explicitly. In accord with the second major argument of this thesis Davidson proposes that a theory of meaning must, by giving "a constructive account of the meaning of the sentences in the language", be a "necessary feature of a learnable language" (Davidson 1965, p.3) and continues by criticising various meaning theories on the grounds that they do not allow for language to be "learnable".

The implication is that he is going to provide an alternative to "shaky hunches about how we learn languages", whereas what is actually presented is a consequence of his, and Quine's, holism (that the first steps to learning language are best described not "as learning part of the language; rather it is a matter of partly learning" - ib. p.7) followed by an examination of what is to count as knowing a language. The consequence of this examination is, naturally enough, not an empirical account of language acquisition but rather an explanation of the formal constraints that such an account must operate within.

The central constraint is that of explaining how infinite meaning is possible from a finite set of given meanings and Davidson's explanation is that one must "discover a finite basic vocabulary in the verbal phenomena" so as to allow the meaning theory "to prove useful to a creature with finite powers" (Davidson 1984, p.xiii). This base consists of a "finite number of semantical primitives" (Davidson 1965, p.9), such primitives being defined as an expression in a sentence whose rules of meaning are not determined by meaning rules in sentences where they do not appear (ib.). If one removes the negatives from this definition then the identity with Convention T becomes clear:

Semantical Primitives: dfn.

an expression in a sentence whose meaning rules are determined by meaning rules in a sentence where it appears.

Convention T: dfn.

's' is true iff p

It would follow that once these primitives were acquired then, as with Quine's Observation Sentences, there would be a base of meaning from which to grasp the remainder of language, for to acquire a semantical primitive is at one and the same time to acquire meaning. It is for this reason that Davidson claims that his theory of "meaning-as-knowing-the-semantic-concept-of-truth" is empirical, for it can be

tested by showing that it does in fact give the basic structure of what is required to speak and understand language. It does this by "relating the known truth conditions of each sentence to those aspects ("words") of the sentence that recur in other sentences" (Davidson 1967, p.25), through moving from the finite known to the infinite unknown roles of words. It should be noted, however, that he does not explain the acquisition of these primitives in either of the two papers referenced above.

At this point the earlier identification of Davidson's work as a possible compromise between Quine's empiricism and Chomsky's rationalism becomes clearer. In a sense Davidson has moved away from empiricism as soon as his "primitives" become sentential rather than sensory. If to that move one adds the emphasis on creativity (the need for an explanation of the infinite in terms of the finite), provided by the logical structure of Convention T, then the next step is inevitable, where "we see the natural language as a formal system ... (with) linguists and analytical philosophers as co-workers" (Davidson 1970, pp.55-56).

Thus Chomsky's "deep-structures" would, to all intents and purposes, be identical to the logical form generated by Convention T (Davidson 1984, p.xv), a point of similarity which is reinforced when, speaking of a modified, Tarski-style, theory of truth, he says, "To belong to a speech community - to be an interpreter of the speech of

others - one needs, in effect, to know such a theory and to know that it is a theory of the right kind" (Davidson 1975, p.161).

The picture here is much more rationalist than Davidson's acknowledgements to Quine might lead one at first to believe. Language acquisition is a matter of interpreting what is not known into what is, for, "The problem of interpretation is domestic as well as foreign ... All understanding of the speech of another involves radical interpretation" (Davidson 1973b, p.125). However such interpretation does not proceed with the aid of some sort of translation manual, in that reference to the interpreter's own language is "otiose" once one realizes the universality of the structure of Convention T, hence "the only expressions a theory of interpretation has to mention are those belonging to the language to be interpreted" (ib. p.130).

Although at no point does Davidson drift into talk of innate knowledge it should be clear from the above that what is taken to be "given" is, in fact, a theory of truth that satisfies Convention T; without such a theory (coupled to the Principle of Charity), communication-as-interpretation is impossible (Davidson 1974b, p.197). This, then, is not so much innate as rather a pre-condition for such a view of communication and the move towards rationalism is accelerated by the abandonment of reference as the point of

contact between "linguistic theory and events, actions, or objects described in non-linguistic terms" (Davidson 1977b, p.219).

If some sort of empiricist reference is not the point of contact and, presumably, a rationalist's innate knowledge of linguistic deep-structure is also to be rejected (on the standard grounds that it prevents language being learned - although see what follows), then all that is left to explain the contact is the sentential Convention T, where one starts with some T-sentences and tests them against the rest of the language to see if they are in fact held to be true (ib. p.222), adjusting as one proceeds. It is, then, the concept of truth à la Convention T that "brings us back" from talk of language to talk of the world (Davidson 1973a, p.65), not innate knowledge or sensory information, and it is this which, within Davidson's work, is supposed to account for first-language acquisition.

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#### 5a.6 Critique

As Davidson himself recognizes, what he is presenting is a metaphysic (Davidson 1977a, pp.213-214) and so, as before, valid criticism can only be internal to his system in that it must operate within the framework he accepts. The "purity" of his philosophy of language, for example, can be criticised by pointing out that it only is pure when, with Tarski, it remains at the formal level (assuming that truth can be explained in some formal way). However, as soon as Davidson begins to relate his philosophy of language to natural language then it loses its purity and takes on the epistemological concerns of the traditionalists. This problem becomes particularly clear when he says that knowledge of Convention T is a pre-requisite for membership of a "speech community" (Davidson 1975, p.161).

However, the results of such criticism based upon notions of epistemological purity are in fact criticisms of Rorty's conception of the philosophy of language, not Davidson's. Indeed, Davidson's emphasis on natural language as the central concern of the philosophy of language (Davidson 1973a, p.71) shows how far Rorty is from understanding Davidson's work and so this possible criticism misfires.

Rorty's comments, however, do identify an area of possible tension. Davidson, as has just been indicated, is



presenting a "philosophy" of language which rests upon two pillars, a philosophy of formal language and the Principle of Charity. It could be argued (for example, by Tarski), that the move from the first of these supports to the domain of natural language is invalid if only because formal language is by definition logically consistent and natural language is not (Tarski 1944, p.60).

At this point it becomes clear that the picture presented by the metaphor above is a false one. The Principle of Charity is not a support so much as a bridge (see p.139) which allows Davidson to make reference to the inconsistencies of natural language (see, for example, Davidson 1974b, p.197) within his general position on the philosophy of language. It is, indeed, a category shift to move from the formal to the natural, but this shift is one that he justifies (as it is part and parcel of his meaning theory it will be examined in what follows).

For this reason it is probably best not to identify Davidson as a Formal Semanticist (as Strawson - 1970 - and Harrison - 1979 - amongst others hold), but rather as a Sentential Empiricist (see pp.141-142). As such he can then be seen as making use of the insights of Formal Semanticists, such as Tarski, so as to continue Quine's task of modernising empiricism through a radical holism. It remains to be seen whether such empiricism has a meaning theory consistent with its account of first-language acquisition.

Generally speaking it is Davidson's meaning theory which has borne the brunt of most criticism. Hacking, for example, argues that it is a mistake to think that "means" and "is true if and only if" are directly reducible one to another as "provability" of T-sentences is required (Hacking 1979, p.142). This requirement is necessary so as to avoid the situation where two halves of a sentence might be true, the whole sentence would thus be true but, in an important sense, incorrect. Thus in his example, "The German sentence 'Schnee ist weiss' is true iff the sun rose yesterday", both halves of the sentence are true, but "means" cannot be substituted as the connective. Even provability is not enough, as "I know what lots of sentences mean, but know few enough proofs of T-sentences" (ib. p.143).

Davidson, as Hacking recognises, is not making this harder claim, only that he can "go from truth to something like meaning" (Davidson 1973a, p.74), this being achieved by the requirement that "there be just one systematic system of translation" (Hacking 1975, p.155), the twin evils of indeterminacy and incompatibility being avoided by the structure provided by a theory of truth and the agreement assumed by the Principle of Charity. Developed in this way Hacking believes that Davidson's work shows that "knowledge itself has become sentential" (ib. p.181), a position Hacking is happy to accept.

As has already been shown, of course, Davidson would also be able to accept this conclusion. Moreover, unlike Hacking, Davidson resists a drift to some form of sentential relativism that it might imply (see Hacking 1982), as he claims that his account allows him to "re-establish unmediated touch" with the world (Davidson 1974b, p.198). So, although on the surface Hacking appears to be arguing that there is no meaning theory here ("Davidson resuscitates meaning by administering the kiss of death" - Hacking 1975, p.179) what in context Hacking is claiming is that there is no theory of meaning-as-entities. There is, however, a theory of meaning-as-sentences and this is one that Hacking is happy to accept.

This aspect of Davidson's account of meaning seems to have been missed by Hamlyn when, in criticising Davidson, he says, "meaning is a property of sentences; hence the idea of a semantic theory of truth is an incoherent hybrid" (Hamlyn 1970, p.128). Davidson's theory of truth is semantic in that, with Tarski, its original context is that of a formal language, but it is related to ordinary sentences in the way described earlier. Thus the account of truth embedded in the new context of a natural language is supposed to bring with it an account of meaning. It is, then, indeed a hybrid, but it has yet to be shown that it is "incoherent".

A more worrying criticism is that of Harrison, who concentrates on the idea of "solving for meaning". He

points out that the Principle of Charity is the tool used to "hold belief steady", but "the notion of truth-telling is itself derivative from the notion of an utterance" as, by implication, only the utterance of an assertion can be true or false (Harrison 1979, p.138). It would seem to follow that the application of Convention T to the task of translating a foreign language presupposes a knowledge of truth for that language which, in this theory's terms, means to presuppose meaning. In this way a reductio ad absurdum of Davidson's theory of meaning is apparently produced, as it would seem only to be able to explain meaning when meaning is already known<sup>(11)</sup>.

Davidson can probably avoid this conclusion by stressing that he is not defining truth-in-a-language, which is indeed relative "to times and speakers" (Davidson 1967, p.35), but rather "truth predicatehood" (Davidson 1973a, p.65). That is, Convention T is an absolute pre-condition of truth statements, but it is not itself a particular truth statement (the distinction here is that between a meta-language and an object-language, where his definition is couched in the meta-language and is a pre-condition for the application of truth in object-languages). Meanings, then, are not being assumed, only their pre-condition.

In emphasising the distinction Davidson can lend support to his claim that the "truth of sentences remains relative to language" (Davidson 1974b, p.198) and "explicit appeal must

be made to speakers and their circumstances in giving a theory of truth" (Davidson 1977a, p.213), whilst still retaining his formal, objective, context-free Convention T. Such a defence, then, is analogous to the defence that Chomsky might make to such a criticism, namely that Harrison is criticising a dualistic theory as if it were a monistic one, ignoring the way that deep-structure (Davidson's truth) and surface-structure (Davidson's truth-in-a-language) inter-relate. However, as will be shown, the development of Harrison's criticism is not so easily answered.

Another critic, Blackburn, has criticised previous meaning theories as being "dog-legged" (Blackburn 1984, p.40), in that language is given meaning by being interpreted in some other guise (traditionally, Idea) which has meaning within it. This avoids a regress of interpretation, but if the way in which meaning is so contained is not explained then meaning is not explained, only assumed, the assumption being hidden in the convolutions of the dog-leg (ib. p.43).

Now it could be argued that Davidson's account of meaning is of this sort, where there is an unexplained end to interpretation, his variation of the "medium which carries its own interpretation with it" (ib. p.44) being Convention T. This possibility is in fact mentioned in Blackburn's early discussion of dog-legged theories (ib. p.66). In reply to the early criticism Davidson could stress, as was suggested he could against Harrison, his distinction between

pre-suppositional and particular language (the form of language as opposed to particular expressions within a language - 1967, p.31).

In this way the dog-legged metaphor could be dismissed as being too simplistic, for meaning is not given in the uninterpreted base (Convention T): it is used in the language under consideration, mediated by the constraints of the common base (its commonality being "natural" - Davidson 1965, p.8 - and "intuitively obvious" - Davidson 1973a, p.66) and not translated into it. In fact, given Davidson's acceptance of the sentential nature of meaning he could argue, with Hacking, that meaning was located in the sentence, which was in turn located in the language, so no interpretation of meaning takes place at all. In this way Davidson could defend himself by showing that his account of meaning does not even begin to move in a dog-legged fashion.

Blackburn's detailed criticism is slightly different however, taking the alternative conclusion to the dog-legged one. He accepts that if Davidson's approach worked then "the fine-grained property of meaning (would emerge) ... from the discipline of finding a coarse-grained property" (Blackburn 1984, p.285). However, the approach hinges upon "a regressive theory of understanding (ib. p.299), for his explanation of our understanding of new sentences is given in terms of a formal derivation working on a prior understanding, which itself was generated from a still prior

understanding, and so on.

This criticism can be met by Davidson in two ways. Firstly, he could point out that Blackburn's formulation of his position appears to suggest that he is introducing some sort of intensional concept, understanding, to replace meaning. Davidson is careful to make no direct mention of such a concept at this level of explanation and, as an intensional concept, its introduction would run counter to the whole position he is advocating (such concepts are shelved until meaning is "solved"). If "meaning" were substituted for "understanding" the nature of the misfire becomes clearer - there is no regressive theory of meaning because there is no theory of meaning.

Secondly, and following from this, Davidson could also point out that his explanation of the "elasticity of language" is not purely in terms of Convention T and so is not purely formal. Admittedly, the functioning of a natural language is constrained by the logic of the formal language, but Davidson's point is that this constraint is empirically testable because, in one's own language at least, it produces trivial propositions (Davidson 1967, p.25). The formal theory does not explain the particular meanings so much as identify the structure of that language. In another's language the theory will not work at all without the Principle of Charity. The understanding that results is self-certifying, not regressive, because it is testable

within the language being interpreted. Thus his account of meaning appears to be defensible against two major critics.

In fact, of course, having identified what his account is supposed to do he has, in effect, identified criteria that it must meet to be successful. Those who introduce new criteria, or interpret his criteria in a way that Davidson does not intend, can hardly fail to be surprised when their criticisms (expressed in terms of his failure to meet their criteria) misfire. The two basic problems he identifies as criteria that his account has to meet do appear to be met, namely:

1. Is Convention T universal?

By definition it is, as it is a formal condition for truth. This is no hidden petitio principii, because the formal condition can be tested empirically.

2. Does the Principle of Charity explain the application of conclusions regarding formal language to informal language (at heart the central difficulty for this approach to natural language)?

It appears to because, if language is perceived holistically, then to understand a part of a language (with the aid of Convention T) is to have an entry into the particular truths or meanings of the remainder of that language. It does not matter that "contexts are not extensional" (Blackburn 1984, p.287); the intensional



(meanings and the like) is brought in on the backs of the extensional Convention T and the universal nature of agreement that is presumed by the Principle of Charity.

In meeting these problems (in effect bridging his version of the fact/value gap) he does appear to have met two and a half of his three criteria for success. He has

1. defined formally "the class of meaningful expressions" (Davidson 1969, p.8)

2. given a non-circular account of meaning

- 3a. thereby explaining how another language can be learned.

It now remains to see whether he can meet the second part of his third criterion, to

- 3b. explain how one's own language can be learned.

Harrison correctly points out that both the anthropologist and the pre-linguistic child have the same "fundamental data for any interpretation", uninterpreted sentences and the contexts of their utterance (Harrison 1979, p.131). As has already been shown, the anthropologist has the additional data of having a language to work from, so has at least a working knowledge of the constraints of Convention T which he can then apply to the alternative language under consideration. But the crucial difference is that the

pre-linguistic child has, by definition, no access to such data. Bereft of access to a conception of the nature of Convention T, on Davidson's account of the matter at least, the child has nothing with which to begin the process of translation and so, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, should remain without language.

What is required is an explicit account of first-language acquisition which explains how a child with no working understanding of the grid of Convention T comes to make use of it. In terms of what was described earlier (p.152) the concept of a precondition for interpretation is a meaningful one when there are at least two languages, that to be interpreted and that of the interpreter. If, as seems to be the case with the pre-linguistic child, there is only one language, that to be interpreted, there would seem to be no preconditions which provide a framework for the interpretation to be successful (or not, as the case might be).

Indeed, this is a point which Davidson himself appears to recognise, by implication at least. In the context of arguing for the autonomy of meaning over convention he states that much of language is learned from "playmates and parents" but that its acquisition cannot depend upon their contingent abilities (Davidson 1982, p.274), and needs to be mediated by Convention T ("the theory of truth for the speaker" - ib.). Unfortunately, he says nothing about how

this precondition for language is first acquired and the absence of such an account leaves unclear whether or not he can satisfy his own demand that he explain the acquisition of one's first language (criterion 3b - p.168).

This is not the same point that Putnam makes and which Harrison seems to conflate with the previous criticism (ib. pp.136-137). Putnam argues that Davidson's holism reverses the actual way in which language is learned, for children move from understanding individual words to sentences (Putnam 1975, p.261, quoted in Harrison ib. p.136), to which Harrison adds the criticism that we do not in fact only approximately grasp the syntactical structure of our own language and then confirm it by using operations mediated by Convention T.

Davidson can easily deal with these points for his argument qua holistic philosophy of language cannot, without turning its back on the advantages that Frege brings in rejecting unitary meaning, accept that meaning is word-dependent. Consequently, any descriptive account of first language acquisition which identifies a move from the child first learning individual words to then learning combinations of words needs to give an explanation of meaning which allows for such dependency. That this would be a problem has previously been indicated by the difficulties that atomic theories of meaning face in attempting to explain the public nature of meaning.

Harrison's addition can also be met, perhaps along the lines that similar criticisms of Chomsky's transformational grammar are met. What Davidson is describing is a logical condition of knowing language, so to state that this is not in fact the way we do learn language misses the point. The way we in fact learn language operates within this constraint, not necessarily with it (Chomsky's variation on this defence would be to point out that innate knowledge need not be explicitly known, but the actual use of a language reveals that it exists).

However, neither of these suggested responses to possible criticism actually provide a clear account of first-language acquisition. Because, as has already been indicated, Davidson's account of interpretation is inappropriate in discussing the situation of the pre-linguistic child, some other account is required to explain how, within his general position, Davidson is able to explain why it is a child does begin to act, if only implicitly, as an interpreter.

Having himself identified the need for an explanation of first language acquisition as a criterion of success for his work, he would have to accept that his work is at present not fully realized. His account of truth is, possibly, "up to accounting for all the linguistic resources of the speaker" (Davidson 1984, p.xv). Yet he leaves it unclear how the very creation of those resources in one's own

language first occurs (criterion 3b - p.168). As will be shown later (pp.323ff), it is possible to provide an account of first-language acquisition which seems to fit within his general position. The realisation of this possibility is, of course, necessary to avoid the charge that his work is not so much flawed as seriously incomplete (in that it has not met the second part of his third criterion for a successful theory of language - see p.178). Indeed, this possible incompleteness could reintroduce the problem of the relevance of an apparently formal theory of language, for if it cannot explain how language begins of what use is a language-based theory of truth?

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SECTION Vb - WITTGENSTEIN

### 5b.1 Introduction

The original dichotomy between Formal Semantics and Communication theorists was, as may be recalled, drawn by Strawson who resolves it by opting for the latter approach to meaning, castigating the former's as "unrealistic to the point of unintelligibility - or, at least, of extreme perversity" (Strawson 1969, p.189). For him this is the result of realizing, with Harrison (see p.163) that the act of saying, or asserting, a T-sentence necessarily involves some sort of reference to belief, the later Wittgenstein being cited as an example of such a theorist. It is, then, natural to turn from an examination of Davidson's work on meaning to Wittgenstein's and if any other justification should prove necessary the all-pervading influence of Wittgenstein's work on modern British and American philosophy would alone be sufficient to explain the inclusion of a figure whose most influential work was first published nearly forty years ago.

Given the nature of Wittgenstein's work it is necessary to make a number of methodological preliminaries clear. As is well known, only two of the variety of publications that bear his name were intended for publication by him, the Tractatus and the Investigations, and so these texts will form the core of what follows, the remainder of the corpus being used to justify or expand points that might otherwise

appear weakly argued or unclear. This restriction follows McGinn's approach (McGinn 1984, pp.xii-xiii, note 6), as does the method of separating exposition from the wealth of commentary and criticism. The first restriction allows one to draw mainly on material that Wittgenstein had himself polished for an audience, rather than on notes that might well need extensive development; the second allows one, temporarily at least, to hold at bay "the distractions of exegetical disputation" (*ib.* p.xiii). Thus these two restrictions combine, allowing for a clear picture of his position to be presented, unclouded by the contributions that can be made by the detail of primary and secondary sources.

This said it becomes necessary here to abandon the conventions of the Harvard referencing system, for the original dates of publication of all but the two texts previously mentioned usually bear little resemblance to the date when they were written. For this reason abbreviations will replace dates for all of Wittgenstein's work (see Note 1 for the abbreviations, the tentative date of production and the definite date of first publication).



The interpretation offered here is that his work is internally consistent (this is a natural criterion for preferring one route over another through the maze of his work) and also that his thought can be seen as moving from an early to a later stage with the aid of an interface provided by a stage of reflection. It should be noted that this is taken as being very much a movement, a gentle continuum, rather than as a violent reaction of rejection to all that was present in his early work.

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## The Early Wittgenstein

### 5b.2 The Philosophy of Language

Wittgenstein's first publication, the Tractatus, is clearly influenced by Frege's work. With Frege his approach is holistic, for "If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs" (T 2.0123) and it is also one which rejects Ideas, for "There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas" (ib. 5.631). His early philosophy of language, as a result, is to be seen as setting "a limit to the expression of thoughts ... in language" (ib. p.3), and its emphasis on propositions is, although differing in detail, also consistent with Frege's philosophy of language, as is his statement of realism ("the world is all that is the case" - ib. 1).

