

Stephen Neale

ON REPRESENTING

I. THE END OF REPRESENTATION

Our thoughts, utterances, and inscriptions are taken by many philosophers to have content in virtue of being *representations* of reality. Such representations can be accurate or inaccurate: those that are accurate are said to be true, to correspond to the facts, to mirror reality (nature, the world).

Donald Davidson finds such talk unfortunate: it is thoroughly intertwined with talk of facts, counterfactual states-of-affairs, and correspondence theories of truth, and it lures us into fruitless discussions about scepticism, realism and anti-realism, the subjective-objective distinction, representational theories of mind, and alternative conceptual schemes that represent reality in different ways.¹ The time has come, Davidson suggests, to see only folly in the idea of mental and linguistic representations of reality; and with this realization philosophy will be transformed as many of its staple problems and posits evaporate.

A proper examination of Davidson's case against representations must include an examination of his case against *facts*, for Davidson's position boils down to this: in order to give any substance to the idea of representations of reality, reciprocal substance must be given to the idea that there are facts (which true utterances and beliefs represent). Once the case against facts is made, the case against representations (and, with it, the case against correspondence theories of truth) comes more or less for free:

The correct objection to correspondence theories [of truth] is . . . that such theories fail to provide entities to which truth vehicles (whether we take these to be statements, sentences, or utterances) can be said to correspond. If this is right, and I am convinced it is, we ought also to question the popular assumption that sentences, or their spoken tokens, or sentence-like entities or configurations in our brains, can properly be called "representations," since there is nothing for them to represent. If we give up facts as entities that make sentences true, we ought to give up representations at the same time, for the legitimacy of each depends on the legitimacy of the other.²

If there are no facts to which true sentences correspond, then such entities cannot function (as some have suggested) as truth-makers, causal relata, or objects of knowledge or perception. And if there are no representations, there is no sense to be made of (e.g.) 'conceptual relativism': "Beliefs are true or false, but they represent nothing. It is good to be rid of representations, and with them the correspondence theory of truth, for it is thinking that there are representations that engenders thoughts of relativism."³

The idea here is that talk of relativism is encouraged by the idea that a viable distinction can be made between representations and things represented, a distinction that is supposed to be untenable. In the framework of Davidson's landmark paper 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', the intelligibility of relativism presupposes a dualism of 'conceptual scheme' and 'empirical content'.⁴ His central argument against this dualism comprises four parallel sub-arguments which are meant jointly to undermine the *four and only* ways of making the dualism viable. A premise in one of the sub-arguments—the one against *schemes fitting reality*—is that there are no (distinct) *facts* to which true utterances (or thoughts) correspond.⁵ In short, the success of Davidson's central argument against the scheme-content distinction, representations, and correspondence theories of truth depends on the success of an independent argument against *facts*. I shall return to this.

According to Richard Rorty, by undermining the scheme-content distinction Davidson has made it all but impossible to formulate many of the traditional problems of philosophy.⁶ The only useful application of the phrase "the problems of philosophy", says Rorty, is to "the set of interlinked problems posed by representationalist theories of knowledge . . . problems about the relation between mind and reality, or language and reality, viewed as the relation between a medium of representation and what is purportedly represented."⁷ And,

[i]f one gives up thinking that there are representations, then one will have little interest in the relation between mind and the world or language and the world. So one will lack interest in either the old disputes between realists and idealists or the contemporary quarrels within analytic philosophy about "realism" and "anti-realism." For the latter quarrels presuppose that bits of the world "make sentences

true," and that these sentences in turn represent those bits. Without these presuppositions, we would not be interested in trying to distinguish between those true sentences which correspond to "facts of the matter" and those which do not (the distinction around which the realist-vs.-antirealist controversies revolve).⁸

Once we give up *tertia*, we give up (or trivialise) the notions of representation and correspondence, and thereby give up the possibility of epistemological scepticism.⁹

