

Relativism, Hermeneutics, and Understanding the Other

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Introduction Radical Others

It is often assumed in cross-cultural studies that there could be peoples whose thinking is couched in concepts so unlike one's own as to preclude the possibility of one's understanding them. According to this assumption, it is possible that one could encounter a culture the overall mental profile of whose members is so radically different from one's own that all understanding of them is virtually prohibited, at least that understanding which is not itself grounded in concepts *indigenous* to the culture. In short, given that such a radical other could only be understood from a perspective internal to it, from within itself, as it were, in terms only of such concepts as are proper to it, it would not be inappropriate to characterize such a radical other as simply dwelling in a different world or reality, one which is incommensurable with or intractable from one's own. To be more concise, cross-cultural studies often assume that we can make metaphysical sense of the doctrine known as conceptual or cultural relativism.

We find this assumption underlying the works of such anthropologists as Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Sir James Frazer, Colin Turnbull, and Benjamin Lee Whorf.¹⁾ For example, Levy-Bruhl writes as if the mentality of "primitives" expresses such radical otherness: "The reality in which primitives move is itself mystical. There is not a being, not an object, not a natural phenomenon that appears in their collective representations in the way that it appears to us."²⁾ Similarly, in relation to understanding Hopi language and culture, Whorf writes of the necessity of invoking its indigenous concepts: "In order to describe the structure of the universe according to the Hopi, it is necessary to attempt—insofar as it is possible—to make explicit

this metaphysics, properly describable only in the Hopi language.”³⁾

The idea that a radical other could exist is not, of course, confined to cross-cultural studies. Indeed, the work of Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend in the philosophy of science could also be characterized as endorsing this idea.⁴⁾ In the case of Kuhn and Feyerabend, radical others are simply the practitioners doing science under a certain pre-revolution paradigm. In the case of feminist studies also, we find the view embraced; for example, Sara Ruddick suggests that qua mothers the attitudes in child-rearing of women are not, as things generally stand, understandable from the mental set of men.⁵⁾ So, the question whether the concept of the radical other can be accorded any metaphysical sense is important for an adequate assessment of a wide variety of debates.

In §1 below, we shall develop an argument, due to Donald Davidson, for the position that the concept of the radical other lacks any coherent sense.⁶⁾ We shall try to emphasize why, according to Davidson’s argument, the structure of the interpretation of others is reflexive or circular, albeit not logically viciously so -- not unlike the circularity we find in W. V. O. Quine’s project of naturalized epistemology.⁷⁾ In §2 we shall try to clarify this circularity using Martin Heidegger’s views concerning “the hermeneutic circle,” a circular structure which confines *understanding* (*Verstehen*) and *interpretation* (*Auslegung*).⁸⁾ Finally, as it might be thought that this circular structure effects the very problem which we are arguing it helps to dissolve, namely, that concerning the possibility of understanding others, in our conclusion, we shall suggest a certain diagnosis due to Hans-Georg Gadamer for this seemingly recalcitrant tendency towards conceptual or cultural relativism, namely, specious, Enlightenment prejudices against prejudices, but for subjectivism.⁹⁾

§ 1

Against Relativism

The doctrine of relativism which we are investigating can be characterized as the following claim: there could exist an alien conceptual scheme so different from that housing another’s thinking that members of the alien scheme *could not possibly be expressed* in the other’s home scheme.

When it is claimed that the alien scheme ‘*could not possibly be expressed*’ in the home scheme, the *logical* sense is intended. It is not the Pickwickian sense,

which would suggest that the alien scheme *just happens* to exceed a person's limited ability of expression. We are to envisage the scheme as being logically inarticulable in the home scheme. Even granting unlimited ability with respect to the home scheme, the alien scheme would remain inexpressible: the home scheme would simply lack the appropriate concepts for articulation.

It would help to clarify the doctrine a bit if we glance at Thomas Nagel's article "What is it like to be a bat?"¹⁰ In this article, Nagel argues that from the perspective of objective, physical theory certain facts of experience will always remain simply either inexplicable or irreducible. These are facts about what an experience is like *for* the organism whose experience it is.

For example, assuming that bats have experiences, there must be facts about "what it is like for a bat to be a bat," facts expressing what it is like for the bat.¹¹ However, the only facts expressible in objective accounts of bats are those informing us merely of what it is like to be a bat, such as facts about echolocation, detecting sound waves, eating insects, and so forth. These facts do not indicate what it is like *for* the bat, for these facts to hold of the bat. Facts about what it is like *for* the bat are graspable only from the inner life of bats. Thus, it seems that there could be facts which are simply not expressible using our concepts, in particular, facts about the inner lives of nonhuman organisms.

Nagel suggests that his argument provides some ground on which one might hold "a belief in the existence of facts beyond the reach of human concepts."¹² He tells us that given his argument someone might:

believe that there are facts which could not ever be represented or comprehended by human beings, even if the species lasted for ever—simply because our structure does not permit us to operate with concepts of the requisite type.¹³

Nagel's position affords one example of the kind of view which the relativist wishes to maintain, namely, the view that there could be some alien conceptual scheme with which one cannot possibly "operate" in terms of one's own conceptual scheme. So, what is it to "operate" with a conceptual scheme?

It seems that the clearest understanding of this notion is given by associating conceptual schemes with languages. Thus, to operate with some conceptual scheme simply amounts to using some language.

Once we accept this position, we can thematize the problem of relativism as

one concerning translational failures, either complete or partial. We have complete failure “if no significant range of sentences in one language could be translated into the other; there would be partial failure if some range could be translated and some range could not...”¹⁴⁾

With respect to this position, then, the relativist’s claim seems to divide. We have either the claim that it is possible that there exists a language which is *completely untranslatable* into some familiar, home language, or the claim that it is possible that there exists a language which is (essentially) *partially untranslatable* into some familiar, home language. We shall look first at the former claim, that of complete translational failure.

Davidson’s argument against complete translational failure orbits around the following claim:

Nothing...could count as evidence that some form of activity could not be interpreted in our language that was not at the same time evidence that that form of activity was not speech behaviour.”¹⁵⁾

According to this claim, evidence that some activity is not interpretable in the home language must also be evidence that that activity is not speech behaviour. In other words, reasons for claiming that some activity is not interpretable in the home language must also be reasons for claiming that that activity is not speech. In short, whenever it is reasonable to claim that an activity is not interpretable in the home language, it must also be reasonable to claim that that activity is not the kind of activity it makes sense to try to interpret—which activities are thought to constitute speech behaviour is a conceptually parochial affair.

The claim highlights the importance to the relativists’ position of the view that translatability or interpretability furnishes the criterion for languagehood.¹⁶⁾ It is this criterion which relativists must *deny* since they maintain it is possible to have evidence that some activity is speech behaviour despite evidence that it is not interpretable. This suggests the possibility of construing something as a language despite evidence of its untranslatability. Thus, relativists must advance some kind of criterion of languagehood which does not either “depend on, or entail translatability into a familiar idiom.”¹⁷⁾ Is such a criterion possible?

According to Davidson, the possibility must be predicated on what he describes as “a dualism of total scheme or language and uninterpreted content,” on what

he terms "a scheme-content dualism."¹⁸⁾

This dualism, designated by Davidson also as *the third dogma of empiricism*, pivots an "organizing system," on the one hand, against "something waiting to be organized," on the other.¹⁹⁾ It suggests that something is a language by virtue of organizing, systematizing, classifying, arranging, and so forth, reality, the universe, the world, experience, etcetera.

The dualism is present in the British Empiricists and in empiricist-bent thinkers, such as Feyerabend, Kuhn, Sapir, Whorf, the early Wittgenstein, and Quine. For example, Whorf tells us that "...language produces an organization of experience," "... that language first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in a certain world-order..."²⁰⁾ Quine tells us that the "totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs...is a man-made fabric which impinges on experiences only along the edges..."²¹⁾ Thus, the coherence of the relativists' position depends on whether sense can be made of this dualism.