A realist (in the traditional sense identified by Stoutland - 1989, pp.96-99), propositional philosophy of language is inexorably driven towards the search for a language purified of the anti-realist ambiguities of ordinary language (ib. 3.3230, and so the early Wittgenstein's philosophy of language can be seen as an attempt to improve Frege's conception of "a sign-language that is governed by logical grammar - by logical syntax" (ib. 3.325). It is for this

reason that here he believes he has found "the final solution of the problems" because logic deals in such a finality where "we cannot make mistakes" (ib. 5.473). This, then, is an early Formal Semantics, where ordinary language can be analysed into, and from, its elementary propositions. As such it follows that ordinary language's propositions are to be seen as truth functions of so-called "elementary propositions" (ib. 5).

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### 5b.2 The Meaning Theory

As before, the detail of this theory and its divergence from Frege's<sup>(2)</sup>, is inappropriate here as the purpose of this section of exposition is to show what points of contact, if any, there are with the later thought. The dualism of Formal Semantics generates a dualistic meaning theory, where meaning in everyday language, through a truth-functional analysis, is to be found in the "simplest kind of proposition", which "asserts the existence of a state of affairs" (ib. 4.21). At this elementary level propositions and what they represent meet, this meeting being alluded to by the analogy with pictorial relationships (the meeting place cannot be described directly, otherwise the mode of description would itself be an example of what could not exist, a language beyond language). Thus meaning is, at one level, provided by the connection between pictorial form and reality (ib. 2.222), at another by "the results of truth-operations" on these deeper level elementary propositions (ib. 5.3).

However this formal account of meaning is, here and there added to by comments which appear at first sight to be more sociological than logical. Thus he states that a sign without use is "meaningless" (ib. 3.328), although it should be noted that in context this is a "logico-syntactical" use (ib. 3.327), which stresses the dualism of his meaning

theory. Later, as a parenthetical aside on the nature of philosophy, he says, "In philosophy the question, 'What do we actually use this word or this proposition for?' repeatedly leads to valuable insights" (ib. 6.211). This point, however, runs counter to the general argument he presents, for the transcendental nature of logic (ib. 6.13) means that actual use with its roots in the specific is irrelevant to the theory of meaning he develops.

Similarly, although his talk of ordinary language being "a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it" and as dependent upon complex "tacit conventions" (ib. 4.002) appears to be leading away from Formal Semantics, in context it can be seen that he is in fact making a point about the way in which such complexes disguise the real form to which they are connected by logic. That is, he is well aware of a distinction between the "essential and accidental features" of a proposition and he is making use of both of these features (ib. 3.34).

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### 5b.3 First Language Acquisition

At this stage in Wittgenstein's thought there is, as has already been indicated, a conception of language which distinguishes the logically simple base of language from language per se. Ordinary language can itself be acquired working from the base of elementary propositions and truth-functions, but these last "must go without saying" (ib. 3.34) because they are presumed in any explanation (ib. 4.121)<sup>(3)</sup>. Moreover, elementary propositions cannot be taught, as what refers to them linguistically is itself an elementary proposition ("an elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself" - ib. 5). Consequently these propositions must be understood without explanation (ib. 4.02), each "shows its sense" (ib. 4.022) and, like a picture, represents its aspect of reality (ib. 4.011-4.012).

This, then, is a development of the traditionalists' double-translation account of meaning and language-acquisition (see pp.23ff), but here the traditionalists' "Ideas" are replaced by elementary propositions. These "picture" the world so, although not physical referents (as with the traditional empiricists), they are still the referential base from which ordinary language springs.

One half of the translation account is given, in considerable detail, namely how everyday language has meaning, the other by analogy with a pictorial relationship. The regression of Ideas of Ideas that the traditionalists faced (see p.31) is here supposedly halted with the notion of a "complete analysis" (ib. 3.25) but at a considerable cost, for both this base and the method by which it generates ordinary language cannot on its own terms be acquired, a reductio ad absurdum<sup>(4)</sup> of the whole position. This central problem with the early work is not, however, one that is identified during the transitional stage of Wittgenstein's work.

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## The Middle-Period Wittgenstein

### 5b.4 The Philosophy of Language

Such a period of transition in a person's thought means, almost by definition, that it is difficult to pick out a clear position as the constant movement of thought prevents fixed points being readily identified. This said, it is still possible to make out some important landmarks.

A propositional holism is retained, but developed still further, for now it is not the single proposition which is "laid like a yardstick against reality", but a "system of propositions" (PR p.317). This development eventually reaches a stage where he can assert, "understanding a sentence means understanding a language" (BBB p.5), which is as much a comment about the holistic nature of understanding (or meaning) as it is about language.

However, such holism is tempered by the retention of realism, where language's meaning is derived "from the world" (PR p.80, s.47) although he is aware that, with the Tractatus, "The limit of language is shown by its being impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to (is the translation of) a sentence, without simply repeating the



sentence" (CV p.10e). That is, at this stage in his thought the realm of facts/reality does still exist, but there is an acceptance of the view that there seems to be no tool, other than ordinary language, with which directly to refer to such a realm.

Facts then can be alluded to, but on their own can rarely, if ever, give meaning to language, because language is required to allude to facts. A traditional correspondence theory of truth and meaning, then, is being rejected on the grounds that such a theory generates a circular argument, a circularity that in the Tractatus had been halted by an appeal to elementary propositions. His new awareness that the fixed certainty of reality mirrored by logic need not be an integral part of his philosophy of language finds expression in, first his rejection of the "craving for generality" in favour of the "particular case" (BBB p.18) and, second, his rejection of essences in favour of an acceptance of "mere convention" (RFM p.23e, s.74).

It can be seen, then, that by 1944 his thought in this area had developed into an extended holistic approach to language, coupled to a possible relaxation of the constraints of a traditional realism, in which sociological convention rather than logical form might provide an alternative philosophy of language. The stage then, is being set for a transition from the fixed, a-contextual

necessities of the Tractatus to the changing, contextual "necessities" that typify his later conception of language.

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### 5b.5 The Theory of Meaning

As his view of the philosophy of language shifted subtly so his theory of meaning altered, the one remaining consistent with the other. The view that a single proposition is understood, holistically, within a system of propositions could have remained within the early account of meaning, where the system is analysed down to a base system of elementary propositions. Instead he develops this view in terms of the "application" (PR p.10, s.14), "use" (ib. s.15) and "function" (ib. p.11, s.20) of language, although still not breaking completely with the notion of reality being pictured (ib. s.24). However the "inexpressible" is now no longer necessarily objects in the world, but "perhaps ... the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (CV p.16e), this view being developed as a way of criticising Frazer's realism, where for Wittgenstein there is a common base of "animal activities" in man, the rest of his actions having "a characteristic peculiar to themselves" (RFB p.67).

The movement towards an extended holism is given considerable momentum by his reformulation of the traditional question, "What is the meaning of a word?" (containing as it does the implication that the answer should be given in terms of some sort of a referent) with "What is an explanation of meaning?" (BBB p.1). This second

question is answered not by postulating a mental or physical referent, with all of the untidy logical scaffolding it requires so as to build it on to ordinary language, but by identifying use as "giving life to the sign" (ib. p.4).

At a stroke this removes the picture of language as a calculus (ib. p.25), as being based on some ideal language (ib. p.28) and as being constrained by "the simple and rigid rules" provided by logicians (ib. p.83). Once logic's shackles are cast off then it becomes obvious that the fact that ordinary language proceeds in the majority of cases without "strict meaning ... is not a defect", but rather just the way that things are (ib. p.27). Given a phenomenon where there are rarely essences it is singularly inappropriate to use a tool, logic, which generates essences and so language is then free to be seen as functional, instrumental (ib. p.67), where "the use of the word in practice is its meaning".

What is retained is an explicit rejection of a regress of meaning, where further and further uses might be called upon to explain meaning. A practice is often rule-governed but the reasons for following those rules can end at a point where one simply follows them for no reason (ib. p.143), as a "custom among us, or a fact of our natural history" (RFM p.20, s.63), which have not been doubted and are so obvious as to go "unremarked" (ib. p.43e, s.141). In this way the area which the Tractatus concentrated on, where language and

reality meet to justify meaning, is now being dismissed as able to "take care of itself" (ib. p.67e, s.4).

At this point the notions of language-game, symptoms and criteria can be seen as, amongst other things, replacing the logical perspective on meaning with a sociological one. An account of meaning which accords with the rigour of Formal Semantics is here seen as inappropriate, for neither rigour, nor form, nor for that matter, semantics are any longer appropriate to explain on their own the phenomenon under consideration. A socially based conception of meaning requires an account of meaning which is also socially based, the detail of which has yet to be provided.

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### 5b.6 First Language Acquisition

The early Wittgenstein, as has been shown, could not explain the initial acquisition of elementary propositions because they were presupposed by his conception of language. The rudimentary holism-of-the-system which identifies the transitional stage of his thought has a similar problem, because "any kind of explanation of a language presupposes a language already ... I cannot use language to get outside language" (PR p.54, s.6). So his own summary of this view, "the use of a language is something that cannot be taught" (ib. p.9, s.6), needs to have added to it the phrase "in language" to allow for the presuppositional nature of the problem to be made clear.

This is not to say, however, that language still cannot be acquired, for with the rejection of elementary propositions comes the possibility that first language acquisition may well not be based on language. So, citing Goethe's Faust, he states, "Language ... is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'" (CV p.31e) and later that, "The word is taught as a substitute for a facial expression or a gesture" (LC p.2), the teaching here proceeding via use. The point that language is no longer the basis of language is particularly well put when he says, "The child understands the gestures which you use in teaching him. If he did not, he could understand nothing" (ib. footnote 1).

Such a prelude to a more detailed account of the child's acquisition of his first language is a result, firstly, of a philosophy of language which no longer sees essences and logical form as its goal, and whose holism is expanding from the proposition to the system of propositions and, secondly, of a meaning theory which, as a consequence of this new perception of language, is no longer searching for referents, but rather identifying relevant uses, functions and practices. It follows that if a child no longer needs to build a monolithic referential language upon a referential base then the acquisition of a heterogeneous language can be seen in functional terms, where there are many different bases of language some of which may, indeed be linguistic. This, however, as with the philosophy of language and meaning theory, remains to be developed.

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## The Later Wittgenstein

### 5b.7 The Philosophy of Language

The gradual development of holism reaches its natural conclusion in his later work, propositions now being embedded not simply in language but in what might be called the total context, "the form of life". The "given" then is no longer the Tractarian "world", but the total social context and as such is the basis for all that one can do with language (PI p.226), being the "element in which arguments have their life" (OC p.16e, s.105). This extreme holism is, as has been indicated, a natural development from Frege and brings with it inevitable consequences for his theory of meaning and account of first-language acquisition.

It also, of course, has consequences for his philosophy of language. It would be inconsistent to have this level of holism and yet still to be arguing for language's essential nature, and so he explicitly rejects the search for the "general form of propositions and of language" (PI p.31e, s.65). The search for generality is replaced with a search for specificity, the result being a description of language's infinite permutations couched in terms of language-games and family resemblances. The former are, amongst other things, particular ways language can be used,



the latter the only analogy that can explain the loose and shifting way in which they connect (ib. p.32e, s.67). Thus language consists of a "complicated network" of language-games (ib. s.66), where neither the network nor the notion of "game" can be tightly defined, other than to point to the fact that, qua games, they are located in a social context. The notion of a language-game, then, replaces that of "systems of propositions" and, in so doing, lays stress on the conventional, social, nature of language (ib. p.11e, s.23) and on its "indefiniteness" (ib. p.227e).

It would also be inconsistent to view the philosophy of language as being primarily concerned with identifying the essential form of ordinary language, where some sort of "super-concepts" are to be reached as the goal of a final analysis (ib. p.44e, s.97). Consequently, such a view is also rejected, with ordinary language becoming, to all intents and purposes, the replacement for the ideal, "perfect language" (ib. p.45e, s.98), for "the crystalline purity of logic" (ib. p.46e, s.107).

What is now realized is that such purity is not the result which analysis is aiming for, but rather a "requirement" of a particular way of viewing philosophy (ib.) and it is this requirement which is being rejected as inappropriate, for the translation from ordinary use into perfect "use" brings "the queerest conclusions" with it (ib. p.79e, s.194), as well as running counter to the holistic nature of language.

That is, if language is in fact as described here then it becomes necessary to realize that in philosophy one must recognize "as the solution something that looks as if it were only a preliminary to it" (Z p.58e, s.314), namely ordinary language.

With this form of holism goes a rejection of a traditional form of realism, although not of realism per se<sup>(5)</sup>. This rejection can be seen in his replacement of the analogy of picturing with that of family resemblance. With the former there is obviously something external to a picture which it reaches out to and which, in some sense, shapes judgements about it. However, with the latter the relationship is purely internal to the family concerned. There are, of course, reasons for identifying that relationship, even though they may change from one family member to another (PI p.32e, s.67) and it is these non-linguistic reasons which allow for an acceptance of aspects of realism and thus for talk of objects, truth and meaning.

It is tempting to identify such a realism as linguistic, but to do so would disguise the way in which, as already indicated, this conception of language is socially based. It would, then, seem appropriate to term this philosophy of language Socio-Linguistic Realism, and so incorporate the crucial social dimension into the identification (cf. Stoutland 1989, pp.107ff). As will become clear later, this is not a crude linguistic relativism. Admittedly "others

have concepts that cut across ours" (Z p.68e, s.379) and it would then follow, if his philosophy were based purely on language, that conceptual (and/or linguistic) relativism would result. But as these concepts have a fixed, real, base of certainty "within a system" (OC p.16e, 105), they are not as arbitrary as standard criticisms of relativism would claim. So, although there is a relativity of systems (hence his wish "to rule out the view that we have the right concepts and other people the wrong ones" - RC p.55e, s.293), there is not a relativity of concepts, where concepts and language would be the base, the given, for on Wittgenstein's account concepts do not "reflect our life. They stand in the middle of it" (ib. p.57e, s.302).

That is, there is a "given", namely our whole social system, which reflects, and is reflected by, our concepts and our language. This conception of the given can be seen as a form of realism, but relative to social systems. Such a subtle form of relativist realism (which is as much, or as little, a contradiction as Kant's conception of the synthetic a priori) is, then, the metaphysic which "obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations" (Z p.82e, s.458) for, on the one hand, a conceptual investigation will eventually strike the "facts", which provide those elements which traditional realists stress (such as truth, meaning and understanding) of that system and, on the other, a factual investigation will inevitably be couched within the concepts generated by a

system.

The point being laboured here is that Wittgenstein's philosophy of language represents a resolution of the polarity produced by the traditional realism of the empiricists and the nominalism of the rationalists, comparable to the resolution produced by Kant of the traditionalists' polarity (cf. "Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind ... Only through their union can knowledge arise" - Kant 1787, p.93, II, A51). The objectivity provided by realism and the stress on language provided by nominalism combine to form Wittgenstein's Socio-Linguistic Realism, which can be seen as drawing on aspects of realism, nominalism (or, indeed, relativism) depending on the particular perspective adopted<sup>(6)</sup>. It now remains to show what meaning theory and account of first-language acquisition develop from it.

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### 5b.8 The Theory of Meaning

It is tempting to think that Wittgenstein's meaning theory is no more than a translational account of meaning, in that questions concerning meaning are to be translated into questions concerning use. As will be shown this is a common interpretation of this central aspect of his work, but to summarise his theory as merely advocating "meaning is use" is to simplify it to the point of caricature. The notion of "use" does play an important role in his theory of meaning, but in conjunction with a number of other concepts which give the notion point and purpose. Indeed, without these other concepts it would be too open-ended to apply to problems of meaning at all.

"Use" (or "application", or "practice") certainly plays a part in his meaning theory. Thus, synonymy of sense is given in terms of use (PI p. 10e, s.20) and the point is repeated in a number of places (to know the meaning of a word is to know its use or function - ib. p.12e, s.30/p.20e, s.43/p.22e, s.47: Z p.74e, s.418: OC p.10e, s.64). But it is worth noting that this simple point is made either in a negative context, as when he criticises his earlier view of language as having imposed a simplistic view of language's uses (PI p.12e, s.23), as having given logic precedence over language use (ib. p.46e, s.105-108) and so as having attempted to "reform language" (ib. p.51e, s.132), or

positively to move away from the simplistic formulation the theory to an examination of the other concepts which give sense to the slogan. Stylistically, then, the slogan can be seen as a bridge from his earlier view of meaning to his later. It is not in itself that theory of meaning, rather it leads one to that theory.

The connection is well expressed when, having asserted that "a meaning of a word is a kind of employment of it" (OC p.10e, s.61) he then states, "That is why there exists a correspondence between the concepts 'rule' and 'meaning'" (ib. s.62). That is, if meaning is to be explained in terms of use ("Practices give words their meaning" - ROC p.59e, s.317) then those uses, because they are social practices, are rule-governed (ib. p.57e, s.303). The concept of use, then, is merely a sign-post to that of rule which, as will be shown is itself not sufficient to explain meaning.

Rule-following is examined in considerable detail (in fact in far more detail than 'use' per se). One can, as with a game, follow language's rules "without ever learning or formulating" them; they can be mastered without necessarily being known, because observation of them in action is sufficient to prepare one to use them (PI p.15e, s.31), or to judge that another has mastery of them (ib. p.73e, s.180). Thus the early view that the language-user "is operating a calculus according to definite rules" (ib.

p.38e, s.81), or is "consulting a grammar" (Z p.55e, s.297), is replaced with a conception of rule which is altogether looser because it is founded not on logic but on social "purpose" (PI p.41e, s.87), or "customs" (ib. p.81e, s.199).

This view of rules, then, sees them as shared, public (ib. s.202), applied in particular circumstances and perhaps tacitly known. They are not in some sense chosen by individuals from some smörgåsbord of rules, but are followed "blindly" (ib. p.83e, s.219). Such sub-conscious rule-following prevents a possible regress of justification infecting the account by locating rule-following firmly in practice, in the social setting that is its "bedrock" (ib. p.85e, s.217). This explanation of rules, then, avoids the circularity of defining them in terms of a rule-based language (and, therefore, avoids the paradox of speaking about what cannot be spoken that bedevilled the Tractatus by describing them as conventionally-based. It is for this reason, for example, that he says, "Only in the practice of a language can a word have meaning" (RFM p.344, s.xx2).

There are, however, certain locutions (especially those relating to sensations such as 'I am in pain') whose use suggests that they are not so much linguistic statements as more subtle forms of physical behaviour. In such a case the linguistic behaviour (in addition to other contextual factors, such as that the person concerned is not a congenital liar) comes to replace the purely physical

behaviour as the public criterion for third-party ascription of the appropriate sensation to the person producing the locution (cf. McGinn 1984, p.49). In this way the slogan "meaning is use" clearly highlights the functional aspect of Wittgenstein's meaning theory, so allowing the differing functions, and therefore meanings, that various locutions have to be made clear.

At this point two further concepts need consideration in order that 'social context' and 'rule-governed' can be better explained as accounting for meaning, namely 'language-game' and 'criterion'. Language game is first introduced as a "primitive" application of language which gives "a clear view of the aim and functioning" of its constituent words (ib. p.4e, s.5). Collections of language-games, of "language and the actions into which it is woven", he also terms the "language-game", so indicating that both the complex whole and the simple part are picked out by the term (ib. p.5e, s.7), embedded as they are in the social context, the "form of life" (ib. p.11e, s.23). The use of the analogy with "game" is justified in that it stresses that language-speaking is an activity (ib.) and that the various uses of language are such as to prevent one giving a clear-cut definition of language itself, except in terms of the overlapping network of similarities akin to "family resemblance" (ib. p.32e, s.67), for there is no "general form of propositions and of language" (ib. p.31e, s.65) as he had once thought.



The social context, then, is seen as being analogous to the concept of a game, in that it provides a structure for understanding the use of language and thus its shifting meanings. At this point one simply notes the "proto-phenomenon", that the context is what it is, providing a base for such-and-such meanings (ib. p.167e, s.654-655). What occurs within a language-game, a particular context, "always rests on a tacit presupposition" (ib. p.179e) that "a certain agreement prevails" (Z p.76e, s.430), but that agreement is not one that makes an "appeal to the majority" (ib. s.431), being a sociological, rather than judicial, agreement.

It can be seen that in this way "the language-game ... is not based on grounds ... It is there - like our life" (OC p.73e, s.559). These tacit presuppositions concern our "inherited background" (ib. p.15e, s.14) and are a-truthful, being the system within which appeals to truth through "arguments have their life" (ib. p.16e, s.105). They are that in which we trust and so make language-games possible (ib. p.66e, s.509), being revealed by the way one acts, for acting "lies at the bottom of the language-game" (ib. p.28e, s.204). This "groundless" foundation (ib. p.24e, s.166) is one's form of life (ib. p.46e, s.358-359) and so the agreement that underpins language use is not traditionally metaphysical, being an activity (PI p.11e, s.22) which reveals an empirical "agreement" in forms of life (ib.

p.88e, s.241), "the given" (ib. p.226e).

The social context of meaning, then, is a socio-metaphysical concept which provide a base for language-games to be build upon. Relativity of meaning is, clearly, a relativity of such bases for there is no objective, systemless, certainty (OC p.17e, s.108). Within agreements language-games, meanings, are objective because of the nature of their agreed rules, but outside the context of our particular agreements meanings are less clear and it is at this point that others have "concepts that cut across ours" (Z p.68e, s.379), for their "life would run on differently ... In fact, this is the only way in which essentially different concepts are imaginable" (ib. p.69e, s.388). The formal concept "rule", however, is presupposed as being shared<sup>(7)</sup> and it is this which now needs elaborating.

Much has, of course, already been implied about language's rules through the analogy with "game", these points being developed through the notion of "criterion". The problem that remains is, in effect, that of explaining how it is that one understands that language-games are being used correctly, in accord with the appropriate socially agreed rules.