It is one of the virtues of Davidson's work, says Rorty, that it shows us "how to give up" truth-makers and representations. Rorty sees Davidson as an "anti-representationalist" philosopher in the tradition of Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Quine, and Sellars. The attack on the distinction between scheme and content, says Rorty, "summarizes and synthesizes Wittgenstein's mockery of his own *Tractatus*, Quine's criticism of Carnap, and Sellars's attack on the empiricist 'Myth of the Given'."¹⁰ These philosophers are said to be linked by a rejection of the "reciprocal relations" of *making true* and *representing* that are central to so-called "representationalism." But there is more to anti-representationalism than this. According to Rorty, it is "the attempt to eschew discussion of realism by denying that the notion of 'representation,' or that of 'fact of the matter,' has any useful role in philosophy."¹¹ Davidson is meant to be an anti-representationalist because he is committed to the thesis that "there is no point to debates between realism and antirealism, for such debates presuppose the empty and misleading idea of beliefs 'being made true'."¹² And it is precisely the idea that sentences are made true by non-linguistic entities, i.e. *facts*, that Davidson is meant to have discredited and which has led to the rejection of the scheme-content distinction. In short, Rorty's Davidson is someone whose philosophy transcends "pointless" controversies about 'realism' and 'scepticism'.

There is a revolutionary tone to Rorty's claims: once we see that we should give up representations, we will realize that we are no longer confronted with many, perhaps any, of the standard problems of philosophy. The demise of representations renders the stock problems "obsolete" and presents a challenge for philosophers to find a new place for themselves within the academy. Debates between 'realists' and 'antirealists' and between 'sceptics' and 'antisceptics', to name just two, are "pointless. . . the results of being held captive by a picture, a picture from which we should by now have wriggled free."¹³

I want to revisit Davidson's original argument against scheme-content dualism, explain fully its dependence on a separate argument against facts, and then establish precisely what Davidson is claiming about representation, for it seems to me that Rorty has got Davidson very wrong.

II. SCHEME AND CONTENT

Davidson argues that no good sense can be made of (a) 'conceptual relativism'—the idea that different people, communities, cultures, or periods view, conceptualize, or make the world (or their worlds) in different ways—or (b) the idea of a distinction between 'scheme' and 'content', i.e., a distinction between conceptual scheme (representational system) and empirical content ("something neutral and common that lies outside all schemes"¹⁴).

Davidson's main argument against relativism is intertwined in subtle ways with one of two arguments he deploys against scheme-content dualism, which relativism is meant to presuppose. For concreteness, Davidson associates conceptual schemes with sets of intertranslatable languages (some people find this problematic, but for my purposes here it is not). His first argument against scheme-content dualism proceeds by way of undermining the notion of a scheme; his second proceeds by way of undermining the (relevant) notion of content. The anti-scheme argument involves an appeal to the conditions something must satisfy in order to qualify as a conceptual scheme, conditions that some have found too stringent. I shall not discuss that argument here. I want to look at the anti-content argument and explain precisely why its ultimate success depends upon the rejection of facts. I shall then explain the relevance of this for talk of "anti-representationalism".

Davidson detects two contenders for the role of "content" in writings advocating forms of relativism: (1) *reality*, (the world, the universe, nature) and (2) *uninterpreted experience*. And since we find talk of conceptual schemes (languages/systems of representation) either (a) *organizing* (*systematizing, dividing up*) or (b) *fitting* (*describing/matching*) reality or experience, there are four distinct ways of characterizing the relationship between scheme and content: schemes organize reality, organize experience, fit reality, or fit experience.

None of the four possibilities is meant to be viable. For the concerns of this essay, it is Davidson's argument against *schemes fitting reality* that is important as it connects in a direct way with talk of an ontology of facts. According to Davidson,

When we turn from talk of organization to talk of fitting, we turn our attention from the referential apparatus of language—predicates, quantifiers, variables, and singular terms—to whole sentences. It is sentences that predict (or are used to predict), sentences that cope or deal with things, that can be compared or confronted with the evidence. It is sentences also that face the tribunal of experience, though of course they must face it together.¹⁵

A sentence or a theory (i.e., a set of sentences) "successfully faces the tribunal of experience . . . provided that it is borne out by the evidence," by which