This dualism simultaneously identifies languages in terms of not only *what they do*, but also to *what they* do it. So, we need to understand not only in what sense languages can be thought either to organize, systematize, classify, etcetera, or to fit, predict, face, etcetera; but also in what sense they can be thought to do this to either reality, the universe, the world, experience, etcetera. For example, in the above quotations from Whorf and Quine, language was conveyed in the image of some kind of systematizing mesh of concepts imposed on our uninterpreted, bare experiential data. Thus, can we make sense of such images and metaphors without relying on some notion of translatability?

The problem here is that to think of a given language as organizing a unitary item, say, reality or experience, we must discern within that item's boundaries certain sub-units, those among which the language allegedly introduces organization. To discern these, however, we have to individuate in accord with principles governing the referential mechanisms of our language, its singular terms, predicates, quantifiers, etc. This suggests that the language must be construed as being a "language very like our own" and, thus a translatable one.²²⁾ So, it turns out that viewing language as an organizing system will not, after all, allow us to recognize the possibility of radical disparity.

On the other hand, when relativists think of language as some kind of system which "fits" experience, they are shifting their focus away from language's re-

ferential apparatus to its sentential vehicles, for it is the sentence which fits or fails to fit experience.

The idea here is that languages which fit experience are ones a significant majority of whose sentences are true. To make sense of this notion, then, we require an explanation of the “concept of being true.”²³⁾ However, to respect the demand for a non-translation-based criterion of languagehood, the explanation must not depend on the concept of translation. If we could meet this demand, we could construe a radically disparate language as one which is “largely true but not translatable.”²⁴⁾ Is such an explanation available, then? Independently of the notion of translation, can we understand the notion of truth as applied to language?

Davidson answers in the negative. He argues for the view that these two notions simply cannot be understood independently of each other. While his arguments for this view are many and complex, it would not be unfair to claim that, by and large, they focus on the significance for the concept of meaning of Alfred Tarski’s seminal work on truth-definitions for formal languages, in particular, on the importance of Tarski’s so-called Convention T.²⁵⁾

Convention T tells us that an adequate truth-theory formulated in some meta-language, M, with respect to some object-language, L, must yield, for every sentence, σ , of L, a theorem of the following form:

(T) σ is true-in-L if, and only if, p,

where “ σ ” is replaced by a description of σ and “p” by a translation of σ into M. For example, according to Convention T, an adequate truth-theory in English for Japanese must yield among its theorems at least the following:

(1) “雪が降っている” is true-in-Japanese if and only if it is snowing.

Now, Davidson rightly maintains that Convention T expresses our best intuitions concerning the concept of truth (as applied to language). Therefore, according to our best lights, the concept of truth is inseparable from the concept of translation. Hence, we can infer that relativists can offer no explanation of the former which is independent of the latter. It follows, then, that there can be no criterion of a radically disparate language which “depends on the assumption that

we can divorce the notion of truth from that of translation."²⁶) In short, the idea of language as a system which fits experience affords no leverage for making sense of the relativists' thesis.

In summary of the above considerations, we can claim that no sense can be read in the notion of a language or conceptual scheme so radically different from one's own as to be *completely untranslatable*. The notion is empty.

Now, at this juncture relativists might appeal to the idea of a *partially untranslatable* language. The view here is that the translatable regions of the alien language could anchor explanations of the untranslatable regions. So, let us now turn to Davidson's considerations against this relativistic avenue.

It is important to keep in mind that even in this case, we need to make sense of some non-translation-based identification of not only the problematic region, but also the non-problematic region of the alien language. This suggests that what is required is some "theory of translation or interpretation that makes no assumptions about shared meanings, concepts or beliefs."²⁷) This requirement derives from the fact that the concepts of translation, meaning and belief are mutually interdependent. So, if relativists try to employ a theory which pivots on such assumptions, they could not claim identifiability of a non-translatable sub-language independently of some translation-based criterion of languagehood.

In a somewhat Quinean vein, Davidson argues that, without fear of circularity, the basic evidence for such a theory—called a theory of radical interpretation—must (and, thus, can) involve such sentential attitudes as "holding true" or "accepting as true."²⁸) That we can use these attitudes non-circularly can be seen from the fact that knowledge that a speaker holds a sentence true does not procure knowledge of either what the speaker means by the sentence or what belief his attitude indicates. Thus, relativists must avail themselves of such sentential attitudes to gather evidential support for "a workable theory of meaning and an acceptable theory of belief."²⁹)

Such theories will assume the form of Tarskian truth-theories, and, thus, be required to respect Convention T. For example, were we attempting to construct a workable theory of meaning and an acceptable theory of belief for Japanese, our theory-construction would have to aim not only at yielding at least the following as a theorem:

- (2) “雪が降っている” is true-in-Japanese for a speaker x at time t if and only if it is snowing at t in the environs of x ,

it would also have to provide the following kinds of evidential support for such theorems

- (3) Speakers of Japanese hold “雪が降っている” true when, and only when it is snowing in their environs,

where (3) is generalized from observations of which sentences Japanese speakers hold true under which external circumstances. For example, we would infer (3) after a great number of observations of the following type:

- (3a) Ichiro holds-true-in-Japanese that “雪が降っている” when, and only when it is snowing in his environs,
- (3b) Jiro holds-true-in-Japanese that “雪が降っている” when, and only when it is snowing in his environs,

etcetera, information which is gathered by observing the speech behaviour of native speakers under external circumstances.

There are, however, very serious problems facing this approach. These problems spring from the simple fact that which sentences a person holds true depends in part on what the sentences mean and on what the person believes. For example, Ichiro and Jiro might hold “雪が降っている” true for completely unrelated reasons: Ichiro, when it is snowing but only in December, his belief being that genuine snow falls only during this deep winter month; while Jiro, when his close relatives begin to say “初詣に行かなければならない,” but never when it is snowing, his belief being that genuine snow falls only within a socially recognized temporal penumbra preceding the New Year’s visit to a shrine. Thus, one problem we face is that of empirically supporting (3a) and (3b) and, from such reports, to generalizing to (3). Since different people hold true the same sentences under any variety of conditions, it is extremely difficult to infer any condition binding on the community as a whole for holding a sentence true.

Another problem, also deriving from the fact that which sentences a person holds true depends on what they mean and what the person believes, is that unless it is assumed that Japanese speakers believe that it is snowing when, and only when, it really is snowing, i.e., because it is true, we cannot read (3) as providing any evidential support for (2).

(3) claims not only that speakers of Japanese hold “雪が降っている” true when it is snowing, but also the converse, that when speakers of Japanese hold “雪が降っている” true, it is snowing. However, suppose that ozone-depletion were to cause global environmental changes to such an extent that only during December months did it snow in Japan and that, like Jiro above, Japanese speakers were to hold true “初詣に行かなければならない” with respect to all December snowfalls, and never the mundane “雪が降っている”; and with respect to other months to not hold true “雪が降っている,” the environment having been so badly affected. In this case, observation could lead us to make the following generalization:

- (4) Speakers of Japanese hold “初詣に行かなければならない” true when, and only when it is snowing in their environs.

What is to refrain us from inferring from this generalization the following claim:

- (5) “初詣に行かなければならない” is true-in-Japanese for a speaker x at time t if and only if it is snowing at t in the environs of x ,

in short, the claim that “初詣に行かなければならない” means that it is snowing, which is clearly not the case?

The source of this difficulty stems not only from the holistic nature of belief and meaning, but also from their *mutual interdependence*. As we have been emphasizing, which belief a sentence expresses depends on what the sentence means; however, what a sentence means also depends on which belief its utterance is taken to express. What is more, just as any particular belief derives its identity from a mesh of other beliefs to which it bears a network of logical and causal relations, the meaning of any particular sentence depends on its relations to a collec-

tion of other sentences.

This suggests that to resolve this difficulty we must, in some empirically testable manner, separate, on the one hand, what is involved in a person's learning expressions of her native language—the 'pure' meaning of the expressions, as it were—from, on the other, any collateral information she might learn which equally well guides her use of the expressions—her supplementary beliefs concerning appropriate objects.