Given what has already been said it would be quite inappropriate to hold a particular language-game up against either physical or mental reality to see whether it fitted,

as a picture might. Even sentences that appear to make direct reference to the physical or mental realm do not gain their rule-governed nature by means of that reference, because that they so refer is a function of the agreements within which they nest (PI p.88e, s.241-242). The correct use of a particular language-game's rule is identified by criteria, these criteria providing a way of seeing whether meaning in the game is understood (PI p.172e, s.692), even though they are "not always sharply differentiated" (Z p.83e, s.466). In general the use of an expression provides such a criterion (ib. p.77e, s.190), as does providing an explicit rule or the "picking up" of a rule implicitly.

Criteria, then, are rules of language which are explicit or implicit, use-dependent, public and shared. They are not, however, providers of some form of logical necessity (here the criteria, there the meaning - cf. PI p.49e, s.120), for the criteria can be present when what they are criteria for are not (the correct move in chess, for example, can result by chance or by simply following instructions, not necessarily because the person moving the piece understands the meaning of what he is doing). Their necessity is a social necessity, where their certainty is "comfortable... not still struggling" (OC p.46e, s.357), rather than a logical necessity which in fact develops within such necessity (PI p.46e, s.108), and they provide a way of

giving an answer to the question, "How do you know that the language-game is being used appropriately?" - "By appealing to the agreed criteria".

It is difficult to find a single term to describe such an account of meaning, for its subtleties do not easily fit into one neat title. Meaning is described as being primarily located in ordinary use, this being like a game, rule-governed (criterial) within the agreements of a particular social context, of a form of life. As such it is both fixed and relative, as are the purposes of games, depending upon whether one's perspective is within or without that particular set of agreements.

In this way the concepts of use, language-game, social context, agreements, forms of life, rules and criteria are brought together to provide a description of meaning which, as with Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, is holistic to the form of life. In a sense this is a reference theory, where the referent shifts and alters depending upon the context and is picked out by use, criteria and context. But it is a reference theory like no other so far examined in that it allows for both the external empirical world and the internal mental world (as well as grammar and logic) to play their various parts in language. It is, then, best to identify such an account as a Descriptive account of meaning, leaving open-ended quite what that description is a

description of, other than, perhaps, to see it as consisting of obvious "remarks on the natural history of human beings" (PI p.125e, s.415).

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### 5b.9 First-Language Acquisition

In a sense Chomsky, Davidson and Quine follow Wittgenstein in seeing as important the problem of accounting for a child's acquisition of his first language. In Wittgenstein's case, however, he uses the problem (as does this thesis) as a yardstick to judge others' accounts of meaning. Thus Augustine's account of first language acquisition is criticised on the grounds that the meaning theory it relies on is only partially satisfactory, in that Augustine is using a language-game as if it were the language-game (PI p.3e, s.3).

In so criticising the view that ostensive definition alone can explain the beginnings of meaning Wittgenstein can be seen as not simply rejecting ostension and the mental (or physical) labeling theory that goes with it. On the one hand he is rejecting the rationalist's picture of the child as an interpreter, with the child using a mental language of some sort to translate what is heard (ib. p.16e, s.32), whilst on the other he does accept that ostension can help meaning be understood (Z p.6e, s.24).

Wittgenstein's even-handed approach is a result of his holistic philosophy of language. Augustine is certainly describing one way in which language is learned and so this description has to be incorporated into Wittgenstein's

holistic account of language. Augustine's problems lie in his "over-simple" (PI p.4e, s.4) view of language, which results in a particular view of meaning, the particular being mistakenly used as a general account of meaning and first language acquisition. That is, it is not simply that ostension is too vague to be used as a tool for language acquisition (PI p.14e, s.28), because it is clearly used as such, but rather that it has to be recognised that ostension takes place "with a particular training" (ib. p.4e, s.6). Given the meaning theory which is connected to what is argued here this training cannot proceed with either the mental or physical<sup>(e)</sup> realms as a base, so double or single translation accounts, and their problems, are avoided. Moreover, neither is the training in some sense mystical where, because of an alternative Tractarian meaning theory, for example, nothing can be said about the training.

The nature of what is being trained, both the child and language (or meanings) provides the explanation of first-language acquisition. Language has already been described in terms of use, where rules, the group, the group's functions and form of life combine to provide context-dependent meaning. To acquire language, then, the child qua social creature, can be seen as acquiring another aspect of his socialisation.

Wittgenstein is, however, careful to distinguish the situation of interpreting a foreign language (ib. p.82e,

s.206) from that of acquiring one's first language. In the second case the child has yet to acquire the crucial concept of "rule", whereas in the first the concept can be applied without difficulty to the new, second, language by extrapolation from the language the child already possesses. In a situation where the child's first language is being acquired the rules themselves cannot be taught, for they are a part of what is needed for teaching; nor can the agreements be taught, for they are the necessary background of teaching (OC p.22e, s.152).

What is required is a means of teaching which does not make use of the presuppositions of teaching. This "logical circle" can be avoided in the case of straightforward interpreting by using examples, practice, "expressions of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement" and so on (PI p.83e, s.208). In the case of first-language acquisition, however, what is needed is "a great deal of stage-setting" (ib. p.93e, s.257) and that is provided by the fact that "how words are understood is not told by words alone" (Z p.26e, s.144), but also by training in the use of words and their rules (ib. p.33e, s.186 and p.59e, s.318). This occurs in particular contexts which the child has no need to learn to describe (ib. p.22e, s.116 and s.119), where what may also be acquired is the understanding of particular facial expressions (ib. p.39e, s.218)<sup>(9)</sup>.



Thus, because of the interconnections between meaning, rules and use-in-a-context, it is possible to see that once the child has gained a toe-hold on use-in-a-context he can then acquire meaning, "practically, without learning any explicit rules" (OC p.15e, s.95). That first move, though, has yet to be explained.

It could be argued that at this point the notion of form of life is crucial, because if that were shared then it would provide a common reference point between the child and his teachers. But this would be no more than to assume the point at issue, for if this is where language begins then it would appear that it is itself a part of language.

However, Wittgenstein wants to make a distinction between "our word-language" and the other expressions we use, cries and the like, which are termed "language" by analogy with word-language (PI p.138e, s.494). Language-games, especially the most primitive ones are, he claims, eventually based on pre-linguistic behaviour (Z p.95e, s.541), which become recognised as a part of the particular language-game by reference to "its character and its surroundings" (ib. p.102e, s.587). The child "learns to react in such-and-such a way; and in so reacting it doesn't so far know anything", this coming at a later stage (OC p.71e, s.538). These reactions are trained in certain ways (which include ostension and, for that matter, "a kind of persuasion" - ib. p.34e, s.262) so as to bring the child

into "a community which is bound together" by shared certainties (ib. p.38e, s.298).

These certainties are "the inherited background" (ib. p.15e s.94), the "groundlessness of language's beginnings" (ib. p.24e, s.166), and they provide the "frame of reference" (ib. p.12e, s.83), within which language can be first acquired through "ostensive teaching" (PI p.4e, s.6). Given the context-specific nature of meanings then this is all that can be said at the general level; the acquisition of the techniques of particular language-games with the attendant appropriate reactions and training (Z p.112e, s.646) will need describing in a highly specific way, but within this framework<sup>(10)</sup>.

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### 5b.10 Critique

The progression of Frege's public, propositional holism is now complete. The Wittgensteinian holism of the total social context is a natural development from Frege's pioneering work. Moreover, his Socio-Linguistic Realism, with its Descriptivist meaning theory and account of first language acquisition as a training in an aspect of socialisation is, in effect, a consequence of this extreme form of holism. It now remains to see whether it is sound.

#### (i) The Philosophy of Language

Because philosophy of language is rarely, if ever "pure" its involvement with epistemology brings with it an involvement with metaphysics, these being "inextricably interwoven" (Hospers 1956, p.349), for questions about the nature of knowledge bring with them questions concerning the objects of knowledge. It follows that a particular philosophy of language is ipso facto a metaphysic, and this point has already been established by attaching the standard metaphysical titles of Empiricism and Rationalism to the philosophies of language previously examined. Indeed, the thesis that only internal criticism is valid is in effect a thesis concerning the nature of metaphysical debate. Is, then, Socio-Linguistic Realism a metaphysical position? If

it is not then it would appear that such a philosophy of language is categorially different from others examined and so could not be offered as an alternative to them.

The nature of metaphysics has itself been the subject of considerable debate recently, but it would appear, with Strawson (1959, p.9), that there are at least two types. Revisionary metaphysics attempts to produce a better structure of our thought about the world by a "reallocation" of some concepts which, as "special concepts", plug holes in our everyday thinking (Williams 1957, p.57). The Tractarian metaphysics is clearly of this sort, where elementary propositions and logical form are utilized as special concepts to give what is perceived as a necessary structure to ordinary language. The difficulty here is that of justifying this new structure over the one that already exists in language, for "how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have!" (PI p.49e, s.120). This difficulty, amongst others, leads one to Descriptivist metaphysics, which attempts to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" (Strawson ib.) and this is what is presented in Wittgenstein's later work (cf. Gill 1971, pp.143-144).

One problem with Descriptivist metaphysics is that what it is describing, in this case the use of language, cannot itself be the tool of that description - "use" cannot identify "use" without circularity - and so it would seem to

follow that this "sure guide" must eventually be abandoned (Strawson 1959, p.10). Strawson continues by arguing that such a metaphysic does not so much change concepts as examine the unchanging ones, the "indispensable core" concepts of most men (ib.).

The difficulty here, of course, is that there is a natural tendency to move from description to revision, in that the identification of core concepts becomes, to all intents and purposes, the identification of special concepts. This is something that Wittgenstein avoids because "use" is not the only guide he identifies: with language firmly located in a social context Strawson's circularity is avoided, as is the drift to Revisionary metaphysics or to Rorty's "purity".

Similarly the claim that metaphysical arguments are not characteristically deductive, for the necessary axioms "cannot themselves be proved in the system" (Williams 1957, p.49), is inappropriate when applied to Wittgenstein's version of Descriptivist metaphysics. There are no axioms as such for this form of metaphysics, only an interconnecting web of concepts which are mutually self-supporting (OC p.30e, s.229)<sup>(11)</sup>.

Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language, then, is not a rejection of metaphysics as such (contra Walsh 1963, p.132). As a Descriptivist he can be seen as re-working metaphysics by bringing "words back from their metaphysical to their

everyday use" (PI p.48e, s.109). He does this, not by proposing any theories about language, but by using everyday language to disprove theories that other philosophers have proposed (ib.). His criticism of such alternatives proceeds, as does this thesis, by showing that they cannot account for meaning and/or they cannot account for language being first acquired; in so doing, his criticism can be read as being internal to these alternative, revisionary, philosophies of language. Which is to say that his work is indeed metaphysical, but his criticism of other metaphysical arguments is not cross-categorical because, in effect, the point being made is that even Revisionary metaphysicians have to locate their work in the context of ordinary language for it to have any application (cf. Gill 1971, p.144).

Descriptivism stands or falls by the closeness of fit between its particular description and what that purports to describe (what could be called its descriptive adequacy). In this case the fit between its account of, and the perceived facts of, meaning and first-language acquisition is the criterion for satisfaction (or philosophical persuasion). However, before this is examined other criticisms of the formal area of his philosophy of language need to be met.

It has been argued that this approach makes a spurious "claim to neutrality", "spurious" because the very use of

language prevents such neutrality (Gellner 1959, p.52). This is little more than a misreading of Wittgenstein, for he makes it abundantly clear that language is system-dependent and so cannot be neutral in the transcendental sense that Gellner implies (OC p.16e, s.105). Similarly, Gellner's criticism that his philosophy of language is little more than a justification of the "idolatry of language" (ib. p.55) ignores that aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy which stresses that there is more to understanding than words alone (Z p.26e, s.144), otherwise it would indeed be viciously circular.

In fact, in a later work Gellner comes to recognise the system-dependent nature of this philosophy (Gellner 1974, p.14), but then rejects it in favour of a form of monism. This is not the place to examine Gellner's Critical Monism, but it is worth pointing out that his "conclusive and final" refutation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language (ib. p.49) does not show that it is "empty and worthless" (ib. p.50) because it does not seem to deal with his philosophy, a philosophy which Gellner identifies as normative relativism (ib. p.48). The general criticism of relativism will be left to the following section (pp.319ff), but this is to assume that Wittgenstein is a relativist (with Dummett and Trigg, amongst others), whereas as described here his work is that of a realist, albeit of an unusual type. This is not merely to play with words but to make the important point that whatever target Gellner is aiming at it is not

that of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language.

It has to be said that even a cursory glance through the wealth of material on this aspect of Wittgenstein's work shows surprising lack of support for the realist interpretation advanced here<sup>(12)</sup>. He has, for example, been described as a contextualist and instrumentalist (Naess 1965, p.135) and this is certainly an accurate, although only partial, description of his account of meaning. As it stands, however, such descriptions ignore the realist aspect of his work, as do the terms institutionalist (Searle 1969, p.71), pragmatic (Fann 1969, p.71), anthropocentric (Pears 1971, p.103), anthropological (Canfield 1975, p.394), culturalist (Margolis 1980, p.557) and constructivist (Richardson 1976, p.34). All of these terms emphasise one aspect of his philosophy of language, the social context, to the exclusion of others and so would allow the standard criticisms of social relativism to be applied to his work.

On the other hand, those who emphasise the linguistic strand to his philosophy by identifying his work as criterial semantics (Harker 1972, p.303) or descriptive semiotics (Brown 1974, p.13) do so at the expense of allowing in criticism of his work which does not take full account of the social and, in the sense already described, realist aspects of his philosophy. These two sets of interpretations carry with them particular conceptions of



his accounts of meaning and first-language acquisition which, as will be argued, are not merely faulty: rather they are as lop-sided as their perception of his philosophy of language.

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(ii) The Meaning Theory

Before criticising Wittgenstein's account of meaning two necessary preliminaries need to be dealt with. The first is to defend the view that his later meaning theory is a development from his earlier work and the second that there is indeed a theory of meaning to be defended.

It has been claimed that Wittgenstein's later work is a "complete repudiation of his earlier conception of language" and, by implication, meaning (Fann 1969, p.63) but, as has been shown earlier, this is too extreme a position to take. It is, rather, "a transfer of emphasis from pure to descriptive semiotics" (Brown 1974, pp.16-17) where the one does not exclude the other, the transfer being accomplished by the rejection of an atomist ontology in favour of one based on, amongst other concepts, forms of life. There is, then, a "radical modification, but not the abandonment" of the picture theory of meaning (Kenny 1973, p.224 - see also pp.225ff), marked by a new stress on use, language-game, rules and forms of life.

The difference here is, in effect, a difference in Wittgenstein's conception of realism. His early realism was based on an objective ontology "given extra-linguistically as a condition of the possibility of language" and, as such, was a form of empiricism bringing with it an empiricist

meaning theory. His later socio-linguistic realism, however, is based on an ontology "determined 'from within' language as a by-product of determining the sense of propositions" (Harrison 1979, pp.239-240). This later form of realism brings with it a form of empiricist meaning theory, for there is, after all, something "real" and non-linguistic for it to relate to, a given (contra Ross 1970, p.17). In this way it can be seen that he does not break completely with his earlier meaning theory.

Others have claimed that there is either no theory of meaning in his later work (and so, by implication, no account of first language acquisition) or, at best, that it is "radically incomplete" (Fogelin 1976, p.207). Thus Cooper points out that there is here no "systematic account of meaning which can be called a 'theory'" (Cooper 1973b, p.42) and Harrison appears to take a similar view when he states that Wittgenstein was not "proposing an analysis of the concept of meaning in terms of some concept of 'use'" (Harrison 1979, p.270).

These two criticisms are, however, more apparent than real and can be read as being consistent with each other. Cooper feels that an account can be systematised with the aid of a theory of speech acts (a view that will be examined in what follows). Harrison's point is, in context, not so much about meaning as about the view of philosophy as analysis, stressing as he does that Wittgenstein "is not trying to

define the concept of meaning at all: rather, he is explaining it by saying something about the location and nature of the point at which explanations of meaning necessarily terminate" (ib. p.236).

The former, then, is in fact accepting that there is some sort of meaning theory present, the latter that the possibility of the notion of a positive, systematic analysis of meaning is being repudiated. It is the latter's interpretation that is accepted here, hence the identification of his work as being a Descriptivist account of meaning (p.203), for Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as not advancing theses (PI p.50e, s.128) would prevent such a positive analysis being offered. With McGinn:

We should not, then, expect from Wittgenstein the sort of positive theory of meaning characteristically proposed by philosophers whose intentions are less therapeutic: Wittgenstein is not out to give a 'theory of meaning' in the usual sense of that phrase ... Insofar as Wittgenstein has a positive account of meaning, it is an account whose chief purpose is to act as an antidote to mistaken or misleading conceptions of meaning.

(McGinn 1984, p.1)

However, as will be defended in what follows, this is not to accept the view that the account is "unsatisfyingly thin" (ib.) or that one cannot, without being "misguided", develop a fully-fledged theory of meaning from his work (Fogelin 1976, p.207). There is a description of meaning provided in his work, not a traditional theory, and once the various

strands that make up this description are brought together then, in effect, one has a 'theory' of sorts which argues that description, rather than theory, is the only appropriate approach to the problem of meaning.

For this reason Dummett's re-interpretation of Wittgenstein "in non-Wittgensteinian terms" is clearly mistaken. Dummett claims that Wittgenstein believes "the task of a theory of meaning is to ... render (language-speaking) surveyable by describing it in a systematic fashion" (Dummett 1981, p.29), but this, in fact, is no longer a Wittgensteinian theory of meaning for:

1. there is no theory of meaning in Dummett's sense of the term
2. surveyability is inappropriate when what is to be surveyed is not fixed
3. systematising a non-systematic phenomenon is pointless.

It is as if the view of philosophy as theorising had such a hold on philosophers that the alternative view of philosophy as describing has to be translated into the language of the theorists. Such a translation is quite inappropriate, for it effectively destroys the viewpoint it translates (in that it is attempting an external critique) and, as can be seen with Dummett's reformulation above, this is especially the case with Wittgenstein's Descriptive account of meaning. In effect, to criticise it as being insufficient is to offer

criteria for sufficiency which are explicitly rejected by Wittgenstein himself, on the grounds that these alternative criteria do not do justice to the phenomenon they are describing.

Having so far defended the view that there is a development, rather than a total rejection, of his early account of meaning and that there is indeed an account of meaning in his later work it remains to examine criticism of aspects of that account. These centre on the notions of use, language-game, criteria, forms of life and various attempts to identify and criticise his work as relativist, which will be dealt with in turn.

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ii.i) The concept "use"

As interpreted here Wittgenstein was not, except in the most superficial way, identifying "the meaning of a word - and the sense of a sentence - with its use(s) in the language" and so the claim that such synonymy is "mistaken" (Pitcher 1964, p.251) is irrelevant as a criticism of his work. The point that "use" makes is to direct philosophy's attention away from seeking an analysis which would result in some sort of ideal meaning and, instead, to concentrate on the realities of actual meanings. To analyse meaning in terms of use in order that some sort of synonymy between meaning and use could be located is alien to the whole approach being advocated here.

The alien nature of Pitcher's interpretation is particularly clear when he states "Wittgenstein seems to have been laboring under the traditional assumption - perhaps a hold-over from the Tractatus - that it is the job of the philosopher to give us the real meaning of certain important words" (ib. p.253), conflicting as it does with Wittgenstein's explicit criticism of this tradition (for example, PI p.44e, s.97). Indeed if this interpretation were accurate then the charge of circularity would be impossible to refute, for what would make a use "appropriate" would, of course, be meaning (Cooper 1973b, p.41). Once the synonymous relationship of Pitcher's

interpretation is rejected then the notion of use can be given its criteria of appropriateness by reference to the other links in this account of meaning and in this way avoid circularity being a problem.

Hunter makes a similar error when he, correctly, argues that Wittgenstein is rejecting the view that there is some third thing, mental or physical, which can be identified as giving two words their same meaning (Hunter 1971, p.39) but continues, incorrectly, by interpreting Wittgenstein as explaining synonymy of meaning in terms of synonymy of use (ib.).

All that is happening here, as with any form of reductive analysis (where the reduction of one concept into another is the favoured technique of that philosophy), is that the problems identified in the original concept are simply transferred under the guise of their resolution. So if the original question, in this case "What is meaning?", is answered with Wisdom's "Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use" (Wisdom 1952, p.258)<sup>(13)</sup>, the further question, "What is use?" is inevitably generated. Identifying different kinds of use is no answer to this problem for each 'use' will itself produce problems of circularity (Findlay 1961). The only answer would appear to be a rejection of reductive analysis for some form of descriptivism, where use is described in terms of some sort of context, rather than analysed into another concept.



However, one approach, that of locating use "in contexts - both linguistic and sociological" (Fann 1969, p.68) is an unfortunate way of expressing this point, if only because it separates these two contexts when it is clear that such a separation runs counter to the whole thrust of the Descriptivist argument - the linguistic context is ipso facto the sociological context (for example, RC p.59e, s.317). If these contexts were in fact treated by Wittgenstein as separate then there would indeed be real difficulty, where linguistic and sociological uses clashed, in avoiding the creation of some other court of appeal to mediate between them. Such a court could not be "use", because there would appear to be no other public contexts for use to appeal to. Once the separation of the linguistic from the social is rejected then the possibility of an appeal to some context-free "use" (which is clearly a contradiction in terms) is also rejected. The concept of linguistic use can then be explicated in terms of, amongst other things, non-linguistic social contexts without the charge of circularity being levelled.