Davidson means "the totality of possible sensory evidence past, present, and future."¹⁶ And for a set of sentences to fit the totality of possible evidence is for each of the sentences in the set to be true. If the sentences involve reference to, or quantification over, say, material objects and events, numbers, sets, or whatever, then what those sentences say about these entities is true provided the set of sentences as a whole "fits the sensory evidence."¹⁷ Davidson then adds that "[o]ne can see how, from this point of view, such entities might be called posits. It is reasonable to call something a posit if it can be contrasted with something that is not. Here the something that is not is sensory experience—at least that is the idea."¹⁸ There is definite allusion to the theory of meaning here. A set of sentences involves reference to, or quantification over, material objects, events, numbers, sets, or whatever, only if a successful truth theory for the language as a whole must appeal to such entities in delivering T-sentences for the sentences in the set in question. And the entities in question are part of our ontology: they are the posits of our 'scheme' and can be contrasted with (sensory) experience, i.e., 'uninterpreted content'.

But now Davidson makes what I take to be an important move, a move against schemes fitting either experience or reality. There is no alternative to quoting the relevant passage in close to its entirety:

The trouble is that the notion of fitting the totality of experience, like the notion of fitting the facts, or of being true to the facts, adds nothing intelligible to the simple concept of being true. To speak of sensory experience rather than the evidence, or just the facts, expresses a view about the source or nature of evidence, but it *does not add a new entity* [my italics, SN] to the universe against which to test conceptual schemes . . . [A]ll the evidence there is is just what it takes to make our sentences or theories true. Nothing, however, no *thing*, makes sentences or theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true. *That* experience takes a certain course, that our skin is warmed or punctured, that the universe is finite, these facts, if we like to talk that way, make sentences and theories true. But this point is put better without mention of facts. The sentence 'my skin is warm' [as uttered by me, here, now] is true if and only if my skin is warm [here and now]. Here there is no reference to a fact, a world, an experience, or piece of evidence. *Footnote: See Essay 3* [i.e., "True to the Facts," SN].¹⁹

Here there is allusion both to the theory of meaning and to a collapsing argument (slingshot) against the viability of *facts*. The theory of meaning doesn't need facts, and the collapsing argument is meant to show that we can't have them anyway. Davidson is surely right that on his conception of a scheme—which I am not going to contest here—if the *schemes-fitting-reality* story is to succeed, there must be something extralinguistic for a true sentence

(or belief) to fit or match up to. And surely there are just two plausible candidates: the world itself or an individual fact. Davidson is claiming that neither will work because each trades on the idea that the entity in question “makes the sentence true.”

The reason he thinks that individual facts will not do the job is that he has confidence in his collapsing argument, which shows that there is at most one fact (this is surely part of what is suggested by his back-reference to “True to the Facts” in the footnote quoted above). I have discussed this type of argument in detail elsewhere, so I can be brief here.²⁰ Those who have waived aside slingshot arguments as formal tricks that have no bearing on theories of facts, and those who have seen the same arguments as ruling out facts (and nonextensional logics) are both wrong. Slingshot arguments are extremely valuable: they impose very definite constraints on what theories of facts (and nonextensional logics) must look like, constraints that many proposed theories are incapable of satisfying. (Russell’s theory of facts passes—assuming his Theory of Descriptions and his idea that facts contain universals as components—but the theories of Wittgenstein and Austin appear to fail.) There is, then, some room for the fact theorist to maneuver, but it may not be room enough to produce a theory of facts of the sort that initially motivated the postulation of such entities.

Now what of the alternative position, that individual true sentences are made true not by facts but by *the world*? There is nothing in Davidson’s attitude to facts, his general approach to truth and meaning, or his argument against scheme-content dualism that requires him to reject the idea of a world existing independently of our thought and language. So why does he suggest, in the passage quoted above, that not even *the world* can make a sentence true? In the course of rejecting the idea of schemes *organizing* the world, he points out that such a story presupposes distinct entities in the world to be organized. Distinct entities in the world are called for by the meaning and use of the word ‘organize’ (you cannot organize a closet without organizing the things in it). But they do not appear to be called for by the meaning and use of the word ‘fit’. And, interestingly, on occasion Davidson seems to suggest that the world is, in fact, one of two things that does make a (true) sentence true, as in the following passage:

What Convention T, and the trite sentences it declares true, like “‘Grass is green’ spoken by an English speaker, is true if and only if grass is green” reveal is that the truth of an utterance depends on just two things: what the words as spoken mean, and how the world is arranged. There is no further relativism to a conceptual scheme, a way of viewing things, a perspective. Two interpreters, as unlike in culture, language, and point of view as you please, can disagree over whether an utterance is true, but only if they differ on how things are in the world they share, or what the utterance means.²¹

Suppose that a simple sentence ‘Smith is sitting’ is true. Then surely, given the meaning of the sentence, it is true because of “how the world is arranged”: one of the entities in the world, Smith, is sitting. Indeed, this much is given by a Davidsonian truth theory (and no appeal to an alternative set of axioms will alter this fact). So the world makes the sentence true in at least this sense: if the world had been arranged differently—i.e., if the things in the world had been arranged differently (for a world to be arranged, the things in it must be arranged)—if Smith were, say, standing, the sentence ‘Smith is sitting’ would not be true. Denying this would drain all content from the concept of truth that permeates Davidson’s writings.

There might seem to be no barrier, then, to making the scheme-content distinction viable by thinking of schemes fitting reality, for it is still open to pursue the idea that a true sentence fits the world without endorsing the (possibly hopeless) idea that it fits a particular fact. But of course there is nothing here to console the correspondence theorist. It is no more illuminating to be told that a sentence is true if and only if it corresponds to the world than it is to be told that a sentence is true if and only if it is true, states a truth, says the world is as the world is, or fits the facts. For the last of these phrases, perfectly ordinary as it is—unlike the philosopher’s invention ‘corresponds to a fact’—is just an idiom meaning ‘is true’. Indeed it is hard to resist the point that all talk of ‘facts’ is idiomatic and that the logical forms of sentences do not quantify over facts (‘it is a fact that *p*’ = ‘it is true that *p*’; ‘that’s a fact’ = ‘that’s true’; ‘the fact that *p* caused it to be the case that *q*’ involves quantification over events, and so on.²²

III. REPRESENTATIONS

If there are no individual facts, then we cannot say with any felicity that a true sentence (or belief) corresponds to, or represents a fact. When Davidson says that neither “sentences, [n]or their spoken tokens, [n]or sentence-like entities [n]or configurations in our brains can properly be called ‘representations’, since there is nothing for them to represent,”²³ he is proposing an injunction against statements of the form ‘*a* represents *b*’ wherever ‘*b*’ is meant to refer to or describe a *fact* (*situation, state of affairs, circumstance*). In this vein, no sentence, statement, utterance, mental state, computer state, painting, or photograph can be said to represent a fact.

It is important to see—as I think Rorty does not—that Davidson is not explicitly claiming that there can be no representations of *objects* or *events*. Without any charge of inconsistency, Davidson can accept the truth of many sentences of the form ‘*a* represents *b*’ where *a* is (e.g.) a painting or a sculpture and *b* is (e.g.) a person, a place, or an event (e.g., a battle). He can say

that a map of San Francisco represents San Francisco, that various marks on the map represent its streets, coastline, parks, and so on. Similar remarks apply to remarks one might make about wind-tunnel and computer-generated models of objects (e.g., aircraft and automobiles) or events (e.g., hurricanes and earthquakes). So anyone seeking an explicit argument against the existence of representations of objects and events had better look elsewhere; no such argument is to be found in Davidson's work.

I mention this because Rorty appears to want to draw more from Davidson's rejection of facts, for example when he says that 'anti-representationalism'—to which he sees Davidson as subscribing—is "the claim that *no* linguistic items represent *any* non-linguistic items".²⁴ If we are meant to take this at face value—the italics are Rorty's—then Rorty is drawing a conclusion that Davidson is not. Schematically, Rorty is ascribing to Davidson the view that there are no true sentences of the form '*a* represents *b*' where *a* is a linguistic item and *b* a non-linguistic item. But Davidson's explicit position is that there are no true sentences of this form where *a* is *anything whatsoever* and *b* is a *fact* (*situation, state-of-affairs, circumstance*); and this entails only that no linguistic items represent *facts* (etc.), not that no linguistic items represent *any* non-linguistic items. Davidson holds there are no true sentences of the form '*a* represents *b*' where '*b*' is of the form 'the fact that so-and-so' (or some similar form designed to describe a fact) because he believes he can show (by way of his collapsing argument) that there are no entities to serve as values of '*b*'; nothing can be said to represent a fact since there are no facts to be represented. It's that straightforward, and there is no overt reason to ascribe a stronger injunction to Davidson.