However, as Quine has well argued, we can make no empirically testable sense of "a distinction between what goes into a native's learning to apply an expression and what goes into his learning supplementary matters about the objects concerned."³⁰ In short, in our case, we cannot in any experimentally testable sense, carve away at community-wide collateral information about snowfall to arrive at a sentence with respect to which holding-true is prompted by, and only by the event of snowfall, a sentence which expresses in Japanese the pure meaning of "it is snowing." The proposal lacks any testable sense. The *indeterminacy* which infects the project of empirically tracking the conditions under which, and only under which, Japanese speakers hold true "雪が降っている" is simply ineliminable.

This might lead us to give up all hope of ever satisfying the constraints on a truth-theory, namely, evidential support for such T-theorems as (2). However, this need not be the case. Our difficulties merely highlight the fact that to even launch the project of testably tracking a truth-theory for Japanese we must assume that *Japanese speakers believe that it is snowing when, and only when, it really is snowing*, i.e., that they believe what is saliently true (from the theoretician's perspective, of course). In other words, assuming this, we can take the fact that Japanese speakers hold "雪が降っている" true when, and only when it is snowing as evidence that "雪が降っている" is true-in-Japanese for a speaker x at a time t if, and only if, it is snowing at t in the environs of x ; the point being that we must postulate that the reason x holds "雪が降っている" true when she does is that it is true.

Thus, to make any workable and acceptable initial sense of an alien language, we must assume that, generally speaking, its speakers believe *what is true when it is true*. In short, the formulation of a truth-theory is so constrained that from the outset we must construe others as being, in some sense, believers of the truth.

Of course, the truth in which others must be assumed to believe is the truth *according to the interpreter's lights*. What is more, since the ultimate aim to which interpretation aspires is an overall account of the behaviour of others, an account which makes sense of their behaviour, and since such an account will require other propositional attitudes, such as wonder, doubt, desire, hope, etcetera, it must be assumed that, generally speaking, speakers are similar to oneself in overall mental profile.

This assumption of *similarity to oneself in overall mental profile* is known as the Principle of Charity, Charity, for short. The assumption has been characterized by Davidson—and many others—in various ways, not always transparently equivalent. For example, we read: “choose truth conditions that do as well as possible in making speakers hold sentences true when (according to...the theory builder's view) those sentences are true”;³¹⁾ “make native speakers right when plausibly possible, according, of course, to our own view of what is right”;³²⁾ “interpret the utterances and other behaviour of a creature as revealing a set of beliefs largely consistent and true by our own standards”;³³⁾ “count them [others] right in most matters.”³⁴⁾

The above difficulty shows, therefore, *that interpretation of an alien language cannot begin to get off the ground without assuming its speakers are similar to oneself in overall mental profile*, that they are, for the most part, not very different from oneself, that, for the most part, their understanding accords with the general principles which govern the theoretician's concepts of mental states and her concept of meaning. Generally speaking, then, the ‘mind set’ of an interpreter's others must be assumed to respect the principles of so-called folk psychology (which should not be confused with either the German “Völkerpsychologie” or the French “psychologie des peuples”).³⁵⁾

Folk psychology is a recent term of art used by analytical philosophers to designate an amorphous collection of “commonsense views” about the mind and human behaviour with respect to which we not only understand the behaviour of others around us, but also understand our own behaviour. In short, folk psychology is that collection of general beliefs, rules of thumb, homilies, proverbs, maxims, etcetera, which couch the concepts of mental states, such as beliefs and desires, and pleasures and pains. It is this miscellaneous collection of ‘beliefs’ about the mind and behaviour which Charity subsumes.

The necessity for assuming Charity highlights the fact that disagreement between interpreters and interpretees can be made sense of only against a wide background of agreement. Thus, when the relativist encounters some allegedly recalcitrant region of an alien language, e.g., when its speakers seem stubborn in holding true some sentence which, by her lights, is false, the relativist must have available a kind of evidence which will force her to conclude that the region in question houses radically different concepts, rather than that the speakers simply have different opinions. However, could such evidence exist?

Unfortunately for the relativist, no such evidence could exist. In this context there is simply no clear distinction between "a difference in concepts" and "a difference in opinions."³⁶⁾ Davidson expresses the point as follows:

If we choose to translate some alien sentence rejected by its speakers by a sentence to which we are strongly attached on a community basis, we may be tempted to call this a difference in schemes; if we decide to accommodate the evidence in other ways, it may be more natural to speak of a difference of opinion. But when others think differently from us, no general principle, or appeal to evidence, can force us to decide that the difference lies in our beliefs rather than in our concepts.³⁷⁾

So, what sense can we now make of our relativist's position? Once she sets out on the project of initially trying to make sense of others, the project of radical interpretation, she is methodologically so constrained that she could never "be in a position to judge that others had concepts or beliefs radically different from" her own.³⁸⁾

A creature which the relativist discovers is simply undecipherable using the tools which she must use in her attempt at interpretation is simply a creature whose elicited sounds bear no discoverable, systematic relation at all to the world. The relativists can no longer coherently think of such a creature as engaging in a mysteriously meaning-bearing, albeit, uninterpretable activity. On the contrary, as the above considerations show, she must see such activity as not evincing any speech behaviour at all. That is to say, therefore: "nothing could count as evidence that some form of activity could not be interpreted in our language that was not at the same time evidence that that form of activity was not speech behaviour."³⁹⁾

§ 2

Heidegger on the Hermeneutic Circle

There are various Kantian lessons to be drawn from Davidson's argument. In particular, we are forced to acknowledge an ineliminable, seemingly parochial element pervading our interpretation of others. This is made plain by our having to invoke Charity.

We are not at cognitive liberty, as it were, to choose whether to accord with Charity or not. It stands, like a Kantian category was thought to stand, as a regulative, normative principle which renders the very interpretation of others possible. That is to say, to be able to interpret others at all we must, at some level of description, try to make sense of them with the very notions in terms of which we make sense of ourselves.

It is a consequence of Davidson's position, then, that our interpretation and understanding of ourselves should, in some sense, be a discernible element in our interpretation and understanding of others. This consequence is precisely what we should expect given Martin Heidegger's views concerning the hermeneutic circle. It is to these views we shall now turn.

Traditionally, as the art of textual interpretation, hermeneutics had always recognized a certain circularity characterizing understanding. In this context, the hermeneutic circle referred to an ongoing adjudication between 'parts' and 'wholes' in the interpretation of texts: by holding fast a working interpretation of some part of a text, one extrapolated to an interpretation of the whole text, and later, in light of this more comprehending interpretation modified the working interpretation of the sub-text. It was this kind of 'feed-back loop' which was recognized within hermeneutics, from Luther, through Schleiermacher, to Dilthey.⁴⁰⁾

With Heidegger, however, the circularity of understanding (*Verstehen*) no longer indicates either an epistemological or a methodological precept; it assumes global ontological significance in relation to human existence, to 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-Sein*). Understanding's circularity is now to be seen as pervading the kind of Being intrinsically enjoyed by creatures like ourselves, *as showing the essential constitution* (*Wesenverfassung*) of our kind of Being, a *Wesenverfassung* which is an existential constitution (*existentialen Verfassung*), one intrinsically having existence.

In Heidegger's words, the circularity of understanding is part and parcel to *Dasein*, a colloquial German word roughly meaning 'human existence', which Heidegger adopts as a technical term to designate the kind of creature that we are, that creature in whose existence Being is essentially an issue for it ("Dasein" was also used by Kant, albeit in a different theoretical role). So, to say that this circularity is our ontological signature is tantamount to saying that our ontological structure is itself circular. We shall see below in what sense this is true according to Heidegger.