Thus one common interpretation of his account of meaning, that for Wittgenstein the "definition of meaning ... is 'use'" (Hardwick 1971, p.34), is here rejected and with it the view that this aspect of his philosophy is seriously flawed because it is at worst circular, at best "cursory" (ib. p.143). His remarks on use are no more than an

introduction to his general treatment of what he perceives are the problems of meaning and to fail to see this is to treat what he offers as an hors d'oeuvre as his pièce de résistance. For this reason Pitcher, Cooper and Hunter's various re-workings of the meaning-as-use thesis in terms of speech acts are misfounded, if not otiose. They are otiose because, as will be shown, the important strengths of the speech-act theory are already contained within Wittgenstein's work (as one of the founders of that theory himself recognizes - see Searle 1969, p.71) and misfounded because that thesis is not the full account of meaning in his work.

The deflection of criticism of this aspect of his work as being basically the result of a misapprehension is not appropriate when dealing with another type of attack. Such an attack emphasises the view that there is a clear distinction between "use" and "legitimate use", where only the latter is justified, and to think otherwise is to confuse a term's connotation with its denotation (Gellner 1959, p.34). The proof that a society's use of a term is justified is given when that use is shown to find "the object to which it refers ... its denotation" (ib.).

The difficulty here, of course, is that the onus is on Gellner to show how such a transcendent justification is possible, how to refer to the object "in itself", and this he signally fails to do. Indeed, in a later publication he

rejects total transcendence for a transcendence of the specific (Gellner 1974, p.20), of what he terms oceanic monism for critical monism (ib. p.22), and at this point it becomes difficult to distinguish his position from the one he purports to be criticising.

There are, then two ways of criticising such an approach as Gellner's. The first is to show that its own positive position is, because of a misunderstanding, in fact the very position it thinks it is attacking. The second is to show that it requires some form of transcendental argument if its position is to be identified as a discrete one. However, such a transcendental argument is philosophically unsound (with Korner 1967), if only because of its "total vacuousness" (Watt 1975, p.45), and so the alternative position is unfounded.

In fact, as will be shown, Gellner is qua realist attempting to criticise Wittgenstein qua relativist (or, as Gellner puts it, pluralist - Gellner 1974, p.4) and so at this level is providing an external, and therefore invalid, criticism. The subsequent weakening of Gellner's monism allows for a perfectly valid absorption of his viewpoint into Wittgenstein's, for the latter is not rejecting realism per se, as has been shown, but rejecting the total transcendence that Gellner himself objects to. The latter might well baulk at a system-dependent transcendence but that is precisely what his critical monism describes, unless its

"genuine knowledge" and the principles which identify it are transcendent and system free, which would then locate it firmly outside the tradition he sees as relevant.

A less subtle form of this argument is that of an out-and-realist, such as Trigg, who asserts that "a fundamental distinction must be drawn between the way the world is and what we say about it, even if we all happen to agree. We could all be wrong ... What is true and what we think is true need not coincide" (Trigg 1973, p.1).

The first reaction to such a statement is to question its justification, for it would seem to be the case that if everybody agreed on the truth-value of a particular statement then that is its truth-value, for by definition there is no-one available to provide an alternative. A more substantial criticism is to indicate that Trigg is able to make this point by systematically confusing "we" and "I", such that the system-dependence of language becomes individual-dependent, even though he does distinguish subjectivism from, for example, relativism (ib. p.3). As before, it must be accepted that if an absolute, transcendent objectivity were identifiable then the introduction of "use" would be the introduction of a signpost indicating the wrong direction for philosophers to travel. However, the nearest Trigg gets to providing a justification for that absolute objectivity is some form of transcendental deduction (ib. p.149), which would introduce

all of the attendant problems previously identified (see also Gilroy 1982, p.82).

In fact his concluding remarks, that reality is both concept-dependent and provides objective criteria for judging between such concepts (*ib.* p.168), reveal the incoherence of his position. It is again an example of a Tractarian approach to the question of meaning which founders on the problem of identifying the necessary absolute objectivity within a system-dependent tool of identification, language. It is also an example of a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's approach to meaning as being that of conceptual relativism (Trigg 1973, p.24), a misunderstanding which is compounded by accepting a superficial reading of his work as providing nothing more than a use theory of meaning.

The exegesis provided earlier makes it clear that the use of an expression is given by providing a description of its function in a particular language-game and/or by providing an explicit definition of its use (pp.197ff). In the latter case use is predicted on a prior understanding of other meanings, so clearly cannot represent the underpinning of meaning; in the former case what is assumed is a practical understanding of the appropriate language-game. At this

point, then, problems concerning the nature of "use" shift to the concept "language-game".

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ii.ii) The concept "language-game"

Wittgenstein's comparison of language with games, as with his use of the picture analogy in the Tractatus, serves a number of purposes, not least to enable a new question to be posed. Previously, the question, "What is meaning?" was answered by, "Meaning is identified by, use", so producing the question, "But what is use?" and with it the problems inherent in a reductive analysis. If, however, meaning is provided by language (amongst other things) then the original question becomes, "What is language?", followed by, "Language is identified by use". At this point is added, "and language-use is like a game", so avoiding any form of reductive analysis. Moreover, this addition allows for a description of language-use in terms, crucially, of implicit or explicit public rule-following (pp.198ff).

The subtlety of this analogy has escaped some critics of the position. Walsh, for example, argues that "Wittgenstein's advocacy of the view that we should confine ourselves to particular language games does not satisfy. Not all language games, we feel, are equally well founded, even if they are all played" (Walsh 1963, p.132). This criticism is similar to Gellner's view that some justification of one language-game over another is required, which is provided by the fact that "thought is not bound and enslaved by any of the language games it employs" and so can stand outside them

in order to re-assess them (Gellner 1959, p.44).

The difficulty that both of these criticisms face is that the act of passing judgement on language-games is itself a language-game (in Walsh's case that of metaphysics, in Gellner's that of critical monism, which is a form of metaphysics). That said it then becomes clear that such a language-game, qua meta-language-game, is almost a contradiction in terms. This contradiction is created by suggesting that everyday language can be judged by an appeal to some sort of supra-language, such a "language" being reached via some kind of transcendental argument.

Another aspect of the concept of game is relevant here, for if there is no essence of "game" to be identified then there is no logically sufficient criterion of "game" to be identified either. In the absence of such a criterion then there is nothing to make some games "well founded" (for Walsh) and others not so founded, and nothing to provide the measure of assessment that Gellner requires. Similarly, the view that language use is to be assessed internally, by reference to its particular practice, is reached as a result of seeing that there is nothing else which can validly be used to assess language use (PI p. 8e, s.120).

The notion of some sort of free-floating, unbound, thought is not one that Gellner defends and yet without such a defence it becomes difficult to see quite what this



language-game-free conception might be (PI p.107e, s.332), for any example he gives will be couched in the terms of some particular language-game. Thus these criticisms fail to see the strength of the analogy with "game" and, in particular, fail to see what metaphysics has now become.

Another line of attack has the opposite failing in that it fails to see that the variety of language use is being compared to games, rather than being identified with them. Thus Cherry's major criticism, which develops Kenny's position (Kenny 1973, p.167) "that what goes on in a game, any game, can have no direct effect upon the world" (Cherry 1976, p.57), falls short of its target. The language-game metaphor is intended to make a series of points about the nature of use not, at this stage, about the "world" and so the apparent fact that games do not directly affect the world could be matched by showing that much language-use does not either.

Kenny's example of the game of chess is used to support his view that games have "syntactical rules", which certainly allows for his and Cherry's conclusion to follow. However, that is not the case with other examples of game (such as a solitary game of hitting a ball against a freshly-painted wall so as to add to the mottling effect). That is, if "game" is used in the non-essentialist way that Wittgenstein describes then it becomes clear that, as with language, some games do, and some do not, have syntactical rules.

In fact if the totality of language is to be accurately described in terms of language-games (PI p.5e, s.7) all that need be brought into focus is the fact that language as a whole is, like games as a whole, an activity and so may, or may not have effects on the world. The "world" here is, as with games, presupposed as given by language use and makes its use possible (OC p.66e, s.509) and whether this connection is direct or indirect is irrelevant.

In passing it is worth noting that as described here there is not (contra Kenny 1973, p.166) a clear distinction between the middle and late Wittgenstein's use of the term. Admittedly, language-games are first introduced as being "a study of primitive forms of language" (BRB p.17) but they are also so described in the later work (PI p.4e, s.5) and the later work's use of them in the context of the totality of complex language use is also referred to when they are first introduced (BRB ib.).

There is no inconsistency here, only a different emphasis and Findlay's view that the examples given of primitive language-games represent "one of Wittgenstein's more irresponsible fancies" (Findlay 1961, p.119), because there could not in reality be such a primitive language, is based on a gross misunderstanding of this aspect of his use of language-game. The "fancy" of the builders and their primitive language-games is introduced in order that the

notion of language as an activity can be explicated as well as the rule-bound nature of that activity. The hypothetical example, and that is all it is, then moves closer and closer to language use as we know it so as to make the further point that complex-language games have a history which is located in primitive first language-games, a point that is of crucial importance for his account of first language-acquisition.

Viewed in this light the various criticisms of Wittgenstein's use of "language-game" can instead be read as criticisms of his account of meaning. That is, if meaning is seen as being explained in terms of use, and use in terms of language-games, then the general criticism of a circularity existing between meaning and use (for example, Findlay 1961, p.118) would indeed carry over to the connection between use and language-games. If the various defences to such criticism so far offered are sound then the use of this analogy is also sound, directing inquiries into meaning towards the notion of a rule-bound practice, where the rule-following may be conscious or sub-conscious (pp.197ff).

These rules are rarely consciously chosen (and certainly never at the primitive level of first-language acquisition or at the "bedrock" of certainty - ib.). It follows that the view that "to play different language-games we simply choose different rules" (Brown 1974, p.55) is not in fact a

description of our day-to-day employment of language. If we did simply choose rules in this way then the circularity that Brown accepts (ib. p.57) would indeed follow, as the criterion for choosing one set of rules over another would, presumably, be the meaning they provided. In using language, in playing a language-game, one "just does something" (Canfield 1975, p.397) and the pattern of these actions described in terms of rules is superimposed on the action. For Brown, however, the reverse is the case, where rules are chosen and then they generate language-use, a rationalist view of meaning which Wittgenstein is at pains to reject.

The notion, developed above, of a continuum of Wittgenstein's thought concerning the elucidation of meaning is also defensible in these terms, for Wittgenstein's approach in the Tractatus is similar to that which Brown reverses, the sole exception being that the pattern produced by one language-game, logic, is taken to be the only pattern. Language games, then, can now be seen as not merely "analogous to the elementary propositions in the Tractatus" (Finch 1977, p.69). The identification and use of elementary propositions was a language-game<sup>(14)</sup>, albeit an unsound one (in that it ignored the fact that it was merely one game among many and so could not validly judge other games by its own rules).

Similarly, the analogy with "game" is consistent with the form of realism identified earlier (pp.217-218) for, within its own particular rule-structure a game's activities cannot be adequately described simply in nominalist, idealist or phenomenalist terms. On Wittgenstein's account there is still "reality" as such, but it is a presupposition of the various socio-linguistic activities of language, rather than a result of the absolutist ontology of the Tractatus, where Reality ("the world") generated the "acceptable" game of truth-functional logic and elementary propositions. In this sense reality can be seen as being understood only from within language as a presupposition of the various "games" that make up the language.

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ii.iii) Criteria

In the same way that rules govern, or can be predicated upon, games so rules also relate to language. Given this aspect of the notion "language-game" it behoves Wittgenstein to give some more direct account of rules than is provided by an analogy, if only to ensure that an explanation of language's rules does not smuggle in some sort of circularity that an argument by analogy might disguise. Such an account is given in terms of criteria and in sufficient detail for at least one identification of his work on meaning to be labelled criterial semantics (p.215) although, as with much of what has been examined already, there is considerable misunderstanding as to its nature.

The so-called Criterion Doctrine of Meaning, "the view that the applicability of a term must be based on the satisfaction of certain conditions (which conditions constitute the criteria for the application of the term)" (Richman 1965, p.66), is one which Richman, for example, wants to argue against. However, as he defines it, the key concept of "satisfaction" is interpreted solely in terms of "sufficient and/or necessary conditions" (ib. p.65) and it is this interpretation which has generated considerable debate.

Some want to argue that criteria do represent such conditions (Hacker 1972, p.258) and so for them what is required is a development of Wittgenstein's "criterial theory of meaning" which would correct what they see as his unsystematic and obscure approach to the subject (ib. p.309). However, it is clear from what has already been said (p.202) that logical entailment is explicitly rejected by Wittgenstein as a means of describing criteria. Indeed, if he were to accept such a description this would take him back to a Tractarian conception of meaning.

Others take the alternative view that these conditions represent a "conventional tie ... in virtue of an implicit or explicit rule of language" (Canfield 1974b, p.298), where even logically necessary truths are no more, and no less, than such conventional ties (Kenny 1967, p.259). Such an interpretation would fit within the account given earlier (pp.210ff), especially if it were emphasised (contra Albritton 1959 and Kenny ib.) that there is no break between the middle and late period of his thought on the issue (with Wellman 1962, Canfield ib. and Richardson 1976).

There is, however, a more drastic approach to this problem and that is to reject the Criterion Doctrine out of hand. From what has already been established about the nature of language-games (pp.231ff) it should be clear that Richman's definition of the doctrine makes inevitable the incorrect

prior identification of "certain conditions" which are then used as the basis for the subsequent application of a term. This priority is reversed by Wittgenstein ("the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated" -PI p.46e, s.108), for the application of a term usually occurs without reference to conditions and these conditions are only called up when questions as to the justification of an application occur. As before, if this were not the case then meaning would not be located in use, but in some logical realm of entailments.

In this way it can now be seen that talk about the conditions for the application of a term being contingent upon other factors (the "defining criterion" view - Canfield 1974a, p.77), or of these conditions being a different kind of necessity ("conditional necessities" - Pears 1971, p.109), whilst within the interpretation offered here is, strictly speaking, unnecessary. The account of meaning is not a form of the Criterion Doctrine, which it in fact criticises, and so there is no need to offer an interpretation within the terms of that doctrine or to be concerned with Hacker's criticism that it needs, qua criterial semantic, development.

This is not to say that some explanation of criteria is not required or, for that matter, forthcoming, because once questions concerning the justification of certain uses arise then criteria come into their own. That is, they are not



(and cannot be) a framework which language-speakers use to construct the pattern of their language but once some part of that pattern is questioned then the pattern is justified by reference to criteria.

So described it might appear that they serve the same function as his earlier elementary propositions, linking language to reality (the pattern to what it is a pattern of). Thus Finch describes them as "a way of linking language and the world" (Finch 1977, p.55) and his interpretation of them as both conventional and natural, where "both aspects come into existence together" (ib. p.56) would serve as a fine description of elementary propositions.

This is not, however, the way that they are used in Wittgenstein's later account of meaning, for it is not the natural world that acts as the ultimate, court of appeal or measure to judge correct meaning/use, but rather the social world within which references to the natural world gain their sense (see pp.201ff). Criteria, then, provide for internal objectivity. In this sense they also provide for our logical entailments (cf. Hamlyn 1965, pp.10-11), but they are rarely called upon directly, for coherence with our other uses of language and our practices provides a continual guide to "correct" use. When they are used they do not, and cannot, justify the sort of absolute, external, Objectivity that traditional realists, for example, require.

They operate in the main implicitly, such that one might appeal to them by simply asserting, "Any 'reasonable' person behaves like this" (OC p.33e, s.254), where "reasonable" is community-dependent (ib. p.38e, s.298). Indeed, if they did not so operate then they could not fit within the general framework of "use", which would then allow for Finch's interpretation.

At this level they describe rather than define meaning and so avoid the regress of definitions that regressive analysis generates, although it is true to say that they can also operate at the explicit level where a definition by means of a rule or referent can be given (with Canfield 1974a, pp.71-72). However, because this explicit level is definitional it eventually regresses to the implicit level where explanations end. This is because there is nothing then left as shared for an explanation to operate with, except shared practices (and if these are not shared then, as one has reached the end of reasons, one treats the person requesting justification as a "fool and heretic" and turns to persuasion rather than criteria to validate one's meanings - OC p.81e, s.611-s.612).

Albritton, then, is wrong to identify them as providing "unnerving contingencies" (Albritton 1966, p.250) for, within the sets of language-games that make up the particular language-game, they provide the nerving certainties without which language could not operate. In

the same way as the analogy with "game" directed questions of meaning away from language and towards the practice that it is embedded in so criteria are, in the end, not simply linguistic but firmly rooted in practice, providing that particular language's "way of looking at things" (OC, p.29e, s.211).

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ii.iv) Forms of Life

This "notorious expression" (Baker and Hacker 1980, p.47), as with "criteria", has gained its notoriety by virtue of the wealth of interpretations it has generated. One approach is to claim that it is the "irreducible ultimate" which serves as the foundation for language and beyond which one "cannot penetrate" (Specht 1963, p.49), which leaves unclear quite what this "ultimate" is. Moreover, if it were in some sense "ultimate" then, as with elementary propositions, it would be incapable of being described. The fact that Wittgenstein does describe it is ipso facto to reject this interpretation.

A variation on this approach is to identify it as a "logically primitive concept" where its use is such as to prevent, logically, the existence of meanings other than those which operate within the form of life, where the term is understood as the "human condition" (High 1967, p.102). Such an interpretation leaves it unclear how the identification of such a logical barrier to alternative meanings allows Wittgenstein to refer to situations which have meanings other than those within our form of life (for example, Z p.69e, s.379: OC p.17e, s.108: RC p.55, s.293), as well as implying that logic can set a limit to the human condition, whereas Wittgenstein is arguing for the very reverse of such a viewpoint.

This so-called "organic account", where "form of life" is synonymous with "something typical of a living being" (Hunter 1968, p.278), ignores the way in which the term is consistently used to locate meaning-as-use in a social, rather than a biological, context (with Finch 1977, p.90ff). In fact, given the biological uniformity of the species man it would be difficult to argue for alternative meanings without also making radical points about biology and this is something which Wittgenstein is clearly not doing. There may well be such uniformities and such similarities would allow different groups' social perceptions to overlap (cf. the notion of "limiting concepts" - Winch 1964, pp.110-111), but this is not primarily how Wittgenstein utilises "forms of life", if only because it would have to always be used in the singular.

Given what has already been said about meaning it should be clear that "forms of life" is a term used to identify that point at which explicit definitions in terms of some other, shared, understanding of language give way to a justification expressed in terms of, "this is simply what I do" (PI p.85e, s.217). In the same way that a justification of a game's rules ends by an appeal to the practice of the game so the justification of language's rules end with an appeal to the communal nature of that activity, the form of life (with Kenny 1973, p.163).

That is, one language-game can be justified by reference to the language-game of which it is a part and that total language-game by reference to other social practices of which it, in turn, is a part<sup>(15)</sup>. In this way the circularity of some form of criterialism is avoided, for criteria are not themselves justified by reference to criteria within language, but rather by reference to other activities of which they are a part. The term "forms of life", then, can be seen as indicating that the criterial relation is not "a relation between sentences ... (but) a relationship between sentences and human activities" (Guttenplan 1976, p.26), and most certainly is not indicating a relationship between sentences and man's biology.

Described in this way the criticism that the forms of life thesis requires an "independent criterion" to identify each form of life, because mere disagreement is "useless" as an explanation because of its circularity (Trigg 1976, p.66), withers away. To begin with this is not a thesis, only a shorthand description to identify the variety of human activities. Secondly, his request for an independent criterion gains what force it has from Trigg's acceptance of some kind of extra-social Realism. Once this type of realism is seen as self-contradictory (see pp.227-229) then the independence of criteria can also be seen as a chimera, for the variety of human activities prevents an independent, universal way of identifying them.

Moreover his general definition of the term as being "a community of those sharing the same concepts" (ib. p.64) is a travesty of the position, as is his later interpretation of "form of life" as synonymous with "language-game" (Trigg 1985, p.18). A definition in terms of concepts introduces the very circularity that the term's emphasis on practices is introduced to avoid; a definition expressed solely in terms of language-game ignores the way in which language is merely one amongst other practices. Disagreement in language-use can be founded on differing definitions, as described earlier (p.201), and these can usually be resolved, or at least understood. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that there is a level of disagreement where resolution and/or understanding fails because there is no shared medium for agreement to occur. At this point one talks about alternative forms of life but, contra Trigg, this is very much the exception rather than the rule, otherwise the concept of agreement in meaning would be without use (OC p.46e, s.354).

The various aspects of this account of meaning are, then, drawn together by the term "forms of life". In effect the slogan Wisdom recalled can now be seen not as offering an analysis of meaning in terms of use but, rather, of directing questions about meaning towards a different, social, context. The movement is linear (meaning -> use -> language-games -> rule-following -> criteria -> forms of

life), not circular and does, therefore, appear to avoid the charge of logical circularity. There are, however, other criticisms whose general thrust is either to show that this Descriptive account of meaning fails in not providing an adequate description of the phenomenon it is characterizing, or that, as some form of relativism, it is incoherent and these criticisms will now be examined.

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5b.11 Critique

(1) An Inadequate Characterization?

Hardwick argues that Wittgenstein, in pointing out that use determines meaning, has only dealt with "one aspect of meaning", the pragmatic aspect and this is a result of his "insisting that language is a form of life" (Hardwick 1971, p.53). What is missing, according to Hardwick, are those aspects of meaning concerned with syntax and semantics. In this way it could be argued that Wittgenstein has provided an incomplete description of meaning.

Now it is certainly clear that Wittgenstein's early work does deal primarily with syntax, the "formal structure of language, and ... the rules with which signs are related to one another in a system of signs" (*ib.* p.50), whereas his later work rejects this aspect of meaning. The reasons behind that rejection have already been made clear (pp.191-192), not least being the impossibility of identifying a single structure for such multifarious phenomena. Hardwick's desire for an account of meaning which includes the syntactical dimension reveals, then, not an inadequacy in Wittgenstein's work but rather a fundamental weakness in Hardwick's own perception of language.