Thus, when Heidegger claims that understanding, and, so, its circularity, is the ontological signature of *Dasein*, he is claiming that understanding belongs essentially to the kind of Being which is definitive of the kind of creature which we are. What's more, according to Heidegger, this understanding is itself, specifically, an understanding of Being. That is to say, understanding belongs to *Dasein* as that creature "a definite characteristic of whose [*Dasein's*] Being is itself understanding of Being" ("*Seinsverständnis ist selbst eine Seinsbestimmtheit des Daseins*").⁴¹

Now, in contrast to *Dasein*, Heidegger postulates two other species of Being: *Vorhandensein* and *Zuhandensein*. Roughly speaking, *Vorhandensein* picks out the kind of Being characteristic of such 'items' as theoretical posits or objects and 'everyday things' when, having come to display conspicuousness (*Auffallen*) and obtrusiveness (*Aufdringlichkeit*), they are severed from within their everyday contexts of use, and examined, inspected, analyzed, in short, when they are thematized, etcetera. *Zuhandensein* refers to that kind of Being characteristic of 'items' in actual use, for example, tools (*Zeug*), as dealt with from within their proper everyday context of use. *Zuhandensein* depicts the kind of Being enjoyed by so-called *pragmata* (*πραγματα* that with which one has to deal in one's dealings in life, one's *praxis* (*πραξις*)).⁴² Unlike items of *Vorhandensein*, those of *Zuhandensein* are inconspicuous and unobtrusive, inexplicitly embedded in a context-of-use rendering them *transparent* to their user.

The species of understanding which is our present concern is not unlike that which discloses *Vorhandensein*. It is the kind of understanding which 'lays out' what Heidegger calls an *as-structure* (*Als-Struktur*), a structure which is *explicitly* discerned from out of our familiar everyday comportment.

It is this species of understanding which assumes the form of interpretation (*Auslegung*), an *explicit* kind of *taking-as* vis-a-vis some item or other. For exam-

ple, when among the *pragmata* (πραγματα) involved in a *dealings in life*, a praxis (πρᾶξις), ‘a disturbance’ evinces itself, interpretation ‘lays out’ the various items in the context thus: as a table, or as a hammer, or as a door, etcetera. Hence, not only does a certain kind of *explicitness* always typify interpretation, but it always assumes the form of *something as something* (*Etwas als Etwas*), what Heidegger calls the ‘*as-structure of interpretation*’ (*die Als-Struktur der Auslegung*). He puts it as follows: “The ‘as’ makes up the structure of the explicitness of an understood; it constitutes the interpretation (“Das »Als« macht die Struktur der Ausdrücklichkeit eines Verstandenen aus; es konstituiert die Auslegung”).⁴³

According to Heidegger, ‘explicit interpreting’—to put it redundantly—is possible only within parameters of what he designates *the fore-structure of understanding* (*die Vor-Struktur des Verstehens*). The fore-structure is comprised of three levels: *fore-having* (*Vorhabe* [*Habe* (“ἔσται”, as property, possessions of ‘house-and-hold’)]), *fore-sight or fore-seeing* (*Vorsicht*) and *fore-conception or fore-conceiving* (*Vorgriff*).⁴⁴ We can see how these levels function by working through some concrete examples.

When one is absorbed in rock climbing, one inexplicitly commands a mastery of the context in which the climbing is going on. One ‘knows’ the lay of the rock’s immediate face, the disposition of one’s own body with respect to it, the availability of one’s tools, such as pitons and hammer. In short, *before* any ‘ingredient’ of the context can be ‘explicitly interpreted’, one must *have* a background grasp of the overall practice involved, and of the proper ‘place’ which its ingredients must occupy within that practice—a context in which the body ‘remembers’ what is had.

In addition to this fore-having, what is also required before ‘explicit interpreting’ can arise is an ability to see, to hone in on or to focus on ‘from where’ interpreting must arise. For example, our rock climber must know how the properly placed ingredients of her context should appear, so that should some event announce itself, ‘should violate proper appearances’, she will know where interpretation must get started. She must be able to ‘*nonpropositionally sight-read*’ the rock’s face, to have the ability to recognize whence interpretation should spring—such is her fore-sight, a ‘know-how’ for getting interpretation going.

Finally, our rock climber clearly must already enjoy a mastery of *concepts* under which any ingredients of the context can be sensibly subsumed, that is, she must

already be prepared with some fore-conception.⁴⁵⁾

The kind of inexplicit mastery and knowing and know-how to which we are trying to refer is perhaps expressed more clearly by what is termed *the experience of flow*:

Flow refers to the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement.... It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next in which we are in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment....⁴⁶⁾

In terms of the notion of flow, we could say that the fore-structure which renders any interpretation possible for the climber is that set of skills which affords her the experience of flow while on the rock face (these skills cannot, it seems, be identified independently of one's 'skills' with respect to one's own body).

So, given the inexplicit fore-structure at her command, our rock climber can 'explicitly interpret' various episodes she might encounter during her ascent, episodes which shatter any experience of *flow* which she might have been having. If, for example, a ledge breaks off at her grip, or a piton slips from a crag, or the face chips off under the weight of her footing, she can explicitly interpret the episode as flaking granite, or as a piton needing to be re-hammered, or as a badly weather-worn surface. In summary, we can see in the rock climber's case how a certain fore-structure of understanding bears various as-structures of interpretation possible.

Similarly, to use one of Heidegger's examples, when one is undisturbedly absorbed in hammering with a hammer, one does not see the hammer qua thing, it is not "*grasped* thematically...as an occurrent Thing..." (*erfaßt...thematisch als vorkommendes Ding...*).⁴⁷⁾ Qua tool, item of *Zuhandensein*, the hammer is inconspicuous and unobtrusive. It simply is in the hammering; it is the intersection of a certain repertoire of skills which one already has available to bring to hammering.

However, should the hammer prove unusable for the task at hand, for example, should it prove too heavy, or should its head prove to be insecurely fastened to its handle, it will come to betray conspicuousness and obtrusiveness. With respect to these disturbing modes, fore-sight and fore-conception allow thematizing the context, allow seeing the source of the problem and conceptualizing it in terms of 'hammer', 'heavy', 'head', 'handle', etcetera. In short, one can explicitly interpret

the situation thus: as a hammer that is too heavy, or as a hammer whose one part, interpreted as the head, is not securely fastened to another part, interpreted as the handle -- items of *Vorhandensein*.

It is important that we do not misread the relationship between the levels in the *as-structure*, or misread the relationship between it and the fore-structure. The latter is always present with the former and the levels of *Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht*, and *Vorgriff* always work inseparably in tandem within the *as-structure*—somewhat as secondary qualities (what would be ‘the *as-structure*’) for ordinary perceivers are necessarily inseparable from primary qualities (‘the fore-structure’).

It seems, then, that we are confronted with the following situation: on the one hand, we have that interpretation always already belongs to understanding; however, on the other, we have that only within understanding is interpretation possible. Thus, it seems that interpretation must occur in the horizon of something that is already understood. This is, indeed, how Heidegger himself puts it: “All interpretation which is to advance understanding must already have understood that which is to be interpreted” (“Alle Auslegung, die Verständnis beistellen soll, muß schon das Auszulegende verstanden haben”).⁴⁸⁾

The situation is not unlike the alleged paradox described by Socrates as “the trick argument” used by Meno. Socrates asks Meno:

Do you realize that what you are bringing up is the trick argument that a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know? He would not seek what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for.⁴⁹⁾

Perhaps, rather than as providing an argument for the so-called theory of recollection (*ἀναμνησῖς*), Plato should have seen the argument as suggesting that knowledge and inquiry constitute an epistemological circle, not unlike the hermeneutic circle itself. However, the latter is indicative of our ontological structure.

We can see this if we recall that according to Heidegger understanding of Being always already belongs to *Dasein*; for if this is the case, interpretation of Being must also always already belong to *Dasein*. So, we could fairly characterize the kind of creature we are as ‘understanding of Being interpreting its own understanding of Being’, i.e., as having an ontologically circular structure (*ontologische*

Zirkelstruktur). It is in this sense, as we mentioned above, that Heidegger has given the circularity of understanding an ontological reading. What we are now concerned with, then, is relating this circular structure to the circularity we noticed in Davidson's account of interpreting others.

The Davidsonian account concludes with translatability being the criterion of languagehood. As we saw, this conclusion rests on reflections concerning what is involved in interpreting the other as a speaker, or equivalently, in interpreting an activity as speech behaviour, or, more concisely, in interpreting an other as mindful. Thus, we will now turn to the task of disclosing the fore-structure which renders possible the interpretation of others *as* mindful; we need to appreciate the *Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht*, and *Vorgriff* which grounds such interpretation.

Now, one might try to object to this proposal on two grounds. First, one might object that because the Davidsonian account is best seen as a theoretical model, or as a rational reconstruction of what we actually do in our everyday interpretation of others, it does not concern the kind of interpretation with which Heidegger deals, namely, the very interpreting itself which vehicles our interpretation of others, and not some model or reconstruction of it.⁵⁰⁾

Secondly, one might also hold that since the Davidsonian account argues that we must appeal to such mental states as beliefs and desires in order for interpretation to arise, the account is predicated on a kind of view which Heidegger vehemently opposes, namely, a view of understanding other minds according to which this involves 'grasping' subjective or internal Cartesian mental states.

As for the first objection, it simply neglects how pervasive the circularity is, according to Heidegger. It pervades not only "interpretations" couched in so-called *Verstehen*-type 'understanding', but also "interpretations" couched in so-called *Erklaren*-type, i.e., natural scientific explanations. Indeed, the influence of Heidegger's views in philosophy of science has re-fueled the debate whether the two species of interpretation can even be genuinely distinguished.⁵¹⁾

As for the second objection, there clearly is not adequate space for an elaborate response. Suffice it to say, however, that although Davidson's view requires appeal to mental states, these mental states need not be construed as some species of Cartesian mental state.

On Davidson's view, to individuate mental states requires reference to the external world: which particular mental state a person is in depends on factors refer-

ring to her social and natural environment. That is to say, Davidson is sympathetic with the view that the individuation of mental states, what principles go into 'counting' mental states, must involve reference to the world outside of the head of the thinker. In other words, Davidson's views tend to be externalistic.⁵²⁾ Similarly, it could be said, albeit misleadingly, that according to Heidegger also, a person's mindfulness depends on factors of the social and natural environment, factors which Heidegger would say describe aspects of *Being-with (Mitsein)* and *Being-in-the-World (In-der-Welt-Sein)* of mindfulness. What is more, if we carve away the token-identity theory from Davidson's anomalous monism, we find another area of agreement with Heidegger, namely, that 'the mindful' (the domain of Dasein) is not reducible to the physical (the domain of *Vorhandensein*). So, in short, our response to this second objection is that Heidegger's position regarding the mindful is itself externalistic; it respects the kinds of conditions which Davidson argues mental states must respect.⁵³⁾

Now, as Davidson's views concern constraints on the interpretation of others, to access its fore-structure we should first look at Heidegger's own views concerning just 'who' the others are. That is, since the other is clearly also Dasein, we need to learn who is, according to Heidegger, "the 'Who' of Dasein" ("das Wer des Dasein").⁵⁴⁾

Misleadingly reminiscent of the Kantian claim to the effect that it must be possible for an 'I think' to accompany all my representations, Heidegger claims that to each and every Dasein a *mineness (Jemeinigkeit)* belongs. He thus claims: "Dasein is an entity which is at all times I myself; its Being is at all times mine" ("Dasein is Seiendes, das je ich selbst bin, das Sein ist je meines").⁵⁵⁾ However, in profound contrast to Kant's claim, Heidegger's claim is not that in the case of the singleton Dasein there is a certain item answering to any kind of transcendental unity of apperception or to some kind of Cartesian *res cogitans* (to preclude this kind of reading of Dasein's *Jemeinigkeit*, it helps to think of this mineness as similar to that according to which pain also is an 'entity' which is at all times mine; pain is essentially someone's pain).

As Heidegger explains, our existential constitution does not admit of individuation apart from the world. It is (i.e., we, who are it, are) such that the dimensions of what has traditionally been viewed as our subjective or mental sphere, i.e., the dimensions of our inner space, must be drawn in the world around us,

construed as already including the other.

In brief, from within the position of Dasein's understanding of Being—the position of Dasein, tout court—no sense can be accorded the idea of a Self/Mind 'being existingly' in isolation either from a world or from others. The idea of a wordless subject (ein weltloses Subjekt) expresses no sense. So, Heidegger makes the following claim: "Clarification of Being-in-the-world shows that a bare subject without a world neither 'is' proximally, nor is it ever given. And so in the end, even as little proximally given is an isolated "I" without others" ("Die Klärung des In-der-Welt-seins zeigte, daß nicht zunächst »ist« und auch nie gegeben ist ein bloßes Subjekt ohne Welt. Und so ist am Ende ebensowenig zunächst ein isoliertes Ich gegeben ohne die Anderen").⁵⁶⁾

If, however, Dasein's individuation does not metaphysically isolate a singleton Dasein from other Daseins, it becomes unclear who others are. In some sense, they cannot be construed as *genuine others*. They must be seen as just like oneself, as not distinguished from oneself. This is indeed precisely the view which Heidegger expresses: "'Others' does not signify so much as: all the remaining not counting me, out of which the "I" stands out; the others are, on the contrary, those from whom oneself is for the most part not distinguished, among whom one also is" ("»Die Anderen« besagt nicht soviel wie: der ganze Rest der Ubrigen außer mir, aus dem sich das Ich heraushebt, die Anderen sind vielmehr die, von denen man selbst sich zumeist nicht unterscheidet, unter denen man auch ist").⁵⁷⁾

The view Heidegger is trying to voice concerns 'others' as encountered within contexts of undisturbed, everyday Dasein, from within the horizon of Dasein's understanding of Being, as both inconspicuous and 'unascertainable' ('Nichtfeststellbarkeit'). Within such contexts, apropos of our fellows, an *implicitness* prevades: we are merely undisturbedly going about, comporting in the world, with freely given (freigegeben), anonymous others.

According to Heidegger, such ontologically intimate circumstances reveal not only that the other is *proximally and for the most part* (*zunächst und zumeist*) already given to Dasein, but also, a fortiori, how oneself is given to one. Therefore, according to Heidegger, since no 'isolated "I" without others' is ever given, *proximally and for the most part, what is given to oneself of oneself* and, in addition, *what is given to oneself of others* are always certain 'others', in particular, those from whom 'oneself is not distinguished, among whom one also is'.⁵⁸⁾

From this discovery, it follows that what is primordial (ursprünglich) vis-a-vis 'the other' is a metaphysically irreducible mode of Dasein's Being, namely, what Heidegger designates *With-Being* (*Mitsein*). It is irreducible because it necessarily cannot be analyzed as a phenomenon involving a 'bare subject', for example, res cogitans, having some such property as 'with-ness'. When one thinks even of one's self, of 'I', one already thinks of oneself from within the horizon of a shared and public world, a *With-world* (*Mitwelt*).

So, when our rock climber thinks to herself, "Here I am, a lonely rock climber, hammering a piton in the North Face," the contents of her thoughts limn the profile of a With-world: a world of tools, such as hammers and pitons, manufactured for certain uses, for within certain kinds of practices, characteristic of certain public roles, such as rock climber, pursued for the sake of various reasons, by those among whom she, herself, 'is' an undistinguished one. Although thinking of herself as 'I', the contents of her thoughts involve an absorbed concern for the With-world: for the publicly defined role of rock climber, involved with certain publicly designed tools, for use by anyone pursuing that certain practice characteristic of that certain role open to anyone. In short, she thinks of herself in reference to a shared, public world, as a participant in a social nexus which includes herself among others. She is always already with others; the world is one she is always already sharing.

As should be clear, from within the With-world, from within the horizon of undisturbed, everyday Dasein, as characterized by *inexplicitness*, there simply are no 'others', in the sense of those of whom sense *needs* to be made, at whom one must target Davidsonian interpretation. Such *genuine others*—as we expressed it above—are coeval with interpretation, when *inexplicitness* withdraws. Thus, to now continue our pursuit of the fore-structure of the *interpretation of (genuine) others*, we should first look at episodes in which such *inexplicitness* withdraws. This will reveal interpretation and show the kind of fore-structure it must have.

Just as in the case of everyday dealings with tools, *inexplicitness* retreats when something conspicuous and obtrusive hails, i.e., when there are what Gadamer calls "breaches of subjectivity."⁵⁹ These are events in which our 'co-Dasein' behave unexpectedly, surprisingly, in a way which sharply contrasts with the ways in which 'one' just behaves. Davidson would describe such breaches as displaying the necessity for invoking the concept of belief (it is unclear how extensive a

breach is 'interpretably assimilable' by Dasein: so extensive as to include the behaviour of unweaned infants, of word-babbling toddlers, of those suffering from schizophrenia or madness).