The semantic dimension of meaning (which deals with "the relations between the sign and that to which the sign refers" - ib. p.52) is, however, quite explicitly dealt with, although not in the precise form that Hardwick requires. Insofar as Wittgenstein is concerned to identify the nature, rather than the exact form, of the various rules which govern the denotative aspect (amongst other) of language-use through what he argues about language-games and criteria, then he is dealing with the semantic aspect of meaning. Admittedly he is not concerned with determining these rules (ib. p.53), except in the particular examples he chooses to concentrate on, but then his work is about the nature of meaning and not about the detail of one aspect of it. Indeed it could be argued that such detail would serve hardly any useful purpose for it would be so specific that semantics as a discipline would become little more than a series of context-dependent descriptions of various language-games' rules of interest only for the connoisseur or, perhaps, an anthropologist.

In fact, of course, Wittgenstein does not claim that language is a form of life and it is difficult to see quite what this claim might mean, given the interpretation of "forms of life" argued for previously. In context Hardwick uses this claim to show that it results in a mistaken concentration on pragmatics, which suggests that "forms of life" is being taken to mean "all the psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the

functioning of signs" (Morris 1960, p.30). If these "phenomena" were seen as underpinning language-use then this would be identical to the interpretation already argued for, but describing them as simply occurring in language-use is to destroy the way in which a Descriptive account of meaning avoids circularity. That is, if language is simply, for Hardwick, one amongst other social phenomena then the way in which meaning is dependent upon certain of those phenomena is left unsaid, implying a circularity of using meaning to identify the appropriate "context" (Hardwick 1971, p.66) amongst all these phenomena.

These arguments, then, fail to show that Wittgenstein has not adequately characterized language-use and, if anything, suggest that Hardwick is operating with a view of language that is at best one-sided, at worst simply inadequate. Indeed, his claim that there is a distinction between "language ... considered as a system of signs, and speech considered as particular speech acts" (ib. p.67), between the universal and the particular, leads him to argue that understanding particular uses of words comes only from a logically prior understanding of the universal general use (ib. p.69). No reason is offered for rejecting Wittgenstein's distinction between language-games and the language-game, the particular and the collection of particulars, and the Chomsky-style universals are in fact abandoned in his own description of how language is learned (ib. pp.126ff). Thus this strange view of language (strange

because it fails to match the phenomenon it purports to describe) is contrary to Wittgenstein's and is itself inadequate, as Hardwick himself, in rejecting linguistic universals, perhaps comes to realize.

Another form of this charge of inadequacy is that which argues that a theory of speech acts is needed to elaborate what is in effect an unsophisticated "theory of the uses of language" (Cooper 1973b, p.38). Accepting Alston's view that an illocutionary act is the "most fundamental conception in ... the philosophy of language" (Alston 1964, p.39) Cooper then develops a theory of speech acts which he argues explains synonymy in a non-circular way. This is achieved in terms of "illocutionary act potential" (Cooper 1973b, pp.204ff), where illocutionary force provides the linear, rather than circular, explanation of synonymy.

Even as briefly summarised here, such an elaboration is, as Cooper would probably accept, at the very least assumed within Wittgenstein's work (as Strawson argues - 1969, p.172). It could also be claimed that speech acts are merely a variation on the theme of language games, for if illocutionary force is provided by the certainties of criteria located in a form of life then this elaboration is otiose. Indeed, given the problems that subsequent developments of speech act theory have produced, in particular the theory's apparent reliance on speakers' private intensional states, contra Frege (see Harrison 1979,

p.201), or the difficulty it has in explicating rules for the performance of such acts (ib. pp.177ff), it would seem safer to retain Wittgenstein's original account. This account, as has been indicated, is consistent with Frege's identification of the public nature of meaning and rejects an all-embracing analysis of "rule" which it claims cannot be provided. A development through a theory of speech-acts, then, is at best unnecessary, at worst unsound and does not on its own indicate that the characterization of meaning being offered is in some sense inadequate.

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(2) A Relativist Account of Meaning?

One interpretation of this account of meaning is that it is relativist, another that it is relativist and therefore unsound. An example of the former interpretation would be provided by Specht, who argues that the use of language-game brings with it "a certain relativism of language to people or to the specific linguistic community concerned" (Specht 1963, p.140. Dummett would also accept this interpretation, as he claims that Wittgenstein is arguing for the view that "we have the right to make our words mean whatever we choose that they shall mean" (*ib.* p.29). In this way Wittgenstein can be seen as an "archetypal" relativist (Dummett 1981, p.28), and both Specht and Dummett find this form of relativism unproblematical.

The interpretation offered in this thesis more closely fits with Specht's, for Dummett's expression of the position is far too subjectivist to fit with the remainder of Wittgenstein's thought. However, even Specht's formulation needs tightening, for the "community" concerned cannot be identified solely by language otherwise, as has been previously indicated, circularity becomes a problem. Such circularity is avoided by accepting as identifying features the relevance of the community's particular practices, its form of life.

The second interpretation of Wittgenstein's work goes further in claiming that not only is it an example of relativism but, as such, is unsound. The odium attached to "the abyss of relativism" (Martin 1974, p.2) is such that one might be better advised to abandon the term altogether, even if one accepts its implications. More seriously, as Wittgenstein's later work has here been defended as a form of realism, then a criticism of it as relativist can be seen as a mere calumny.

This said, however, it is worth indicating the general nature of the criticism so as to show that it does indeed miss its target. Relativism, it is argued, "can neither be stated coherently nor held consistently" (Trigg 1976, p.220), for its very statement is its refutation (to say all x's are relative is to utter a non-relativist, objectivist, statement). It follows that in arguing for this position one must be involved in a basic inconsistency, that of self-refutation.

Trigg claims, in his earlier work<sup>(16)</sup>, that Wittgenstein is a relativist (Trigg 1973, p.31) and in this he is in the company of, amongst many others, Gellner (1974, p.20). The literature on relativism is enormous, and will be examined in a subsequent work, but suffice it to say that even if relativism per se can be defended (see, for example, Korner 1974, Hacking 1982, Okrent 1984, Devine 1984 and Unger 1984) the successful or otherwise, conclusion of such a defence is

irrelevant here.

It has already been shown that Wittgenstein is not defending a relativistic thesis, but rather offering a description of the ways in which language is used. The only refutation that would be appropriate would be one couched in terms that made it clear that his description is in some sense inadequate (hence the defence offered in the previous section against such a charge) and so Trigg's criticism in terms of the problem of self-refutation manifestly fails to connect to this account of meaning.

Wittgenstein's account of meaning involves more than mere conventions, bringing with it presuppositions about reality (cf. Harrison 1979, p.241), so to criticise it as being crudely anti-realist (which is the general definition of relativism) is, as has been argued (pp.191-192), inappropriate. Because the "relativism" being described here as Wittgenstein's is a relativism of social systems, not of concepts, language or reality, then its refutation can only be provided by showing that there is a virtual uniformity of all social practices. Ontology is certainly a presupposition of such practices (which include meaning) and, as such, is relative to them (unless some form of transcendental argument can be defended), but this is no conceptual or linguistic relativism and so arguments that apply to such accounts of meaning are irrelevant here.



Fittingly, the diametrically opposed view has also been suggested, that Wittgenstein's account of meaning is "individualistic" (McGinn 1984, p.200). Such an interpretation flies in the face of the intrinsically social nature of meaning that is described and, as with variants on the speech act theory, would run counter to Frege's public conception of meaning that is carried over from the Tractatus. Indeed, if it were individualistic then the criticism of relativism as a disguised subjectivism would take hold here and the realist aspect of the account of meaning would simply disintegrate. But it is as a description that it is offered and as such its "correctness ... is therefore that it should agree with the practice that it seeks to describe (Dummett 1981, p.29). Nothing, has yet been established as a prima facie observation of incorrectness or, for that matter, internal inconsistency (see pp.248-249) and so one must conclude that this Descriptive account of meaning so far stands. It now remains to see whether it can adequately describe the practice of first-language acquisition.

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### (3) First-Language Acquisition

There is, to say the least, some confusion as to what Wittgenstein's account of first-language acquisition is, caused in the main by not relating his account to the other aspects of his work considered here. For example Specht somewhat hesitantly suggests that the analogy with language-game is meant to show that "infant language learning ... already presupposes certain linguistic forms and techniques, and which, consequently, cannot precede language learning" (Specht 1963, p.70). Although Specht does not use the term "innate" his suggestion implies that these "forms and techniques" are in some sense innate, for it is difficult to see what else he could appeal to without simply assuming the point at issue (indeed, on the previous page he does seem to do precisely this when he interprets Wittgenstein as asserting that words' "typical modes of application" are first learned in primitive language-games, leaving unsaid how this learning occurs).

Such an innateness hypothesis is developed by Brown who claims that for Wittgenstein it is the "capacity to follow linguistic rules, rather than the rules themselves" which is innate (Brown 1974, p.17). He develops this claim in terms of "innate mechanism which permits us to behave in accordance with rules without actually attending to them" (ib. p.40) which "permits language learning" (ib. p.80) and

which is a form of a priori innate knowledge, of "the innate order which lies behind our thinking in general" (ib. p.81), of "the rules-of-usage" (ib. p.82).

Admittedly Brown qualifies this notion of "innate" such that it becomes a biological, rather than an epistemological, absolute (ib. p.80) but even so qualified it is grossly misleading to use the notion within Wittgenstein's general account of meaning. The whole essentialist assumption that there is a universal underpinning to our language is rejected by Wittgenstein (pp.191ff), as is the view that rules are innate and thus in some sense private (ib. p.82).

Brown, then, has correctly identified "rules" as being a crucial part of Wittgenstein's account of meaning but has wrongly interpreted them as being a form of knowledge prior to language and thus biologically "innate". An innateness hypothesis makes mysterious precisely that which it is trying to describe by removing it from the realm of public description (see, for example, pp.128-129) and this is certainly not Wittgenstein's intention. Rather he can be seen as arguing that Brown has, in effect, reversed the correct priority. For Wittgenstein there are two perspectives to take into account, that of the person attempting to acquire their first language and that of the more sophisticated language-user. For the former the attempt at first-language use precedes grasping rule-structure: for those who have gone beyond the stage of

first-language acquisition rule-structure can be predicated upon language (and other social practices), that predication being, strictly speaking, unnecessary for the practice to continue.

Because language appears to presuppose some sort of rule structure to provide criteria for correct use it is natural, when considering language use in the context of those who have gone beyond the stage of first-language acquisition, to think of first-language acquisition in terms of acquiring rules which then assist in the production of language. Given what has gone before it can be seen that Wittgenstein, however, changes the direction of the enquiry into first language acquisition. The question as to how language is first acquired is now not directed at how rules are acquired (the answer for some being given by the problematical "innately"), but how language-use is acquired, with rules being seen as provided by others as a gloss on actual use.

There is a consistency here with what was previously argued regarding our understanding of the language of sensations (see p.198), for the third-person's understanding of another person's sensation language is not normally provided by reference to linguistic rules alone, but rather by accepting that in such cases the language concerned is a form of behaviour and to be understood as such. Rules may, at a later stage, provide some sort of structure to the language of sensation, but when such language is first acquired it is

acquired as behaviour, mediated perhaps by our "natural history", rather than as rules which produce the behaviour.

Moreover, given Wittgenstein's extended treatment of rule-following (which explains how one simply relies on the appropriate context to see if a particular practice's continuation is being followed in accord with a rule, rather than on some hidden, innate, understanding (PI p.60e, s.154)), then Chomsky's key notion of creativity is also explained. However, this is not in terms of explicit rule-following (Brown 1974, p.83), which, as Chomsky has made clear, cannot at the surface-level provide the necessary creativity; rather it is in terms of a finite application of language, as opposed to a knowledge of infinite innate universals, and it is upon this application that others predicate rules and rule-following (PI p.58e, s.147).

This rejection of Brown's interpretation of Wittgenstein is not, however, to reject the view that something must precede language acquisition. There is an aspect of Specht's formulation which, suitably altered, is a part of Wittgenstein's account of first language acquisition, namely the acceptance of Specht's claim that language learning presupposes a grasp of certain aspects of language, provided that these presuppositions are not seen as linguistic, but as consisting rather of other aspects of our social practices (pp.206-207).

Specht is misled into thinking that "linguistic forms and techniques" cannot be taught in language as they presuppose language, which is correct as far as it goes. If, however, these forms and techniques can be provided in a "primitive" fashion by other aspects of practice then no circularity is generated, only a linear movement from crude social practices to the complex ones of language-use. The term "language-game", then, embodies behaviours which are linguistic and non-linguistic, the latter providing a link to the former. Thus if language-use is seen as involving "an interaction between using words and behaving in non-linguistic ways" (Pitcher 1964, p.242) then language's initial acquisition can be explained as resulting from that interaction.

On this account, then, being minimally engaged in social practices at however crude a level provides the infant ipso facto with a context which is rule-governed and it is that minimal engagement which forms the basis for training in further engagements with its particular community (p.207), leading eventually to the more developed practices of language use. The first acquisition of language is not simply "an introduction into a set of social practices" (Hamlyn 1970 p.67); it is indeed that introduction, but one that is facilitated by other social practices or, generally speaking, the "acculturation in the form of life of a community" (Baker and Hacker 1980, p.48).

A similar misunderstanding about the nature of what is acquired reveals itself in Hardwick's work. The need to define rather than describe the process of first language acquisition is again evident when he states that "language learning is a matter of learning rules for the use of words", where these rules "represent the conventions" of a particular "speech community" (Hardwick 1971, p.86). If Hardwick's interpretation of Wittgenstein were correct then Wittgenstein would face the debilitating problem of explaining how these conventions could be learned when they presuppose learning, a paradigm of Quine's problem of radical translation.

Hardwick is aware of the difficulty, for he continues by attempting to resolve this irresolvable problem by arguing that, for Wittgenstein, "the rule and the use of the rule come together "at the level of word-function (ib. p.87), which he sees as non-linguistic (ib. p.86). This is, as has been shown, a correct answer (assuming one added that word-function does not require knowledge of rules), but to the wrong question, for the presuppositions of learning cannot themselves be learned. A question posed in terms of learning rules cannot be answered without becoming involved with the problem of circularity, for learning itself is rule-governed. The novel question that has been posed and answered by Wittgenstein, without circularity intruding, is expressed in terms of developing the embryonic skills of

social interaction, whereby as one takes a part in such "games" one becomes more adept at them, language developing as a by-product of such interaction.

This aspect of primitive language-games is clearly misunderstood by Hardwick, who claims that Wittgenstein's account is that the child first learns words which are then combined into sentences. Given this interpretation of the account it would follow that Wittgenstein's primitive language-games are "fruitless" and "an inadequate characterization of language" (*ib.* p.116). If this interpretation were correct then one would have to accept Hardwick's conclusion but, as has been already shown, this interpretation ignores those aspects of social practice which are indicated by "game" and which are involved before the first word is acquired. To say that we are here being given an account of how words are learned is certainly correct, but to ignore the account Wittgenstein provides of the "stage-setting" that occurs before that learning is to ignore crucial aspects of the account of meaning, in particular his account of language-games and forms of life.

Thus the distinction which Hardwick makes between learning to talk and learning to talk a language (*ib.* pp.118ff), although important, can in fact be found within Wittgenstein's conception of "language-game". The acquisition of the appropriate motor skills of speech is, for both Hardwick and Wittgenstein, "affected by a social



context" (ib. p.121), by use, as is the acquisition of speech-with-meaning. Both proceed through the notion of use, for "the child learns the meaning of a word by learning what he can do with the word" (ib. p.129), the difference between them being expressed in terms of what is acquired, rather than how it is acquired, between different, but connected, types of language-game. For this reason one would agree with Hardwick, that his own account is "compatible with Wittgenstein's"; it is not so much that Hardwick is offering "a wider perspective" (ib. p.136) but rather the same perspective, albeit with more descriptive detail.

Given the detail of Wittgenstein's Descriptive account of meaning the circularity implied in Wisdom's slogan which equated meaning with use is thus also avoided in his account of first-language acquisition (with Harrison 1979, p.234). As the child acquires "a set of ways of manipulating the world, into which linguistic moves fit in various ways" (ib. p.245) so the child acquires an ontology based upon the accepted operation of the language-games he plays. In this way Wittgenstein's work, viewed as a metaphysic, an account of meaning or as an account of first-language acquisition, can be seen as an alternative to what has been previously examined. Moreover, as defended here, it is neither internally inconsistent nor, apparently, incomplete. As far as its external validity is concerned then, given what has already been argued about such a criticism, all that can be

said is that given what it claims is the criterion for such validity then it would appear to have met that criterion of descriptive adequacy (cf. p.211).

As it stands, then, is this a sufficient account of first-language acquisition? It would certainly appear to be a minimally satisfactory account, maximally so if one were to concentrate only on the area of his work which describes what develops from primitive language-games. What is required if the account is to be acceptable in toto is an elaboration of the non-verbal precursors of language and the following section will examine what such an elaboration might offer. Such an account is central to the thesis, for if the "basis of language is, in a certain sense, pre-judgmental for Wittgenstein" (McGinn 1984, p.55, footnote 52) then, qua description of that basis, something needs to be said about the non-verbal forerunners of language. Indeed, if nothing can be said about them then this would represent a major weakness in Wittgenstein's account of first-language acquisition, and, by implication, his account of meaning and philosophy of language.

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SECTION VI - MEANING WITHOUT WORDS

Experience and information joined in the brain to provide explanations. It was like writing the first draft of a poem: words formed on the page without passing through the conscious mind.

(McCarry 1974, p.52)

### 6.1 Wittgenstein and the Non-Verbal Base

It could be argued that the postulation of a non-verbal base to language is, like the parallel area of elementary propositions in the Tractatus<sup>(1)</sup>, by definition beyond discussion for one would appear to be using language to identify what is at one and the same time both beyond language and also its base. Such a criticism fails to see that this non-verbal base is different in kind from the base that elementary propositions provided in the earlier work. There is no translational account being offered here where, by a series of logical operations, our actual language is translated out of a purer form of language. Rather, the non-verbal base provides experience of certain aspects of language, in particular the experience of participation in rule-guided social activity, and it is this practice which is used as the medium whereby the child begins to take part in the activity of language.

In this way actual experience, not some theoretical formal base, mediates between language and non-language. Moreover this area of induction into a form of life can be spoken of (contra his earlier view that it was "inexpressible" CV p.16e). This is because it is quite unlike the area which elementary propositions bridged (which was in some indefinable way both verbal and non-verbal), although once

identified can be seen as simple and familiar (PI p.50e, s.129). Finally no hypothesis need be presented about this area, with all the problems such theorizing brings, only a description of what it is and how it operates.

This said it becomes clear from a reading of his later work that Wittgenstein provided only a cursory glimpse into this aspect of his views on language. It must be said that this is at best a disappointment, at worst a major failing, in that work for, as argued above, the area is crucial and also well within the scope of his perception of philosophy which, at this point, "obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations" (Z p.82e, s.458). If one accepts that language is a "refinement" on its beginnings in non-verbal "deeds" (CV p.31e) then something certainly needs to be said about these unrefined practices.

There are remarks scattered throughout his later work on this subject, but nothing that could be called a sustained treatment and, more often than not, these remarks in context are not about the non-verbal base per se, but about meaning. Thus in the context of a discussion about feelings Wittgenstein makes the point that "the communication of feelings by gestures" requires a knowledge of "the criterion of having succeeded in communicating" (BBB p.185). This would appear to suggest that non-verbal communication requires not just the same kind of criteria as does verbal communication, but also a knowledge of those criteria. If

this were indeed his position then all that has already been developed and defended in his account of first-language acquisition would fall away, being replaced by some form of innate knowledge of criteria (with Brown 1974 - see pp.325ff). However, as Wittgenstein is here talking solely about experienced language-users such an interpretation is not sound as they are using their knowledge of language to understand the non-verbal area, not vice-versa.

Elsewhere the term "natural history" is one that could well be seen as relating to the non-verbal base. Practice, for Wittgenstein, "is simply what we do. This is use and custom among us, or a fact of our natural history" (RFM p.20e, s.63). The connective "or" does not here represent an equivalence but rather an alternative, for elsewhere "natural history" is used consistently to refer to what one might call the biology of man (where, for example, "natural history" is connected to eating - PF p.12e, s.25 - and, in a different context, the names of plants - OC, p.71e, s.534).

So practices are based on our customs and our biology such that when one is trying to translate the language of a group whose customs are very different to one's own then one is left with the second alternative as a way in to the language, as "the common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (PI p.82e, s.206). Interpretation, of course, is not directly relevant to the area of first-language

acquisition, because the interpreter already has language, whereas the infant does not (OC p.71e, s.536), but the point made about interpretation confirms the view of "natural history" suggested here (as opposed to an interpretation in terms of the contingencies of "our very human nature" offered by Bearsley - 1983, p.232).

Given this use of the term then it would follow that examples of our natural history are statements of the obvious (RFM p.43e, s.141) "which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (PI p.125e, s.515), the example in the latter's context being the use of the word "pain". So it might appear that, if a "word is taught as a substitute for a facial expression or a gesture" (LC p.2), with use acting as the criterion for appropriateness, then what is being suggested is a transition from the very primitive language-game of merely biologically based expressions or gestures (such as a wince) towards their replacement with language, this being supported by the claim that in learning to speak the child "learns to react in such-and-such a way" (OC p.71e, s.538). Such an interpretation would be consistent with Malcolm's account of Wittgenstein's explanation of avowals (Malcolm 1958) and with Lenneberg's postulation of a "biological matrix for the development of speech and language" (Lenneberg 1964, p.603).

What must be avoided here, however, is any movement towards a crude referential theory of meaning, which would in turn allow for slippage into the realm of private languages. It is all too easy to think of "natural" expressions gaining their meaning by, in some way, acting as referents for the words which replace them. It might then seem to follow that some natural expressions would gain their meaning by referring to the sensations that it is claimed they are in some sense related to and in this way a private referential theory could be reintroduced. As the supposed referents of natural expressions would be in some cases irreducibly private (for example, with sensations' language-games), it would then be easy to smuggle back a private referent so as to give meaning to the public language of sensations at least, and so contradict all that has gone before.