In breaches of intersubjectivity, one of Dasein's persistently on-going concerns becomes fractured, namely, the concern to 'not be the odd one out', for 'not rocking the boat', for 'not creating a scene'. With a breach, a 'scene' erupts. Our on-going concern, termed *distantiality* (*Abständigkeit*) by Heidegger, reaches conspicuousness and obtrusiveness. Co-Dasein 'interpretably' fails to do 'the done thing'; what emerges with a *someone*, is a failure in some circumstance to do something 'in the way it is done'.

A breach also discloses violation of what Heidegger calls the *averageness* (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) which characterizes each and every one of us, oneself and those 'others' with whom one already always indistinguishably 'is'. It is in virtue of *averageness* that it is true that, *generally speaking, we simply do things in the way one does them*. Heidegger illustrates the case thus: "We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves, in the way one takes pleasure; we read, see and judge literature and art, in the way one sees and judges; also we pull ourselves back from 'the great mass', in the way one pulls oneself back; we find 'shocking' what one finds shocking" ("Wir genießen und vergnügen uns, wie *man* genießt; wir lesen, sehen und urteilen über Literatur und Kunst, wie *man* steht und urteilt; wir ziehen uns aber auch vom »großen Haufen« zurück, wie *man* sich zurückzieht; wir finden »empörend«, was *man* empörend findet").⁶⁰⁾

The 'One' which Heidegger is referring to is that 'anonymous nobody who is everybody'. Termed by Heidegger "*das Man*", this 'One'—'*the They*'—is the *One* of whom the following homilies are held to be true:

- (i) One who suffers bodily damage will feel pain.
- (ii) One who suffers a sudden sharp pain will wince.
- (iii) One deprived of food for a certain period of time will feel hunger.
- (iv) One who is angry will tend to be impatient.
- (v) One generally does what one says one will do.⁶¹⁾

In other words, *das Man*, *the One*, *the They*, is the character collectively profilled by the homilies comprehended by what we referred to above as folk psychology. The One is the *dramatis persona* of folk psychology.

In addition to *averageness*, breaches reveal threats against *the care of average-*

ness (Sorge der Durchschnittlichkeit), the care to maintain and preserve the average, to conserve 'the way things are done by One'. In short, breaches reveal the phenomenon which Heidegger calls "levelling" ("Einebnung"), a tendency to assimilate any eruptions against *averageness* and *distantiality* as being simply other mundane and banal features of Dasein.

Thus, we can see that interpretation announces its need at disruption in *distantiality*, *averageness*, and *levelling* of the One. The way of Being of the One is muted, a way of Being constituted by *distantiality*, *averageness*, and *levelling*, a way of Being Heidegger calls "publicness" ("die Öffentlichkeit"). Thus, Heidegger writes: "Distantiality, averageness, and levelling constitute, as ways of Being of the one, what we know as 'publicness'. It proximally rules every interpretation of the world and Dasein and, in the end, is always right" ("Abständigkeit, Durchschnittlichkeit, Einebnung konstituieren als Seinsweisen des Man das, was wir als »die Öffentlichkeit« kennen. Sie regelt zunächst alle Welt- Daseinsauslegung and behält in allem Recht").⁶²

It is here that we can finally see that the fore-structure giving possibility to interpretation must reside in *publicness*; for as Heidegger says, *publicness* 'proximally rules every interpretation of the world and Dasein'. So, we see again how according to Heidegger interpretation is essentially circular: publicness somehow renders interpretation possible, but interpretation already essentially belongs to *publicness* by virtue of *levelling*, for *levelling* assimilates phenomena as merely this or that mundane aspect of everyday Dasein.

So, we reach the position that what makes interpretation possible is what makes *distantiality*, *averageness*, and *levelling* possible ways of one's Being. What makes this the case is not only one's at least being able to have appropriated skills which background the use of 'tools' called for in various practices of the One, but also one's having mastered those conceptual abilities involved not only in judging or thinking of the World and Dasein in the way the One does, but also those involved in *levelling*, such as are needed for interpreting in the way the One does—in short, 'being existingly' in the With-world.

There is an obvious circularity involved in this position. We could describe it as follows: what makes it possible that I can interpret others, that I can see others as mindful, is that I can be interpreted by them, that I can be seen as mindful; and, conversely, what makes it possible for others to interpret me, to see me as

mindful, is that they can be interpreted by the likes of me, i.e. , can be seen as mindful by those who can interpret according to the One.⁶³⁾

In order to interpret others as mindful, in effect, as Agents, I must see them and their behaviour in the only terms I have available, namely, in terms of *publicness*, in terms afforded by the One, in terms expressible in folk psychology. What is more, to see them in this way I must construe them as thus seeing themselves, i.e., to construe them as seeing the wellsprings of their own Agency as grounded in *publicness*—we try to make sense of others as they make sense of themselves. Moreover, insofar as they thus see their own Agency, they see their Agency as I see my own; I see my own as also grounded in *publicness*. Therefore, insofar as I can interpret others as mindful, I must think of others as possible interpreters of me. Conversely, of course, if others interpret me as mindful, it is in terms of the publicness-grounded notion of Agency, the only notion which they have available. However, it is in terms of this notion that I make sense of myself; and, thus, in terms of this notion I must also make sense of others. Therefore, I can make sense of others only if they can make sense of me, and conversely.

It seems it would not be unfair to characterize Heidegger's position here as the claim that the so-called first-person perspective is in some sense constituted from the so-called third-person perspective; for according to Heidegger, in some sense, I am the other, I am the One. This reading of the view seems to make sense of his claiming the following: "*Proximally*, in the sense of my own self, it is not that 'I' 'am'; on the contrary, it is the others, whose way is the one's. It is from them and as them that I am 'myself' proximally 'given' to me" ("*Zunächst* »bin« nicht »ich« im Sinne des eigenen Selbst, sondern die Anderen in der Weise des Man. Aus diesem her und als dieses werde ich mir »selbst« zunächst »gegeben«. Zunächst ist das Dasein Man und zumeist bleibt es so").⁶⁴⁾ In other words, what is given to me of myself from the outset are simply 'ways the One does', the 'done' things according to the One, for it is from such ways that I am myself. Thus, I am, in a sense, constituted by *publicness* (of course, this concerns only so-called inauthentic (uneigentlich) Dasein, but then, it is inauthentic Dasein who is the target of Davidsonian interpretation).⁶⁵⁾

Now, when we look again at Davidsonian interpretation, it should be clear why interpretation must invoke Charity. This principle merely articulates the content of publicness, that others are characterized by folk psychology similar to the one

which characterizes oneself, i.e., that others share a similarity *to oneself in overall mental profile*.

As we saw above, according to Davidson, when we interpret a person's behaviour we should do so in a way that not only makes sense of the behaviour from our perspective, but also in a way that makes sense—or would make sense—from her perspective. This means that our account of her behaviour should also aim to 'converge' with her own interpretation of that behaviour, in the sense that, for example, any beliefs and desires which our account attributes to her as reasons for her acting, or as making sense of her acting, must be readable as beliefs and desires which she also would ascribe to herself as reasons for acting. Charity requires that we should aim to eliminate any differences between these two perspectives. Therefore, properly understood, Charity does not tolerate any differences between first-person and third-person perspectives.

Thus, while Davidson claims that for methodological reasons we must invoke Charity, why we must assume between ourselves and others an overall similarity in mental profile, Heidegger offers us an ontological account for why this is so, an account couched in terms of the nature of our Being. Methodologically speaking, interpretation must accord with Charity to minimize any differences between first-person and third-person perspectives because, ontologically speaking, the first-person perspective is constituted out of the third-person perspective.