What must be stressed is that these apparently nature-directed expressions are not, and cannot be, nature-interpreted; that is, they are not some sort of private language. Given Wittgenstein's account of meaning, the public, context-based interpretation of a biologically-based gesture (such as pointing) results in a variety of public interpretations, even though the biological base may well be invariant. For this reason he asserts, "We don't understand Chinese gestures any more than Chinese sentences" (Z p.40e, s.219) and that "The gesture



... tries to portray, but cannot do it" (PI p.128e, s.434).

The pre-verbal aspect of communication, then, is as much subject to the constraints of context as is the verbal and so, in spite of their location in our "natural history", are not an aspect of meaning which in some way bear their meaning themselves, independent of other social practices. Thus, to say that cries are full of meaning is not to say that they carry their meaning with them, as elementary propositions were supposed to, but rather that "much can be gathered from them "(ib. p.146, s.543), as they serve as descriptions even though they are too primitive, qua pre-verbal, to actually be a description (ib. p.184e).

The pre-verbal is here being identified as "a primitive reaction" which a language-game is based on, "the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought" (Z p.95e, s.540-541). Indeed it is ordinary word use which Wittgenstein identifies as language, and the other aspects of communication are given the same descriptor "language" only "by analogy or comparability with this" (PI p.138e, s.494), which implies that the "language" of natural expressions founded in man's natural history is subservient to ordinary language, not as was implied earlier by Malcolm and Lenneberg, the reverse.

To summarize, it can be seen that Wittgenstein's treatment of the non-verbal base to language makes the following points:

- i) man's biological nature is such that certain general primitive reactions are a part of his natural history;
- ii) these reactions are not referents for language for those producing them, but they can be taken as such by those observing them;
- iii) thus, as they are interpreted in a social medium, they are given that medium's meanings, (they do not convey their meanings with them, independently from that interpretation).

It is for this reason that he stresses that it is through training, not explanation, that the acquisition of one's first language begins (PI p.4e, s.5) because in the absence of the shared language which explanation requires, such beginnings are in effect the moulding of "natural behaviour" to make it fit to a specific set of social practices. A form of life may well be the "given" but this is certainly not provided at birth (with Bearsley 1983, p.233), where behaviour is biological and primitive, but rather as these behaviours are trained to fit the social given.

As presented here his account seems more systematic than that which can be found in his actual writings, but it is certainly consistent with what has gone before (see Sections Vb7-Vb9, pp.191ff). The three points summarised above, although important as they stand, still only represent a most general description of the crucially important

pre-verbal base and, without further detail, it could be argued their very generality diminishes their usefulness - vague directions are almost as bad as false directions. In fact as they stand they are difficult to argue for or against, except insofar as they are internally consistent with the rest of his thought. The necessary detail must be sought elsewhere in order that this aspect of his work can be substantiated.

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## 6.2 Pre-Linguistics

As has already been suggested in this thesis, attempts in linguistics to account for first language acquisition have been heavily influenced by Chomsky such that it is accepted by many that the pre-verbal child "seems to operate like a professional grammarian" (McNeill 1966a, p.61) who gains language by acquiring "abstract information" (McNeill 1966b, p.99), these points being beyond dispute (Fodor 1966, p.105). Such a theory has been criticised at length in this thesis (pp.114ff) and has been replaced with an account which does not see language in terms of "a two-level theory" (Greene 1972, p.190), the child acting as a translator to produce an "internal representation of the grammar of his language" (Cairns and Cairns 1976, p.187) with the aid of an innate "linguistic archive" (Aitchison 1976, p.176) conceived of as a "mental lexicon" to explain words' meanings and uses (Matthei and Roeper 1983, p.70).

The substitution of Wittgenstein's account for Chomsky's produces a position so opposed to Chomsky's theory that it becomes difficult to see quite how it would be possible to merge them as has been suggested (see, for example, Searle 1971, p.12). Such a merger is only possible if just one aspect of Wittgenstein's work, for example the contextual nature of meaning, is added to Chomsky's account as Chomsky could then properly respond by pointing out that all

Wittgenstein is doing is simply stressing a surface element of language, thus retaining intact his dual conception of language (see, for example, Bloom 1970, p.2 and Falk 1973, pp.345-346). However, once the totality of Wittgenstein's account is grasped, in particular his monistic conception of language and all that flows from it (see Section Vb7, pp.191ff), there is then little of Chomsky's theory left to merge with, for their philosophies of language are quite distinct.

Although other disciplines such as sociology (Firth 1950) or psychology (Falk 1973, p.v) may be seen by some as relevant to the concerns of linguistics, the relevance of philosophy (even when this is interpreted as Descriptive Linguistics - Firth 1950, p.37), is often ignored by those writing on language development. Indeed, one text's subtitle of "a multidisciplinary approach" is justified by providing a list of a host of relevant academic disciplines, but with philosophy noticeable by its absence (Lenneberg and Lenneberg 1975) and another's identification of the four academic disciplines which deal with language also excludes philosophy (Greene 1976b, p.53). This comment is not intended merely to repeat the claim that philosophy does have something to contribute to the field of first language acquisition but rather to stress that its contribution is crucial.

On the one hand philosophy can provide internal criticisms of linguistic theories by showing, amongst other things, that some of their implied meaning theories are unsatisfactory; on the other hand philosophy can provide a thoroughgoing account of language, meaning and first language acquisition, as already described, which is a far cry from the conception of philosophy mocked as armchair theorizing (Bower 1977b, p.10). The preconception, for example, that a word is a "container of meaning" (Anglin 1970, p.2) sits ill with Anglin's acceptance of aspects of Wittgenstein's later work (*ib.* p.4) and such a basic misunderstanding of meaning is easily rectified through philosophy. Moreover, given the philosophical conception of language argued for in this thesis then the assumption that spoken language alone provides the necessary and sufficient base for linguistics can be rejected, so enabling the introduction of a new dimension to linguistics which, amongst other things, provides a structure for the development of an account of how language is to be first acquired.

The claim has been made that in the 1960's and 1970's theories about language acquisition concentrated on what was acquired, whereas the modern approach is concerned with how the child learns (Oksaar 1977, p.24). This is certainly an over-simplification, partly because earlier theories certainly did have an account of how language was learned

(Halliday, for example, typifies Chomsky's work as being concerned with how language's structure is acquired - Halliday 1975, p.240) and partly because it is difficult to talk about how the child learns without at the same time referring to what is being learned. It is this interconnection between the "how" and the "what" of first-language acquisition that makes philosophical considerations about language pertinent here, for if "language" can be re-defined to include pre-verbal communication then attempts to explain how language is first acquired must take this additional aspect of language into consideration.

Some inkling of this alternative conception of language is provided by Nelson who takes as his concern that area of language "which is assumed to underly the linguistic system", being "beyond the child's words" (Nelson 1977, p.117). Unfortunately he then proceeds to develop something very like Vygotsky's idea of "inner speech" and thoughts which are "more inward than inner speech" (Vygotsky 1934, p.149) through some form of representational theory couched in terms of there being a conceptual layer underneath language (what Macnamara calls "an innate language of thought" - 1977, p.143).

Although developed in a way which, because of its simplistic referential meaning theory, is to be rejected Nelson does at least point towards a non-verbal area which is relevant to

linguistics. As such he can be read as breaking with a tradition exemplified by Chomsky and his followers, who assume that meaning is to be accounted for solely in terms of language, so producing a linguistic theory of meaning (see Section 4.3, pp.102ff). This assumption generates a lop-sided view of meaning such that meanings' rules, for example, are inevitably seen in terms of the rules of language (see, for example, Palermo 1978, p.175), and this in spite of an acceptance that the non-verbal area of communication does add to meaning (ib. p.223).

This inadequate view of meaning has come to be rejected in that area of linguistics which is primarily concerned with accounting for first-language acquisition, being replaced with what is termed Functional Linguistics. Halliday is the founder of this alternative rejecting, as he does, Chomsky's approach as being "one-sided" (Halliday 1975a, p.240).

Instead of concentrating on grammatical structure Halliday approaches the problem of first language acquisition from a functional perspective, in which by concentrating on the whole linguistic system it becomes possible to see "early language development ... as the child's progressive mastery of a functional potential" (ib. p.242)<sup>(2)</sup>.

Such an account of early language use which characterises it as a species of regulatory behaviour within a social context produces an interactionist view of meaning ("between the child and other human beings" - ib. p.243). It also allows



for the claim that "the child has a linguistic system before he has any words or structures at all" (ib.), what could be called a non-verbal linguistics. Although Halliday still occasionally talks in terms reminiscent of Chomsky (when, for example, he sees the child "constructing for himself a social semiotic" - Halliday 1974, p.256), it is his stress on the social nature of what is supposedly constructed (ib. p.276) which is so markedly different from what linguistics previously saw as its sole concern. Moreover, the recognition that there is no need to begin studies of first language acquisition with children aged nine months allows for the introduction of the view that before this age the child is not constructing anything, but is genetically primed just to engage in "communicative acts in general as opposed to intentional acts of meaning" (Halliday 1979, p.74).

Functional Linguistics as outlined briefly here has marked similarities to Wittgenstein's view of first-language acquisition insofar as it has in common the idea of introducing the social context as being central to the understanding of meaning. Moreover, Functional Linguistics has even been criticised in much the same way as Wittgenstein's view of meaning was, in that it allows one to "end up saying that anything can be made to mean anything, given the right circumstances" (Greene 1976b, p.39).

Such a subjectivist interpretation ignores the way in which the group, rather than the individual, makes language "mean", although Greene is certainly right in claiming that this account deals with communicative, rather than merely, verbal, competence (ib. p.42)<sup>(3)</sup>. As such there is no need to erect a theory to account for the development of rule-acquisition (with Olson, 1977a, p.114), for the functionalist account is one of the development of socialization (Widdowson 1976, p.41). Thus Crystal's "scale of linguisticness" (cited in Greene 1976b, p.19), which purports to show the way in which non-verbal phenomena gradually merge into verbal phenomena, could well be replaced by some sort of "scale of socialization", from the primitive to the highly complex, where one moves from simplistic attempts at socialization through to that provided by the complexities of language.

As Halliday's account of first language acquisition stands, however, the developments in communication occurring before the age of nine months are not referred to in any detail and so, as with Wittgenstein, further elaboration is required<sup>(4)</sup>. Such an elaboration is provided in linguistics (or rather, "paedolinguistics") by introducing the idea of non-verbal aspects of communication as being an important part of the "interaction basic to social, emotional and linguistic development" (Oksaar 1977, p.149). This allows for the view that, if non-verbal communication can be shown

to occur with an infant then, as "adults decode the meaning of the baby's utterances by looking at the specific non-verbal behaviours ... that accompany them" (Bower 1977a, p.143), substance can be given to the view that as a consequence of a Wittgensteinian account of language and of meaning there is indeed a pre-verbal base to first-language acquisition.

In this way it can be seen that it is not that the infant means through its non-verbal behaviour, but rather that its adult audience takes this behaviour as meaningful, and in this way the infant "gets the idea of communicating by being communicated with" (Hamlyn 1978, p.106). What, then can be said of this non-verbal behaviour which is taken in both Wittgenstein's later philosophy (as interpreted here) and Halliday's Functional Linguistics as being crucial to meaning?

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### 6.3 Meaning Without Words

The first thing that must be said is that the temptation to treat the phenomenon of non-verbal communication in a manner similar to the empiricist or rationalist treatments of verbal communication must be resisted, otherwise the problems previously identified within empiricist and rationalist philosophies of language will simply travel across to the non-verbal aspect of communication. It has already been shown that there is some form of rationalism implied in Specht's identification of the non-verbal area as being of significance to language acquisition which brings with it the rationalist's difficulties with innate knowledge (see pp.217-218), but even apparently straightforward experimental work in the field of infant communication finds itself using the language of rationalism.

One conclusion of a standard work in this area, for example, is that one to four month old infants can "sort acoustic variations of adult phonemes into categories with relatively little exposure to speech" (Eimas et al. 1971, p.306) and that this is possibly carried out by a "linguistic feature detector" (Eimas et al. 1973, p.251). Others write of the infant using "non-linguistic knowledge" to provide "hypotheses about what words might mean", and of first-language acquisition being a mapping of words on to this type of "knowledge" (Clark 1977, p.147). For such

writers non-verbal knowledge is the "means to crack the linguistic code", this being carried out in a manner explicitly compared to Chomsky's approach (Olson 1977b, p.178). The inherent problems of this view's account of first-language acquisition have already been identified (see pp.114ff), not the least being the regress of meaning it generates, where a public sortal capacity (or "mapping" ability) is explicated in terms of a prior sortal capacity, and so on.

In fact the confusion here is such that Clark, an apparent rationalist, in an earlier paper accepts some form of an empiricist reference theory of meaning when he talks of a "child's interpretations of his perceptions" (Clark 1973, p.434) and of certain meanings being "cognitively simpler than others" (*ib.* p.449). Although he also accepts some form of the child-as-hypothesiser thesis his earlier paper's emphasis on the perceptual base of these hypotheses recalls the traditionalists' acceptance of Ideas, as does Macnamara's identification of thoughts as occurring in a separate "domain" to that of "the construction and utterance of sentences" (Macnamara 1977a, p.7). The central problems, of course, are those of explaining the move from thought to language and of describing the way in which language-less, but structured, thought can be acquired (in Clark's terms, how to justify "explaining" first-language acquisition through the language of perceptual interpretations when such interpreting presupposes the very skill which he purports to

explain).

At this point all one is doing is rehearsing previous criticisms made of empiricist and rationalist views of language which saw it as a translation from a base phenomenon (Ideas, experience, elementary propositions or deep structures) to another, more elaborate, phenomenon. Each particular position had its own unique difficulties, but all shared the problem of translation. If public language is to be seen as growing from some other phenomenon then the way in which these two phenomena connect has to be explained without circularity.

Even if this can be achieved there is then the further difficulty of explaining, in a fashion consistent with the relevant account of language, how the base phenomenon is first acquired by the infant. If this cannot be successfully carried out then, as has been previously argued, there is a serious flaw in the position such that its philosophy of language and/or meaning theory has radically to be recast. It would follow that the account of the non-verbal base of language being developed in this thesis should not be seen as part of some sort of translational account of meaning (see p.266), although this is not to say that it will have no difficulties of its own to meet.

To summarise, what is required of an account of first-language acquisition is that it should:

1. avoid making language's meaning irreducibly private
2. avoid an appeal to innate knowledge
3. avoid the circularity inherent in using a translational account of first-language acquisition, which gives the infant the very abilities that are supposed to be explained
4. avoid ignoring the non-verbal aspect of language
5. avoid making an account of first-language acquisition contradict whatever account of meaning is accepted
6. be aware of the connections between the 'how' and the 'what' of first-language acquisition.

Given these six constraints the non-verbal field, then, must be approached with some caution. In fact it is even difficult to find an agreed definition of its subject-matter, the lack of a consensus on this being accepted by some as an indication of the "complexity of communication" (Newman 1960, quoted in Harrison and Knapp 1972, p.347). This, of course, is another similarity with

language per se, the difficulty of defining something so varied, which has led at least one linguist to refuse to define "language", despite the title of his paper ("Language: origins, definitions and chimpanzees"), on the grounds that there are as many definitions as scholars interested in language (Fouts 1974, p.481).

Given what has previously been argued about the nature of language-games such a refusal is very much in sympathy with Wittgenstein's understanding of language and is as much an indication of the nature of definitions as it is about language, resisting as it does any attempt to find a single definition for a complex phenomenon such as language. With Newman, the best that can be expected would be a host of definitions which, taken together, could be seen as an open-ended description of the field, taken separately, as identifying one language-game amongst a host of others.

Such a descriptive, or functional (Myers 1979, p.1), approach to language and pre-linguistics fits well with what has earlier been presented as a descriptive account of meaning and first-language acquisition (Sections 5b7-5b9, pp.191-209) and is exemplified in Key's work. She begins by making it clear that she is aware of the variety of behaviour that is encompassed by the term "non-verbal communication" (from painting to snoring), but that she will be concerned with two areas, paralanguage (defined as "some kind of articulation of the vocal apparatus, or significant



represent "an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all" - Sapir 1927, p.556, quoted in Key 1975, p.12).

This raises two questions: one, how it is possible to follow such hidden rules and, two, what is it that these rules are guiding? The second question is answered with extensive descriptions of examples of paralinguage (ib. Chpt.3 passim) and kinesics (Chpt.4 passim), which build a picture of complex and subtle behaviours. With paralinguage, for instance, the non-verbal, but voice-dependent, communication from adult to infant through the medium of so-called "baby-talk" is designed not to produce meaning so much as "an atmosphere of a special, exclusive kind of relationship" (ib. p.73); with kinesics, there are lexical, directive and emotive aspects to the ways in which we communicate with our bodies (ib. p.101), but the various kinds of tactile kinesic acts are of particular importance for the development of language (ib. p.103).

This two-part categorisation of what it is that is being guided by Sapir's "secret code" is useful in allowing for distinctions that some working in this area miss. For example, the functional analysis of infant cries and non-cry vocalizations (gurgling and the like) presented by Wolff to support the thesis, amongst others, that there is a link between crying and the acquisition of a first language

(Wolff 1969, p.109), and by Lieberman's examination of intonation in infants (Lieberman 1967), can be seen as examples of paralanguage. However, Wolff and Lieberman's concentration on this aspect of non-verbal communication (such that Lieberman claims that infants "communicate by means of sound from the moment of birth onward" - ib. p.41) ignores the other kinesic aspect of non-verbal communication and so presents a one-sided view of the non-verbal communicative process. The reverse is also true, of course, where kinesics can be emphasised to the exclusion of paralanguage. For example, visual behaviour (in particular, eye contact) is taken by some as the major regulatory influence on communication (Ellsworth and Ludwig 1972), with little or no mention of the other aspects of non-verbal behaviour which provide the context for such communication (see, for example, Ekman and Friessen 1972, p.355).

The description that Key offers of paralanguage and kinesics, as with the description that Wittgenstein offered of language and the acts that accompany it, is qualified by the statement that "human behaviour defies classification" (Key 1975, p.104 - cf. "the concept of a living being has the same indeterminacy as that of a language", Z p.60e, s.326) and is structured by the complexities of the context of these behaviours (Key op.cit. pp.122-134). However, in an attempt to deal with the first question concerning the rule-governed nature of non-verbal communication Key herself relies on Austin's speech-act theory.

Unfortunately this section of her work is very perfunctory and seems to represent not so much an explicit analysis of meaning theory as rather an example of a philosophical approach to language which utilizes and epitomizes the non-verbal area (*ib.* p.125) so as to show to her satisfaction that "language and non-verbal events are inextricably related" (Key 1977, p.5). There is no defence offered to a central problem with Austin's speech-act theory, namely that it would seem to require intentionality on the part of the person performing the speech-act, whereas this is precisely what is missing in the infant's use of non-verbal behaviour.

To circumvent the problem of intentionality this area of non-verbal communication should, instead, be perceived in Wittgensteinian terms. It could then be seen as a central example of man's "natural history", of behaviour where the actor's audience predicate rule-following upon his behaviour and where the actor need not be consciously following such implied rules. Such an interpretation of the way in which it is possible to appear to follow hidden, if not unknown, rules, where simply acting is taken in conjunction with a particular social context as criteria for successful, or unsuccessful, rule-following is quite consistent with Wittgenstein's account of rule-following given earlier (pp.234ff)<sup>(5)</sup>.

Interpreted in this way the idea of a base of non-verbal communication avoids the traditionalists' problems of privacy and their double-translational accounts of meaning and first-language acquisition. The feature that particularly distinguishes the infant's and the adult's use of such non-verbal communication is that with the pre-linguistic infant (contra Specht, Clark, et al.) there appears to be, by definition, no intentionality, whereas with the adult there may well be. Indeed, in an important sense the infant does not use non-verbal techniques of communication, for this would suggest some sort of intentionality on its part. It is for this reason that Bruner, for example<sup>(6)</sup>, stresses the role of the mother who, he suggests, makes use of "a very complex joint anticipatory system" (Bruner and Sherwood 1981, p.31) so as to interpret intention in her infant's behaviour (Bruner 1974, p.77). In this manner the mother can be seen as inducting her child into the "rules of social interaction generally and of the "deep" rules of the culture as well" (Bruner and Sherwood op.cit. p.36), what for Wittgenstein would be termed the form of life<sup>(7)</sup>.

Again, however, there are difficulties in Bruner's reliance on Austin's speech act theory. Bruner makes it clear that such a theory makes use of intentionality on the part of both speaker and listener and yet "initially ... it is the adult who must bear the responsibility for interpreting intent" (ib. p.34). Although Bruner does not identify this

as a problem, it follows that Austin's account cannot then be of direct relevance in accounting for meaning at the stage of an infant's life where there is only one-way intentionality, from adult to child; rather, it should be replaced with that given by Wittgenstein, provided that the area of non-verbal communication is suitably elaborated.

For much the same reason Cooper's arguments in support of his view that "it is fruitless to identify concept-possession in terms of mere discriminatory abilities" (Cooper 1973a, p.218) can be accepted without compromising the account of first language acquisition being offered in the thesis. It is not that the pre-verbal infant is being accredited with concepts on the grounds of its behaviour (as, for example, Chomsky might wish to do), but rather that the adults producing communicative behaviour directed towards the child take the child's behaviour as being communication, even though it may not be. No concept-possession on behalf of the pre-verbal infant is here being defended, with all the difficulties that such a claim would produce, only that the adults should have concepts which they infer from the infant's behaviour.

At this point it can be seen that what what was initially offered as a development from an interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and account of meaning has become a description of the area of non-verbal

communication coupled to the claim that first language acquisition initially proceeds by reference to a very one-sided form of communication. Both Key and Bruner have been criticised for relying on an Austinian account of meaning on the grounds that this account requires two-way communication, and thus two-way intentionality. Yet the pre-verbal infant, by definition, cannot be intending to produce communicative acts, as it has no verbal language with which verbally to act. So at this stage in the child's development it is suggested that what is required is that the concept of communication should be re-defined so as to include both two-way and one-way intentionality, whilst at the same time retaining the importance Austin and others accept of the social context within which such intentionality operates.

This is no mere stipulative definition located in some sort of speculative metaphysics, for it is supported in part by the way in which we do in fact appear to communicate with pre-verbal infants (as the empirical work of both Halliday and Bruner amongst others suggests) and in part by Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, which identifies the crucial importance that the social context has in explicating meaning. However, it is clear that the introduction of considerations concerning the importance of one-way intentionality, the phenomenon of non-verbal communication and the relevance of the social context in understanding meaning cannot on their own explain how

language is first acquired by the child. They represent such broad considerations that at best they could only be necessary conditions for the acquisition of language, as they do not on their own explain the move from one-way to two-way intentionality or communication. That is, as presented here they do not explain how language is first acquired, only that there are certain necessary conditions required to allow for the development of language. These conditions, however, do point the way to a possible hypothesis consistent with what has gone before to explain how first-language acquisition might occur.

It has already been established that the pre-linguistic child cannot be said actively to learn its first language, because such learning appears to presuppose the very intentionality required to learn language. Neither can the fact that language is eventually acquired by the child be used to support the view that the child has, in some sense, an innate knowledge of the linguistic basis of language. The Wittgensteinian concept of "natural history" (see pp.269ff) is relevant here, as it allows for the introduction of the sort of biological concerns that support, for example, Lenneberg's view that learning to talk is like learning to walk (Lenneberg 1964), or Halliday's acceptance of Bullowa's claim that the child, qua human, is "born genetically endowed with the ability to take part in acts of communication" (Halliday 1979, p.72).

This is not to say, of course, that there is some sort of genetic 'knowledge' of language. Rather, as all but a tiny minority of children do in fact acquire language then it is clearly part of man's natural history that language acquisition is possible. The difficulty arises in moving from the potential to acquire language to realising that potential, a difficulty compounded by over-simplifying the "what" of first-language acquisition.

If, as this thesis proposes, the what of first-language acquisition is expanded so as to include more than the complexities of verbal communication, then it becomes possible to give some account of how that potential is made actual which accepts the six conditions described earlier (p.286). The account hinges on a distinction between on the one hand a child's propensity to behave intentionally in non-verbal, non-communicative, ways (which allow adults to infer one-way communicative intentionality), and on the other the child's full-blooded linguistic actions (which involve two-way communicative intentionality). This is a distinction which Halliday also draws in terms of "communicative acts in general, which the child is engaging in from birth, and what may be called acts of meaning" (*ib.* p.74), where the potential to mean is made actual through the phenomenon of one-way intentionality described earlier.

If the "what" of first-language acquisition is allowed to include one-way communicative behaviours then the "how"



appears then to be allowed a purchase. The 'learning' situation would become one in which the pre-verbal child merely behaves (the "what" of first-language acquisition) and some of this behaviour is then given meaning by the adult, in Halliday's case by reference to the function that the behaviour performs (the "how" of first-language acquisition). The means/end intentionality that appears evident in the child's other behaviours, such as appearing to seek attention through prolonged eye-contact, can then be seen as carrying over to the intentionality inherent in language (communicative intentionality), where the action of asking for something is seen, for example, as a developed form of the primitive behaviour of appearing to "look with meaning".

That is to say, the child is not necessarily communicating by, for example, engaging in excessive eye contact, but such contact provides what might be termed the intentional context for the adult to infer intentionality and so interpret the contact as a way of communicating (see, for example, the empirical study provided by Halliday of the development of what he terms "proto-language" - 1974, p.257). With Taylor, "The original, prelinguistic communion provides the indispensable context for the development of common spaces around objects of reference" (Taylor 1990, pp.524-525), where his concept of "common space" allows for the partners in the acts of communication to share meanings with each other (ib. p.35). To begin with the "sharing" is,

in terms of intentionality at least, very much a one-way activity based upon the infant's prelinguistic behaviour. However, as Bruner and Sherwood's empirical work indicates, it is this behaviour that the mother in particular interprets as having a socialising function so allowing for the infant's entry into language (Bruner and Sherwood 1981, p.36).

The important point here is that pre-linguistic infants appear to be capable of a primitive form of what in adults would be described as means/ends behaviour. Such behaviour, by definition, cannot be linguistic, so it now becomes possible to re-formulate the question as to how language is first acquired. The problem is not that of explaining how the infant appears to develop linguistic communication from a base where there is no language, but rather how it moves from communicating entirely in one way (non-linguistically) to communicating mainly in another way (linguistically).

What has so far been proposed as a solution to that problem is that:

1. the infant behaves in intentional ways
2. the adult ascribes communicative intentionality to that behaviour and thus assumes the infant is communicating
3. the child communicates intentionally.

However, as it stands this proposal leaves unsaid how the assumption of communicative skills allows such skills to be realised (that is, how step two, above, acts as a bridge between steps one and three). Indeed, without such an explanation step two could fall away as irrelevant and the original problem would remain with no suggested resolution, except perhaps an appeal to some sort of biological propensity for the infant to move from steps one to three.

At this point the importance of a functional theory of meaning to a functional account of first language acquisition becomes particularly clear. Bruner, for example, argues that empirical studies of the pre-linguistic infant suggests that the infant has at least four "cognitive 'endowments'" (Bruner 1983, p.30). These are abilities which allow the infant:

- a. to behave in means/ends ways so as to support goal-directed activity
- b. to behave in ways which support social interaction
- c. to behave in very systematic ways
- d. to have relatively abstract ways of appearing to organise its systematic behaviour (ib., pp.24-30).

He argues that these four "endowments" are "foundation processes that aid the child's language acquisition...as enabling conditions" (ib., pp.30-31). They "enable" first-language acquisition not by in some sense generating

language, but rather by being "primitive procedures" for communicating from which language develops. This development is a functional one, in that the "endowments" are not themselves language, but they provide the basis from which language develops by functioning in a pre-linguistic communicative context. As they are encouraged to develop by the adult so they become more like linguistic procedures and in this way the transition from step one, above, to step three is realised. In addition, although Bruner does not himself make this point, these "endowments" (as well as other biological ones related to the physical make-up of, for example, the human larynx) can be seen as a part of man's natural history. So, by definition, simply presuming that other creatures are communicating would not thereby allow them to be considered as perhaps acquiring language.

In effect the hypothesis being proposed to answer the question as to how the pre-linguistic infant develops linguistic abilities is that the infant appears to be "endowed" with various biological abilities to support its socialising activities (step one, above). Some of these socialising activities share features of linguistic communication (see a-d, above) and adults appear to seize on these and encourage their development in infants (step two, above). Thus the "continuities between prelinguistic communication and later speech" (Bruner 1983, p.39) are encouraged to develop beyond their initial socialising

function to the infinitely more complex function of meaning (step three, above).

In this way it can be seen that what is being proposed in this thesis is that the conceptual link between non-verbal behaviour and language is provided by the general term "communication", where a communicative act might be non-verbal or verbal and involving one-way or two-way intentionality, depending on the function of the act. This speculative link rests upon the empirical observation that means/ends behaviour does indeed occur and that it is from this, and other, bases that the potential to communicate linguistically is made actual. Moreover, the speculation is supported by, and lends support to, a functional theory of meaning of the kind analysed previously in the thesis.

A case study providing the detail of how the potential is made actual is provided by Halliday in his description and analysis of how his son Nigel developed language (Halliday 1975) and represents, in effect, an extended description of the way in which Nigel moved from being treated as communicating by others (on the basis of the imputation of intention to his non-verbal behaviour) to the stage where he intended to communicate (what Halliday terms "meaning"). However, this assumed biological potential cannot be made actual by the child on its own, because the social nature of communication requires the conditions described above for it to be realised (what few empirical studies exist would seem

to lend support to this point - see, for example, Itard 1801, Armen 1971 and Hern 1972).

Such an account of first language acquisition which moves from the hypothesis of a genetic ability to produce behaviour which, by reference to the function it performs, can be taken as communicative to the social realisation of the potential that such behaviour has for the social development of full-blooded meaning, appears to be quite consistent with the holistic philosophy of language accepted in this thesis. As noted above, it is the holism provided by the concept of the form of life which allows for what would otherwise be isolated meaningless behaviours to be given a meaning by reference, implicitly or explicitly, to the social context within which they occur and the function which they perform.

There does, however, seem to be a difficulty with providing a meaning theory for a pre-verbal infant's non-verbal, taken-as-communicative, behaviours, for such an infant would appear not to be aware of meaning anything by its behaviour and so there is no meaning as such to provide an account for. This criticism only has force if the suggested re-definition of communication is rejected, in that communication would then only be said to take place if there were a two-way interaction of meaning. Yet if communication were to be seen in this manner there would then appear to be no way in which language could first be acquired, for the

beginnings of language would then require some sort of intentional communication on the part of the pre-communicative infant. This paradox, of course, is precisely that which leads Chomsky and others into suggesting that the infant has some sort of intentional ability which allows it eventually to communicate with language.

If, however, the alternative definition of communication identified above is accepted then no such paradox is generated. Those communicating through language can, if necessary, be seen as taking part in an activity which involves two-way intentionality; those who are communicating with pre-verbal infants are taking part in communication which involves a one-way intentionality (from the adult to the infant) based upon the assumption that the infant's socialising behaviour, qua human infant, is an attempt to communicate, with the functional context providing the criteria for the success of such attempts, and Wittgenstein's account of meaning allows for this. In addition, by making full use of the holism in that account of meaning, the adult can be seen as inferring intentionality in the appropriate non-verbal behaviours of the infant. The criteria for "appropriate" are provided by the relevant social context. Thus by locating meaning in the social context there is no difficulty in inferring pre-verbal meanings, if only because that inference is based not upon some subjective interpretation of the particular

context, but rather upon the context taken as a whole, and as a part of man's natural history.

In this way it is possible to have meaning without words, where there is no need to provide a meaning theory for the pre-verbal infant's behaviour because what is being suggested is that such an infant is not necessarily intending its behaviour to mean in order that communication might begin to take place. Provided the philosophy of language one is working within allows for "communication" to be understood as occurring during one-way interactions then all that is required is that the account of meaning should be consistent with the philosophy of language, and this has been argued for previously.

There is, then, no need to search for an explanation of some sort of paradoxical pre-verbal verbal ability, with all the difficulties that such attempted explanations produce. With Hamlyn, "We should describe the pre-linguistic child's thought in terms of the language of propositions, and we should be right to do so even if the child cannot make use of propositions in linguistic form" (Hamlyn 1978, p.77), for "actions can be said to have an analogous propositional flavour" (ib. p.107). In this way the complex apparatus of truth conditions can be implied as being a part of the pre-verbal infant's behaviour by means of inferences based upon our own non-verbal communicative skills, without having to make and then justify the claim that the infant is



somehow aware of these conditions.

Alternative accounts of first language acquisition which make reference to a two-way interaction (and thus to a two-way intentionality) where, for example, the infant is seen as making "skillful adjustments of his action and ... expressions in response to the displays of his partner" (Brazelton et al. 1975, p.138) are precisely that which is rejected in this thesis, not because they are in some sense false (after all, Brazelton's account is based on close analysis of televised interactions), but because he fails to see that he is dealing with an infant at a later stage of its communicative development (although, of course, the analysis could well be criticised as being based on over-optimistic interpretations of infants' behaviours).

There may well be such "adjustments" at the early stages of life, but to term them "skilful" is simply to introduce a dimension of intentional, rule-governed (and awareness of these rules) behaviour which is merely presumed acquired, given the failure of arguments supporting an innateness hypothesis. Such two-way interactive accounts are, in effect, smuggling back in the conception of the infant as linguist, as opposed to that of the infant as "a potentially social organism" (Denzin 1977, p.76) and thus can be seen as attempting to nullify the new emphasis away from the verbal to the non-verbal aspect of communication. To do more than identify the behaviour concerned in the very general way

that Key and Bruner do is to fall into the trap of moving from general descriptions of inferred intentions to specific elaborations of, for example, the "fundamental" inferred intention, the "intention to mean" (Pylyshyn 1977, p.40). The trap is a particularly dangerous one in that Pylyshyn's level of specificity is such that, however sympathetic one might feel towards his general position (where meaning is not solely language-based), to infer particular meanings in the specific context of infant communication is fallacious, in that the infant does not confirm these meanings but the adult does, on the basis of previous inferences.

There would, therefore, be no possibility of breaking out of the circle of adult-perceived-inferences of meaning which, in turn, would justify further inferences, and so on (cf. Cooper 1973a, p.368). In effect the infant would never develop meaning, for the adult would always be inferring it, a reductio ad absurdum of the argument. At the level of generality being defended in this thesis the circle is avoided, because the adult does not infer meaning upon the behaviour of a passive infant, but the infant, qua potential communicator, has certain of its functional (that is, primitive means/ends), non-verbal behaviours treated as verbal communicative behaviours through the shared medium of the non-verbal.

Thus the infant's move from apparently biologically based behaviours (Wittgenstein's "natural history") to

socially-based communicative behaviours is allowed for by a perception of communication which sees this phenomenon as being more than something which is merely verbal. If, with Wittgenstein, our view of the philosophy of language and meaning is seen as taking both the verbal and the non-verbal areas of human behaviour as appropriate to its concerns<sup>(e)</sup> it becomes possible for us to see how a descriptivist philosophy can generate a descriptivist account of first-language acquisition whose acceptability lies in the accuracy of its description (assuming that there are no internal contradictions or other weaknesses). The holism of Wittgenstein's later work provides "the wider context from which language-use emerges: a context of varying activity, pre-verbal communication, and the relationships with others that this presupposes" (Hamlyn 1978, p.113). Given a comparable descriptivist account of the pre-verbal base, as provided in this thesis, Wittgenstein can then be taken as giving what appears to be an adequate account of first-language acquisition and of meaning.

Despite all that has been argued for in this section of the thesis the claim could still be made that although the philosophy of language and account of meaning might be acceptable there are still a number of reasons why the corresponding account of first language acquisition is unsatisfactory. One possible criticism might be in terms of its lack of specificity as compared to the empiricist, rationalist and semantical alternatives. However, it is an

integral part of the philosophy of language defended in this thesis that being over-specific brings with it the danger of the account applying to only one aspect of communication, to one language game as if it were the only language game. Moreover, as it has already been shown that neither the empiricist, the rationalist nor the semantical accounts of first language acquisition can break free of the specificity of their view of communication, and that specificity is quite inappropriate at the point where it is particularly unclear whether two-way communication is taking place between infant and adult, then the charge of being unspecific is in fact a strength, rather than a weakness, of this thesis' position.

Another criticism that might be brought to bear against the thesis is that, in direct opposition to its account of meaning's apparent relativism, it is itself assuming universal communicative abilities. Leaving aside the question as to whether or not this is indeed a relativistic philosophy (and, as has been argued previously, this is not an interpretation that would be accepted - see pp.253ff) such a criticism does highlight an important aspect of the account offered of first language acquisition. What is assumed is that there is behaviour prior to verbal communication and this would seem uncontroversial. However, what is then argued for is that, given a wider definition of "communication" than has usually been accepted, certain aspects of this pre-verbal behaviour are taken as being

communicative, even if in fact they may not at first be. Which aspects are so taken depend upon the appropriate context; that they are so taken would appear to be universal in the sense that, failing evidence to the contrary, it would seem to be a part of man's "natural history" that language does develop, in all but the most unnatural contexts (see, for example, Armen 1971 or Itard 1801).

A third criticism might then be that the thesis is guilty of assuming the point at issue, namely that there are innate communicative abilities in the pre-verbal infant. At one level this is to misunderstand the account being given of first language acquisition, for the view that public language can develop from something innate and therefore private has been previously criticised as having, amongst other failings, crippling difficulties in explaining how the child translates private phenomena into those of the public realm.

At another level the criticism points to the ambiguity of the concept of "innate communicative abilities". Because "communication" is usually taken as deriving its meaning from adult verbal interaction, especially in philosophy, then innate communicative abilities are naturally seen as referring to something which both parties to the interaction are at least minimally aware of. If, however, "communication" is redefined so as to include non-verbal interaction and, crucially, one-way interaction then there

is some bite to the criticism. However, the thesis is not so much assuming what is at issue as rather accepting, with certain reservations, that the empirically based studies of Halliday, Key, Bruner et al. appear to lend support to the points made about the importance of non-verbal, one-way, interaction in accounting for the phenomenon of first language acquisition. What appears to be innate is straightforward behaviour based upon man's "natural history" and non-verbal communication is predicated upon that by adults.

The criticism can therefore be side-stepped by accepting that what is being assumed (although justified by being based upon empirical studies of infants) is that the pre-verbal infant does produce communicative behaviour and that the adults they are in contact with do infer, and so encourage the development of certain of these behaviours into meaningful communication. This is not so much the point at issue as an apparently uncontentious description of what in fact appears to occur. Moreover, it gains additional strength by being consistent with the philosophy of language and account of meaning which makes up the totality of the thesis' position, the whole combining to be mutually supportive in a way which the alternatives examined are not.

In doing so this thesis can thus be seen as providing the theoretical framework that Key correctly laments as being

missing from her work (Key 1975, p.162), which satisfies the six requirements for an account of first language acquisition identified earlier (p.286). However, it is a strange "theory" stressing as it does descriptive disparities and the impossibility, given the phenomena of communication, of the kind of all-embracing theory she seems to require. Similarly, from a philosophical perspective, the requirement for the provision of a "theory of meaning ... as the essential theoretical prelude to the First Word" (Platts 1979, p.5) is met by an equally strange "theory", describing as it does the practicalities of the non-verbal "prelude" to language.

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SECTION VII - CONCLUSIONS

All the business of war,  
And indeed all the business of life  
Is to endeavour to find out  
What you don't know by what you do

(Deighton 1963, p.144)



If the interpretation of a Wittgensteinian account of meaning with and without words described, defended and added to in this thesis is sound then it is so because it avoids the problems that eventually brought its alternatives to grief. If the arguments advanced earlier are accepted they support the view that the only appropriate criticisms of a metaphysical position are internal to that position (see pp.8ff) and the descriptivism advanced in this thesis appears to have met such criticisms as are internal to it.

Descriptivism avoids a translational account of meaning in which ordinary language's meanings reduce to, and are dependent upon, some other aspect of languages (here the pre-verbal base), for there is no translation of meaning from the pre-linguistic to the verbal. At best there is an inference of meaning by one partner in the interaction, but this is an inference based on language, not upon pre-verbal phenomena alone (see p.272), although the infant's pre-verbal behaviours provide the reason for the inference. Moreover, the inference is not based upon some form of argument from analogy, as it is firmly located in the context of the interaction as a whole, although there is some uncertainty as to nature of the philosophical arguments which might support the notion of one-way intentionality.

As there is no translational account then there is no need to posit some innate knowledge of language in order that the translation might begin, nor, for that matter, a picture of the language-user (infant or adult) as some sort of linguist. The recurrent problem of circularity is avoided because verbal meaning is not being explained by means of something which presupposes such meaning. Thus when Davidson rejects what he takes to be Wittgenstein's use of a meaning-assumed non-verbal base of functions to explain verbal meaning (see p.141) on the grounds of circularity it can now be seen that such a rejection is misconceived. The non-verbal base, as elaborated here, does not (and cannot, without introducing a translational account of meaning) explain verbal meaning in the way Davidson assumes.

Linguistic meaning, once it is located in a social context, is explained holistically, by its location, by the criteria of practice given in the particular context itself located in the wider context of the form of life. Moreover, it explains the non-verbal base which is not in some sense mystical and beyond verbal explanation. Indeed, Davidson's use of "non-linguistic" is such that it is far from clear whether he would allow the term to include categories such as paralanguage and kinesics, where pre-linguistics would be a part of, but distinguishable within, the far broader area of non-linguistics. As it stands his use of "non-linguistics" is no more than an attempt to prescribe one

aspect of communication as having some sort of communicative precedence over other aspects and, as has been shown, the prescription has difficulties when applied to the actual practice of communication (pp.168ff).

Descriptivism's socially based description of meaning (p.247) thus avoids circularity, is internally consistent, especially as it avoids the apparent inconsistencies of relativism (pp.253ff), and by introducing the non-verbal aspect of communication would seem to provide a broader description of the phenomena it deals with than alternative accounts of meaning (pp.248ff). This last point needs qualifying in that the description provided of the pre-verbal base need elaborating in order that its adequacy can be judged, although the elaboration is consistent with what has gone before. Moreover, that elaboration accords with empirical work on the nature of the connection between the pre-verbal base and first-language acquisition (Section 6, pp.266ff), so providing another reason for accepting the position as sound, in that it allows for the acquisition of one's first language (pp.257ff).

At this point an important implication of this descriptivist metaphysic becomes obvious. Given that only internal criticisms of metaphysical positions are valid it might appear that there could be some form of relativism implied where one is presented with a library of alternative metaphysics and, assuming internal consistency, can make no

judgements between them. Such a situation is similar to that described by Walsh, in that we "need to enter into the thought of a metaphysician as we enter into that of a writer of imaginative literature" (Walsh 1963, p.18), but is not that presented in this thesis. If this were the case then the alternative metaphysical positions described could not be judged as, in the main, unacceptable. However, the criterion of first-language acquisition does provide a basis for choice between them, as has been shown. It would follow that if one applied appropriate aspects of the descriptivist account defended here to these alternative metaphysics then they might well appear more acceptable, whilst retaining their otherwise distinctive features<sup>(1)</sup>.