§ 3

Conclusion

From the above discussions, it is sometimes concluded that we can never know whether our interpretation of others is *really true*. From both Davidson's and Heidegger's positions, it seems that I can interpret others only in *my own terms*, only to the extent that I can make them out to be just like me. If this is the case, however, what is to say that my interpretation of an other is true or correct, and that another person's interpretation is not? Given these views, it seems that we simply can make no sense of there being any objective criteria for adjudicating between competing interpretations. It seems that one interpretation will be as good as any other.⁶⁶⁾

These sceptical impressions voice the worry that only if one can 'get outside' of the circularity of understanding will one be able to objectively assess the correct-

ness of any given interpretation—just as the traditional empiricists' worries suggested that only if one could 'get outside' of the sphere of one's own perceptions would one be able to assess their objective validity.

However, what does it mean to talk of 'getting outside' of the circularity of one's interpretation of others? Why might one think that 'objectively grounded' interpretation can be secured only by cognitively emancipating oneself from the horizon only within which one's own understanding can take place?

Such metaphorical talk as 'getting out' of one's conceptual network indicates that it is thought that 'beyond' the boundaries of the network lie certain bare, uninterpreted phenomena against which all interpretations can be assessed for their truth—just as one thought that beyond the boundaries of the 'perceptual veil' lay a ready-made world with respect to which one could decide the objective validity of perceptual content. In other words, one of the unspoken motivations behind the sceptical worries is a scheme-content dualism; and of this dualism, as we saw above, we can simply make no sense.

Furthermore, talk of the need to 'get out' suggests that the circularity is, in some sense, vicious, and, therefore, cannot afford any legitimate support for any candidate interpretation. That is to say, it is suggested that only something other than beliefs can afford evidence for or can support other beliefs, such as, for example, interpretations, which are basically only sets of beliefs, albeit about beliefs. However, as Heidegger and Davidson are both wont to insist, only further beliefs can support beliefs; and insofar as beliefs are merely the expressions of interpretations, only further interpretations can support interpretations.

Heidegger warns us indeed against just these kinds of worry. He tells us: *"However, if we see in this circle a vicious one and after watch out to avoid it, even if we 'feel' it only as inevitable imperfection, then from the ground up we misunderstand so-called understanding"* (*"Aber in diesem Zirkel ein vitiosum sehen and nach Wegen Ausschau halten, ihn zu vermeiden, ja ihn auch nur als unvermeidliche Unvollkommenheit »empfinden«, heißt das Verstehen von Grund aus mißverstehen"*).⁶⁷ That is to say, to think of understanding (Verstehen), fore-structure to interpretation, as needing to provide interpretation with some required 'ultimate' ground or justification, a ground which would in some sense demonstrate interpretation's objective validity or its status as a species of genuine knowledge, is to misunderstand understanding completely.

Rather, Heidegger is proposing that understanding—*Verstehen*, which also expresses the sense of ‘practical ability’, for example, as Gadamer cites, “er versteht nicht zu lesen” expresses, “he cannot read”⁶⁸)—be seen as grounding interpretation in as circular a sense as that in which Nelson Goodman proposed that we see everyday, inferential practices as grounding the rules of deductive inference.

Goodman tells us that this latter grounding is circular, but virtuously so: “A deductive rule is amended if it yields an inference we are unwilling to accept; an inference is rejected if it violates a deductive rule we are unwilling to amend.”⁶⁹) Goodman’s point is that deduction is grounded in a human practice, and that there is no ‘extra-practical’ activity which affords this practice its ground; it is simply something that we do.

Similarly, interpretation is a ‘bare’—but essential—practice of Dasein. It is simply something which Dasein does; and there is no ‘extra-ground’ to this grounding of interpretation. Thus, although there is no ‘getting out’, there is no epistemological crisis in any case—indeed, such talk as ‘getting out’ of our conceptual scheme or, more radically, our very understanding of Being, no longer can be seen as expressing any genuine sense.

Moreover, when it is thought that one needs to ‘get out’ to safeguard the objective ‘integrity’ of an interpretation, one is assimilating the fore-structure of the interpretation to a kind of sheer prejudice or pre-judgement (*Vorurteil*) which renders the interpretation questionable. However, this assimilation is motivated itself by a prejudice, namely, the prejudice against prejudice which was typical of the Enlightenment.

According to Gadamer’s chronicle of the Enlightenment’s “prejudice against prejudice,” the aim was to secure understanding by eliminating “prejudice due to human authority and that due to overhastiness,” and “to decide everything before the judgement seat of reason.”⁷⁰) In particular, as inherited tradition and history, in a word, publicness or *the ways of the One* were assimilated to a species of prejudice, the epistemological tendency during the Enlightenment was one which aimed to ‘de-historicize’ understanding, to eliminate from the ‘working consciousness’ of the interpreter the effects and influences of history and tradition and, thereby, to induce in the interpreter a presuppositionless reading of bare phenomenon, of what is allegedly simply there anyway. However, there is no such pure, nonconceptual conceptual window looking out onto such phenomena—even the ‘seat of

reason' has a geneology.⁷¹⁾

Thus, in response to these worries springing from the Enlightenment prejudices against prejudice, with Gadamer we must heed Heidegger's claim that "interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of the pre-given" ("Auslegung ist nie ein voraussetzungsloses Erfassen eines Vorgegebenen").⁷²⁾ Indeed, the idea of 'presuppositionless grasping', and, thus, the wellsprings of these worries themselves, involve a notion of understanding to which we can accord no genuine sense, namely, that 'understanding' which we must picture as enjoyed by a de-historicized, de-temporalized understander, in short, the kind of 'understanding' we must picture as would be had by a worldless subject.

ENDNOTES

- 1) L. Levy-Bruhl, in particular, was well-known for such views, especially as concerns the so-called 'primitive' and 'pre-logical' mentality, although he did later abandon such notions. Cf. *Les Carnets* (Paris UP 1949)
Cf: Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Abridged (London PAPERMAC, 1987)
Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York Harper & Row 1972)
B.L. Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality* (Cambridge MIT Press 1956)
- 2) Quoted in Steven Lukes, "Relativism in Its Place," in *Rationality and Relativism*, M. Hollis and S. Lukes, eds (Cambridge Routledge 1982) p. 268
- 3) B.L. Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, p. 58
- 4) Cf: T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago UP 1970)
P. Feyerabend, *Against Method*, (New York Verso 1978)
- 5) Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," *Feminist Studies*, 6(2), pp. 342-67
- 6) Davidson's argument, reminiscent of Kantian transcendental arguments, has often been discussed; however, the discussions in the following are helpful: R. Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton Princeton UP 1979); H. Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge CUP 1981)
- 7) The circularity may be related to that in Quine's project of 'naturalized epistemology': "We are studying how the human subject of our study posits bodies and projects his physics from his data, and we appreciate that our position in the world is just like his.... This interplay is reminiscent again of...circularity, but it is alright now that we have stopped dreaming of deducing science from sense data." ("Epistemology Naturalized" in Quine, *Ontological Relativity & Other Essays* (New York Columbia UP 1969 p. 84)
- 8) Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, (Tübingen Max Niemeyer 1986) [SZ, below]
- 9) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Sheed & Ward Ltd. (London Stagbooks 1979) [TM, below]

- 10) Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (London CUP 1979) pp. 165-80
- 11) *Ibid.*, p. 169
- 12) *Ibid.*, p. 171
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 171
- 14) Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford Clarendon Press 1984), p. 185 [hereafter, *Inquiries*]
- 15) *Ibid.*, p. 185
- 16) For our purposes, since the difference will not affect our argument, the distinction between translation and interpretation is not important. In any case, we have that translation between two languages does not necessarily require knowledge of either, e.g., someone might know that "雨が降っている" is translated as "Es regnet" without knowing either Japanese or German. On the other hand, interpretation does require knowledge of at least the language in which the interpretation is expressed.
- 17) Davidson, *Inquiries*, p. 192
- 18) *Ibid.*, p. 191
- 19) *Ibid.*, p. 191 Of course, by calling this dualism the third dogma, Davidson means to allude to Quine's article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," according to which Empiricism pivots on an unquestioning acceptance of reductionism and verificationism. Cf. W.V.O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge HUP 1980) pp. 20-47
- 20) B. L. Whorf, see n. 3 above
- 21) Willard V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge HUP 1980) p. 42 Also cf. Willard V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge MIT Press 1960)
- 22) Davidson, *Inquiries*, p. 192
- 23) *Ibid.*, p. 194
- 24) *Ibid.*, p. 194
- 25) Tarski's work on truth was published in his seminal article "On the Semantic Conception of Truth." The article provided a mathematically rigorous definition of truth for formal languages in terms of the more primitive notion of satisfaction. Within the area of symbolic logic, his work had revolutionary significance, basically affording logicians with semantical tools with which to investigate language and mathematics. Cf. J. Drayton, "Alfred Tarski, Philosopher-Mathematician" in *Thinkers of the Twentieth Century* (London St. James Press 1986)
- 26) Davidson, *Inquiries*, p. 195
- 27) *Ibid.*, p. 195
- 28) *Ibid.*, p. 195
- 29) *Ibid.*, p. 195
- 30) W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object*, (Boston MIT Press 1960) p. 38
- 31) Davidson, *Inquiries*, p. 152
- 32) *Ibid.*, p. 137
- 33) *Ibid.*, p. 137

- 34) Ibid., p. 197
- 35) Folk psychology is thought of as being that wide array of beliefs each of us has about 'how' people believe, desire, etc. It is sometimes compared to a kind of folk theory, a pre-scientific, commonsensical account of the behaviour of human beings. Given this comparison, it is often argued that it will, like phlogiston and witchcraft theories, eventually be eliminated and replaced by some species of neurophysiology—so-called eliminative materialists, or eliminativists, for short. It is an open question, I think, whether 'ethnocentricism' is couched in folk psychology.
Cf. P.M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge MIT Press 1984)
- 36) Davidson, *Inquiries*, p. 197
- 37) Ibid., p. 197
- 38) Ibid., p. 185
- 39) Ibid., p. 185
- 40) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *TM*, pp. 241-53
- 41) Martin Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 68
- 42) Ibid., p. 64. We should note that Heidegger has a very intimate relationship to the Greeks, e.g., Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is partially for this reason that Heidegger's German is at times very opaque: many times his German expresses his translation of certain Greek notions, e.g., Aristotle. Indeed, it has been suggested by Heidegger scholars, e.g., J. Taminiaux and F. Volpi, that we can read Heidegger's fundamental ontology as merely an appropriation of Aristotle's ethics—perhaps this is Arendt's view;
Cf: H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago U. Chicago Press 1958)
T. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley UCP 1993)
J. Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (SUNY 1991)
F. Volpi, "Dasein as Praxis" in Vol. 2 of *Martin Heidegger: Critical Studies*, C. Macann, ed., (London Routledge 1992) pp. 90-130
- 43) Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 149
- 44) Ibid., p. 150
- 45) By 'nonpropositional seeing' is meant 'seeing' which is not 'seeing that', e.g: He saw Mary run, She saw a cat crying, Austin saw a man get shaved; on the other hand, the following cases are of propositional seeing: He saw that Mary was running, She saw that a cat was crying, Austin saw that a man got shaved. In some sense, the former are not thought to involve conceptual content, whereas the latter are.
Cf. J. Barwise and J. Perry, *Situations and Attitudes* (Cambridge MIT 1986)
F. Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (Chicago U. Chicago Press 1969)
- 46) Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: Studies in Enjoyment* (PHS Grant Report N, R01HM 22883-02, 1974). Cited in Richard Mitchell, Jr., *Mountain Experience: The Psychology and Sociology of Adventure* (Chicago, U. Chicago Press, 1983) p. 153
- 47) Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 69

- 48) Ibid., p. 152
- 49) *Meno*, trans., W.K.C. Guthrie, from E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton Princeton UP 1961), p. 363
- 50) Cf. S. Mulhall, *On Being in the World* (London Routledge 1990) pp. 91-122. It is my view that at the 'post-interpretational level', so to speak, i.e., coeval with interpretation, co-Dasein becomes a genuine other, thus, open to Davidsonian interpretation, despite being existingly with co-Dasein in the fore-structure, i.e., in understanding. Thus, in contrast to Mulhall, I simply see Heidegger as providing a more comprehensive, ontologically based account which constrains any account of interpretation.
- 51) See the discussion on the Verstehen-vs-Erklären debate in Theodore Kisiel, "Heidegger and the new images of Science" in Vol. 4 of *Martin Heidegger: Critical Studies*, C. Macann, ed., (London Routledge 1992) pp. 325-41 Karl-Otto Apel, *Die Erklären-Verstehen-Kontroverse in Transzendental-Pragmatischer Sicht* (Frankfurt Suhrkamp 1979)
- G. H. von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca Cornell UP 1971)
- 52) The current externalism-internalism debate concerns the issue whether mental states such as beliefs, desires, etc., can or cannot be individuated without making reference to the thinker's social and natural environment. The view that such reference is necessary is, of course, the externalistic position. The views of Descartes and other Cartesian-type thinkers is internalistic. There is a tremendous body of literature on the issue; one should see: A Woodfield ed., *Thought and Object* (Oxford OUP 1988)
- 53) This section of *SZ* is particularly difficult due to Heidegger's ambiguity concerning the One, specifically, concerning his views on *uneigentlich* (inauthenticity) and *eigentlich* (authenticity). He often claims that the former is not to be thought of in a 'negative' or 'pejorative' sense; however, he often depicts inauthenticity in just such terms. Dreyfus sees this ambiguity in Heidegger as arising from the conflicting influences of, on the one hand, Dilthey, who emphasized the 'positive' aspects of the social world and, on the other hand, of Kierkegaard, who emphasized the 'negative' aspects. This ambiguity is also responsible for criticisms which Fredrick Olafson directs against Heidegger (as well as Sartre's misreading). H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge MIT Press 1991), esp., pp. 141-62
- F. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (New Haven Yale 1987) 146
- 54) Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 114
- 55) Ibid., p. 116
- 56) Ibid., p. 118
- 57) Ibid., p. 121
- 58) It is interesting to compare Hume with Heidegger on this problem. Hume writes: "...when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some

particular perception of other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hate, pain or pleasure." [Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* 2nd edition (Oxford Clarendon Press 1978)]. We could characterize Heidegger as claiming he stumbles on "the One"). The difference which we can see here is partially due to what characterizes phenomeno-ontological method -to the things in their essential Being -and to what Heidegger would describe as construing Dasein on the model of an item of Vorhandensein, as being an object or thing in which certain properties just happen to inhere, such as (worldless (weltloses)) perceptions or thoughts, etc.

- 59) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr., ed., D. Linge (Berkeley UC Press 1976) p. xii
- 60) We can see intimations of Foucault's views on power and domination in Heidegger's depiction of the One as a dictator: "In dieser Unauffälligkeit und Nichtfeststellbarkeit entfaltet das Man seine eigentliche Diktatur ("In inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the one's actual dictatorship unfolds") [SZ, p. 126]. The insight, once radically generalized, effectively discloses such of our 'precious' inner traits as rationality, compassion, etc., as cunningly, uncannily 'defined' by the One, and its onticity is secured by power and domination exercised through our own Abständigkeit, Durchschnittlichkeit, and Einebnung [SZ, pp. 126-30].
- 61) For various discussions on folk psychology, see the following:
 J. D. Greenwood ed., *The Future of Folk Psychology* (Cambridge CUP 1991)
 W. G. Lycan ed., *Mind and Cognition: A Reader* Oxford Basil Blackwell 1990)
- 62) Heidegger, *SZ*, pp. 129
- 63) Comparing Hume with Heidegger, we see in what sense Dasein's everyday understanding of itself and 'others' is as native as one's mother tongue: one self-ascribes (wordly) content as 'immediately' as Hume's perceptions are immediate.
- 64) Heidegger, *SZ*, pp. 129
- 65) It would seem that *Uneigentlich* would be the mode of Being from which Davidsonian interpretation would gather its 'resources'.
- 66) Holism is important in Davidson's (and Heidegger's) thought. While he does endorse holism, he claims Charity spares him the consequence of scepticism.
- 67) Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 153
- 68) Gadamer, *TM*, p. 231
- 69) Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* 4th edn (Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1983) p. 67
- 70) Gadamer, *TM*, p. 241
- 71) Cf. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, English ed. (NY Routledge 1974) Pt. II
- 72) Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 150