Rorty's distinction between impure and pure philosophy of language can, from this perspective, be seen as unsound. Of course, the fact that it could not even be made to apply to what seems a prima facie example of pure philosophy of language, Davidson's, has already cast doubt on its usefulness (p.160), but now it can be seen that Rorty's conception of language is far too narrow. There are more than his two aspects of philosophy of language, if only because language as described here can involve more than words.

If the concept of language is expanded in the way suggested in this thesis then it can be seen that Rorty's approach is well within the paradigm of "present-day language theories

(which) do not make provision for nonverbal components ... in the structure of a sentence, even though these nonverbal acts are ubiquitous in the face-to-face interactions between human beings" (Key 1975, p.118). This is not to say that Rorty is in some sense wrong to draw these distinctions, only that, as with Augustine, and the early Wittgenstein, he is taking one aspect of language as the whole of the concept of language, further refining this aspect in a way that is not illegitimate so much as one-sided. Indeed, by legislating for only one aspect of the philosophy of language as warranting consideration those aspects of the philosophy of language which account for meaning and first-language acquisition are philosophically ruled out of court. In this way Rorty can now be seen as working within such a delimited framework that one hesitates to give it the general term philosophy of "language".

The traditional empiricists and rationalists operated with a double and single translational conception of meaning respectively (p.42). The criticism here was not directed against the privacy of their referent, Ideas, but rather the fact that without compromising the other elements of its position neither could properly account for language being first acquired. However, if one were to develop the empiricists' emphasis on the "world" such that sensory impressions could be received from the social as well as the physical world then, with some development of their associationist psychology, it might be possible to include

non-verbal phenomena as being a part of their philosophy of language<sup>(2)</sup>. If this were included then the infinite regression of explaining Ideas by means of further Ideas (p.31) would be halted, as there would then be an identifiable point at which the world, qua social, met Ideas, comparable to the way in which Wittgenstein explains meaning in a non-circular way.

Thus by recognising the existence and relevance of the non-verbal aspect of language traditional empiricists might well be able to retain their version of an ideational philosophy of language, for they could then account for first-language acquisition. At this point, of course, one is then left with an alternative description of meaning as Idea-based, rather than socially based, the latter being preferred to the former because the pre-verbal component is a social, not an ideational, phenomenon. In this way, then, by accepting the importance of non-verbal phenomena in understanding meaning traditional empiricists would be accepting a Trojan horse, in that such an acceptance would appear to destroy the very basis, Ideas, of their position.

The traditional rationalists' interpretation of Ideas as being mind (or God)-dependent is one that appears to exclude the social world and the behavioural manifestations of non-verbal communication. Given their single-translation account of meaning then it might appear that Ideas, as they are innate, cannot make use of the pre-verbal

(pre-Ideational) by definition.

However, it was argued that the physical world works so as to actualize potential Ideas (p.40) and thus it could be claimed that at this point non-verbal phenomena function as an actualizer of Ideas. In this way an important, and crippling, aspect of the traditional rationalists' work is altered, for if meaning were not solely Idea-dependent then it would be possible for meaning to develop without necessarily making reference to the contradictory (in their terms) notion of an Idea-free God (p.41). As with the empiricists, however, to identify an area of meaning which is not necessarily dependent upon ideas casts into doubt the bedrock of the Ideational theory.

The traditionalists, then, are impaled upon the horns of a dilemma. They can either retain their Ideational accounts of language and thus not explain first-language acquisition, or, in accepting the non-verbal, explain the latter but cast doubt upon the former. The non-Ideational philosophy of modern empiricism and rationalism of Quine and Chomsky respectively had, however, different problems.

Quine's central problem, that of his reference meaning theories expressed in terms of Observation Sentences, produced a gap between non-verbal referents and their expression in language which he could not bridge (pp.80ff). However, if he were to take cognisance of the non-verbal

aspect of meaning then there would be no need to see a gap, shakily bridged by some form of behaviourism and referentialism. If language were perceived of as part of a variety of social practices, as involving both verbal and non-verbal phenomena, then the circularity of explaining first-language acquisition by means of language-based skills (pp.84-85) would be avoided.

The problems of radical translation similarly alter, for there would be more to aid translation than the sealed verbal unit of the language under consideration and the concept of translation itself alters. In Quine's case the addition of the phenomenon of one-way, non-verbal communication to his account of first-language acquisition provides a means of moving away from his flawed reliance on Observation Sentences as the basic tool used by infant translators.

As has already been suggested, the assumption of an unproblematical analogy between the activity of first-language acquisition and that of translating one language into another is a dangerous one, not least because it suggests that the pre-linguistic child has something linguistic to parallel the language which the mature translator is working from. However, if the considerations advanced earlier hold, then the model for the pre-linguistic child is that of the adult translating the child's behaviours and so the problem of the indeterminacy of



translation for the child does not exist. Rather, the assumption of meaning by the adult brings with it a determinacy of meaning, whereby the adult's interpretation of the child's behaviour becomes the child's meaning too, with, to begin with at least, no reliance upon Observation Sentences.

There is, then, no indeterminacy of translation here, for determinacy is provided by the adult's use of language. Such an addition also has the effect of removing the purely sensory base to his empiricism, replacing it with a social base (and so remove problems of referential inscrutability) and at this point it becomes difficult to distinguish this re-worked "empiricism" from Wittgenstein's later work. In effect, Quine's acceptance of the existence of innate mechanisms of language readiness (1969a, p.196) can be interpreted as a form of Wittgenstein's argument concerning natural history, with the proviso that these mechanisms are to be taken as operating in the context of non-verbal communication as opposed to Occasion Sentences.

Indeed, this re-working has marked similarities to the re-working of the Tractatus in which the reliance on elementary propositions (which parallel Observation Sentences) to bridge the gap between the empirical world and language (Occasion Sentences) is replaced with a view of language which does not require elementary propositions. Occasion Sentences are, then, interpreted as Observation

Sentences by reference to the holism of the appropriate context and so the addition of the non-verbal aspect to meaning here allows for such sentences/propositions to drop out as irrelevant.

The case of Chomsky's rationalism is quite different, for the acceptance of non-verbal phenomena as being relevant to his concerns effectively destroys his position (as was noticed earlier - pp.257-258). His perception of the dualist nature of language is such that once the non-verbal dimension of meaning is added to his account the need to give an explanation of the apparent deep-structure of language vanishes. If the postulate of "deep" linguistic universals is replaced with the concept of a potential for social behavior then the theory of the infant-as-linguist is replaced by a description of the infant-as-socialiser. That is, linguistic universals and their accompanying grammar are presented as a hypothesis to explain the nature of language and its acquisition, but if language is more than linguistics then this hypothesis does not fit what it purports to describe.

Moreover, the ambiguity of the concept of "creativity" in Chomsky's identification of a problem in accounting for the creativity of language acquisition (see Cooper 1975, pp.101-110) results in a weakening of this supposed empirical support for his innateness hypothesis. The sense of "creativity" that Chomsky requires to lend empirical

support to his innateness hypothesis is one that stresses the fact that the new sentences which the child actually produces are so unlike those which it has experienced that they could not be acquired by some form of finite experiential learning, but rather by the operation of some sort of innate knowledge.

Consideration of the non-linguistic context identified earlier is again relevant here. The activity of first-language acquisition does not seem to be one that is best described in terms of the child acquiring language and its structures, but rather in terms of the adult inferring language (and, perhaps, its structures) upon certain of the child's non-linguistic behaviours. The creativity (that is, the fact that new sentences are created and understood) of the child's subsequent understanding and production of language seems better described in Halliday's functional terms, whereby the increasing complexity of the child's social and linguistic situations require the child to function in a particular way, not by defining "creativity" and "language" in such a way that an innateness hypothesis is required to give meaning to the definitions. Indeed, there is much empirical work to suggest that the more stunted the social context the slower the rate of linguistic development, which contradicts Chomsky's claim that the social context of language development is irrelevant. There is a distinction to be drawn between first acquiring language and developing what is acquired, but both precede

within a social context and the richer the context the richer the development.

All that would be left of Chomsky's rationalism by such considerations of the non-linguistic context within which language is first acquired would be the postulate of a surface-structure of language and its related practices; and here a grammatical approach is singularly inappropriate, as functional linguists have recognised (see for example, the claim that here "grammaticality is irrelevant" - Key 1975, p.125). That the non-verbal aspect of communication "contradicts the conditions of language-acquisitions postulated by Chomsky" (Oksaar 1977, p.149) indicates the nature of the problem, for it is not just his theory of language-acquisition which is contradicted, but also his meaning theory and "philosophy" of language. All that is left of linguistic rationalism is his minor claim that phrase structure analyses of language are less elegant than his transformational analysis, a debatable point about one highly specific aspect of communication, where both types of analyses ignore the way in which their work requires a social context to give them substance.

Davidson's sentential empiricism, drawing as it does on aspects of the work of both Quine and Chomsky, was found to have certain difficulties taken from both. Thus the crucial understanding of the nature of convention T cannot be acquired by the infant ex natura rei, and sentential

primitives thus cannot be acquired by the infant. However, if the non-verbal aspects of communication were added to Davidson's work (a move he would, of course, oppose in that he believes circularity results) then the whole thrust of his work pivots. Clearly a sentential concept such as truth cannot apply to non-sentential phenomena (unless, perhaps, one were to translate it into "infelicities ... flaws and hitches" - Austin 1955, pp.137) and so the truth-functional aspect of his theory would have to be seen as only applying to a part of the activity of communication. It would then have lost its function of attempting to explain how language is first acquired (p.158 - though not the acquisition of subsequent languages), for it in turn would need acquiring as part of the socialisation process identified previously.

However, Davidson's Principle of Charity can then be seen as applying not only to interpretation from one language to another but also, with Davidson, as applying to the interpretations involved in first-language acquisition. Here, though, the interpreter is the adult, not the infant, and "charity" is required at the point where the adult infers intentions in non-verbal behaviour. In doing so the infant is encouraged in its communicative behaviour and, eventually, into producing convention T-based sentences. Sentence-based primitives then drop out as irrelevant, being replaced with non-sentential behaviour interpreted through the Principle of Charity as meaningful behaviour.

In this way such a re-working of Davidson alters the concept of "interpreter" in the context of first-language acquisition, because the adult is not so much interpreting the infant's behaviour as representing another language, but imposing upon that behaviour the adult's own language. At this point then, Quine's radical indeterminacy thesis (p.74) is rejected, for there does exist a reference point to act as a criterion for success in identifying meaning, namely the language of the adult that the child is presumed to be acquiring. That is, the requirement of "interpretation" that there be two languages, the infant's and the adult's, is replaced with the realisation that there is but one, the adult's, and the adult accepts certain of the infant's behaviour as being a part of that language.

Davidson would then be left with his sentential empiricism, the non-sentential aspect of communication being grafted on so as to account for first-language acquisition. Moreover this graft makes use of Davidson's own Principle of Charity to justify the introduction of intensionality into his work, for the intentions here are one-way (inferred by the adult onto the infant's behaviours) and so circularity is avoided.

Such an addition merely enlarges the scope of his work without rejecting it out of hand, this further holism being less of a problem than it was to the positions already

mentioned. In effect Davidson deals with the extensional aspect of language but requires an explicit account of the one-way extensional language used by mothers to children (which, from another perspective, is one-way intensionality). This last can be provided if he could somehow bring the non-verbal dimension of language into his account although, as Austin has shown, the question as to whether or not the concept of truth applies here is far from easy to answer, a question which is crucial to Davidson's truth-functional account of language.

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This thesis has attempted to justify a particular, descriptivist, approach to meaning by relating it to a similar approach to first-language acquisition. In doing so the thesis has identified one phenomenon that any "philosophy" of language must account for, such that, if a philosophy of language fails to do so, then such a failure is a prima facie reason for rejecting that philosophy, a repudiation the more damaging because the rejection rests firmly upon the presuppositions of that philosophy itself. Conversely, accounts of first-language acquisition have been shown to rest upon presuppositions of meaning and language such that if these are criticized then little is left of the substantive accounts themselves.

Given the mutual entailments operating between philosophy of language, meaning theory and first-language acquisition then, as both the second and third subject areas have been shown to require the addition of the non-verbal aspect of meaning, the philosophy of language has effectively been translated into the "philosophy" of them both, the verbal and the non-verbal, the philosophy of communication theory<sup>(3)</sup>. In enlarging the scope of the philosophy of language in this way the thesis points to contexts where meaning can be expressed utilising the varieties of non-verbal communication. At this point the descriptivist philosopher and the functional linguist merge to become



social anthropologists, studying the nature of the phenomenon of communication from its potential beginnings in simple non-verbal behaviour through to its actualisation in the complexities of that behaviour we call language, where there is meaning with and without words.

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**NOTES**

SECTION II

1. This is taken from Kenny's (1967) translation.

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SECTION III

1. As opposed to connotative meanings which, for Frege, are subjective and therefore part of Conceptions (Frege 1892, p.212).
2. It should be noted that he calls his position "Logical Empiricism" (Ayer 1936, p.179).
3. Observation Sentences may, in fact, consist of only one word.
4. Quine's position is clearly opposed to traditional realism, in particular the traditional realist's correspondence theory of truth. However, Quine does share aspects of a realist conception of meaning, in particular the view that social practice on its own cannot account for meaning. Thus in Stoutland's terms Quine could be classified as an "anti-realist" without at the same time rejecting all aspects of realism (Stoutland 1989, pp.101-107).

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SECTION IV

1. The reference is to his account of language acquisition, but this is a function of his empiricism.
2. There is, of course, a change in Chomsky's expression of this thesis between 1957 and 1965 (see Greene 1972, pp.50 and 89). It should be stressed that I am here describing Chomsky's account of sentence structure, rather than of a grammar's rules, hence conceptual dualism rather than grammatical "tripilism". With Cooper (1975, p.13), this is to concentrate on the syntactic aspect of grammar.
3. At this stage the distinction between optional and obligatory transformations has disappeared (see Greene 1972, p.53).
4. In Stoutland's terms Plato and Chomsky appear to share the traditional realist view that meaning is epistemic (op.cit., p.99).
5. Huxley's example of the problem of "sleep-teaching" comes to mind here (Huxley 1932, p.19).
6. It is perhaps significant that although he and Katz (1975) were prepared to deal with Cooper's earlier (1972) criticisms, Chomsky completely ignores Cooper's later more thoroughgoing critique (Cooper 1975), not even referring to it in 1980 in the publication whose title identifies precisely that area of his work that Cooper claims is "bankrupt" and "incoherent" (op.cit. p.77).

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SECTION Va

1. Given the mutual implication described in Section I it follows that those who give accounts of the child's acquisition of its first language are, ex natura rei, properly concerned with philosophical matters.
2. I have here avoided the detail of Tarski's argument and criticisms of it, but these "equivalences of the form (T)" are, of course, his T sentences (Tarski 1944, p.55). His condition of material adequacy for a definition of truth, convention T, for a language is, then a matter of providing a "complete list, or way of showing how to calculate a T-sentence for each sentence of the language" (Blackburn 1984, p.271).
3. This alternative to Formal Semantics has been labelled the theory of Communication-Intention, where meaning is described by "reference to the possession by speakers of audience-directed intentions of a certain complex kind" (Strawson 1969, p.171), the communications sub-group being represented by Austin and Searle (who, in fact, lay greater stress on the rule-governed nature of the process), the intentions sub-group by Grice and Bennett, these representatives being suggested by Harrison (1979, chpt.11 passim).
4. It should be stressed that Davidson's opposition to traditional realism, in particular its epistemic conception of meaning, results in only certain aspects of realism being combined with nominalism. Stoutland claims that his attempt to find an alternative to the dichotomy between realism and anti-realism is, in effect, a way of explaining how Davidson can consistently oppose both realism and anti-realism (op. cit., p.109, note 19). However, it is not clear how Davidson's acceptance of a theory of absolute truth (Davidson 1977b, p.225) and Stoutland's rejection of such a theory can be made to cohabitate.
5. In passing it is worth noting that Cooper (1973b) approaches the philosophy of language with synonymy as the major problem that meaning theories must account for, but without Davidson's bias towards a formal account of truth.
6. But note that "truth conditions are not to be equated with meanings" (Davidson 1982, footnote 3; 1970, p.56). There is then no single or double-translation account of meaning with the attendant problems examined in previous sections of this thesis.

7. His aim is "to extract a rich concept (here something reasonably close to translation) from thin bits of evidence (here the truth values of sentences) by imposing a formal structure on enough bits" (Davidson 1973a, p.74).
8. The move from sense to sentence is particularly clear when one considers the different "primitives" of each theory. For Quine sensory information is primitive, for Davidson a "learnable language has a finite number of semantical primitives" (Davidson 1965, p.9).
9. Where the coherence is with truth expressed in sentences and behaviour, rather than with the rest of language.

10. Schematically his account could be represented thus:

Re Formal Languages - Frege + Tarski > Convention T

Re Natural Languages - Quine > Principle of Charity

Account of Meaning

11. Or that the supposedly extreme cases of meaning where there is little contact with the basic shared framework of truth are, in fact, the ordinary cases. If this were so then his truth-based account of communication founded in agreement would be irrelevant.

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SECTION Vb

1.

EARLY:

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus = TLP - written 1921, published 1921).

MIDDLE:

Philosophical Remarks = PR - written 1929-1930, published 1979.

Culture and Value = CV - written 1931 and 1937, published 1973.

"Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough" = RFB - written 1931 and 1948, published 1967.

The Blue and Brown Books = BBB - written 1933-1935, published 1958.

Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics = RFM - written 1937-1944, published 1956.

Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief = LC - written 1938-1946, published 1966.

LATE:

Zettel = Z - written 1945-1948, published 1967.

Philosophical Investigations = PI - written 1945-1949, published 1953.

On Certainty = OC - written 1949-1951, published 1974.

Remarks on Colour = RC - written 1950, published 1977.

2. For example, there are important differences in the relation of sense, names and meaning, and also in their treatment of propositional logic (see Kenny 1973, chpt.2, passim).
3. The nature of this presumption is such that he is forced to conclude that we have "a priori knowledge of the possibility of ontological form" (ib. 6.33).



4. The absurdity of the whole undertaking is accepted by Wittgenstein himself when he writes that a proper understanding of his work involves recognising it as "nonsensical" (ib. 6.54).
5. As will be argued later this is neither nominalism nor a form of extreme relativism but, with Stoutland a "social practice view" (op. cit., p.107) of meaning and truth.
6. This is similar to the way in which Stoutland attempts to chart a path between what he perceives to be the failings of traditional realism and anti-realism (ib.).
7. Its substantive 'filling' being given by the particular form of life under consideration.
8. For "experience does not direct us to derive anything from experience" (OC p.19e, s.130).
9. Contra the transitionary period of his thought, where gestures' understanding were necessary for first-language acquisition (see p.198).
10. Which is done, for example, in the Investigations by learning the language of the builders (PI s.2ff).
11. Where the design of the argument is in the form of a monocoque, not that of chassis and body.
12. Indeed Pears asserts he is anti-realist (Pears 1971, pp.140-141) but, in context, this can be read as the transcendental realism of the Tractatus.
13. It is worth noting that Wisdom prefaces his short article with the warning that what he has to say is not based on any notes but only on memory.
14. As Finch would accept (Finch 1977, p.74).
15. Thus three aspects of Wittgenstein's work are subsumed under the term "form of life". This would allow for aspects of a form of life to be criticised internally

as "the axis of one's beliefs" altered, although not, of course, the whole form of life (Hinman 1983, p.345). In this way "form of life" is not, contra Specht, an "irreducible ultimate" (Specht 1963, p.49), for parts are reducible in terms of other parts.

16. Later, because of what he perceives of as a vagueness in the term "forms of life" he is unsure whether it is a "charter for relativism" or, qua biological concept, an example of objectivism (Trigg 1985, p.27). On the interpretation offered in this thesis it could be either, with suitable qualifications.

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SECTION VI

1. And develops from it, for Saffra's Neapolitan gesture of contempt is supposed to have shown Wittgenstein the way in which propositions do not picture their reality (Malcolm 1958a, p.69), although it could also have quite literally indicated the way in which a proposition can be non-verbal.
2. Which is to accept that "the child, as a result of its natural constitution, is a potential sharer in these forms of life and needs to be made an actual sharer in them" (Hamlyn 1978, p.106).
3. Cf. Cooper's criticism of Chomsky, that "competence cannot be grasped independently of a speaker's performances under certain conditions" (Cooper 1975, p.129).
4. Although this cut-off point is to be preferred to Tough's three years (Tough 1977, p.2).
5. With Hamlyn, one is here anthropomorphizing the infant, but avoiding the extremes of empiricism and rationalism (op.cit. pp.96-99).
6. See also the proposal for an hermeneutical psychology which would include for study the way in which a mother treats her infant "as though he were a person, a being already having, though perhaps unable to express, conscious needs, desires, wishes and intentions" (Gauld and Shotter 1977, p.201).
7. In passing it is worth remarking that this view results in an abandonment of any need to invent fictitious examples of creatures such as a Cyclopes whose "non-linguistic behaviour shows it to be rational" (Kirk 1967, p.370).
8. And not (contra Macnamara 1977b, p.12) that Wittgenstein is rejecting the non-verbal aspect of communication.

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SECTION VII

1. This is possible because of the links between philosophy of language, meaning theory and first language acquisition, where the one mutually entails the other (see below, Note 3).
2. Ideas are, of course, also non-verbal, but not in the behaviourally public sense used here. For this reason they cannot aid social communication.
3. The schema produced previously (p.19) now alters in the following way:

(where PL = Philosophy of Language  
MT = Meaning Theory  
FLA = First Language Acquisition  
PC = Philosophy of Communication  
CT = Communication Theory)

Originally: PL<->MT<->FLA

But: MT and FLA require the non-verbal

So : PL expands to become the philosophy of communication and MT becomes communication theory (so as to include both verbal and non-verbal phenomena)

Thus: PC<->CT<->FLA

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