It is possible that Rorty wants to draw the stronger conclusion about linguistic representations because the only viable linguistic contenders for values of '*a*' are sentences and singular terms (including variables under assignments) and the only viable non-linguistic contenders for values of '*b*' are objects, events, and facts. If sentences and singular terms cannot represent facts (because there aren't any) then the only way for linguistic entities to represent non-linguistic entities is for sentences or singular terms to represent objects or events.

Davidson's collapsing argument is meant to show that any two true sentences will represent the same entity (by whatever name); so there is still no merit to the idea that sentences are representations. We are left, then, with the task of making sense of singular terms representing objects or events. One can only presume that Rorty thinks this impossible because as far as Davidsonian truth theories are concerned, no particular set of reference (i.e., satisfaction) axioms for singular terms is privileged—on Davidson's account, no complete set of truth-theoretic axioms is privileged; so the reference relation cannot be considered usefully representational.

It might be countered that the theoretical ineliminability of reference (i.e. satisfaction) within Davidsonian truth theories threatens to take the sting out of this conclusion. For while it is true that no particular set of working reference axioms is privileged, and while it is true that no philosophical account of the reference relation is invoked beyond the idea of a pairing between singular terms and objects (and events)—Davidson does not have to see reference as determined by (e.g.) description, baptism, or causal or informational chains—on his account reference is theoretically ineliminable in the sense that any adequate axiomatization for a natural language will treat names and variables (relative to sequences, and via axioms of satisfaction) as "standing for" particular objects and events. Thus the theory of meaning reveals an ontology of objects and events. We should not, I think, infer from Davidson's faith in the existence of alternative axiomatizations (containing different singular term axioms) that he means to be claiming that there is no interesting sense in which a singular term can be said to stand for, or represent an object or event. Relative to a particular axiomatization (and assignment) that is precisely what a singular term is doing.

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NOTES

1. See Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 87 (1990): 279–328.

2. Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth," p. 304. In his earlier paper "True to the Facts," *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 748–64, Davidson uses "correspondence theory" in application to theories of truth capable of serving as theories of meaning. At the same time he argues against facts by providing an argument deemed to show that all facts, if there are any, collapse into a single Great Fact. This might seem initially puzzling: if there are no facts, to what do true sentences correspond? Davidson neatly dispels puzzlement in the preface to *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984): truth theories are correspondence theories only in the "unassuming" sense that their internal workings "require that a relation between entities and expressions be characterized ('satisfaction')" (ibid. p. xv), and not in the sense that they presuppose any entities (facts) to which true sentences correspond. So a truth theory might be called a correspondence theory because of the roles played by (sequences of) *objects* and *events*: we find correspondence in the axioms, through satisfaction, but not in the theorems. We must be careful to distinguish this unassuming sense of correspondence from the sense used in

characterizing theories that appeal to *facts*. Abbreviating somewhat: we must be careful to distinguish correspondence theories that appeal to the concepts of *satisfaction by* (sequences of) individual objects and events from those theories that appeal to the concept of correspondence to facts.

In "The Structure and Content of Truth," Davidson views his earlier use of the word 'correspondence' as somewhat unfortunate and potentially misleading, and proposes, in effect, to reserve the term 'correspondence' for use in application to sentential correspondence theories. I shall follow suit. The hallmark of a 'correspondence' theory of truth, then, is the idea that a sentence (or statement) is true if there is some particular fact (state-of-affairs, situation, circumstance, or other non-linguistic entity) to which the sentence, if true, corresponds. Some correspondence theories will also involve structural correspondence between constituents of sentences and components of facts; but this is not an essential feature of correspondence theories.

3. Davidson, "The Myth of the Subjective", in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. M. Krausz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 159–72; quotation from pp. 162–63.

4. Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1974). Reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp. 183–98; page references to reprinted version.

5. *Ibid.*, 193–94.

6. R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 1991; "Twenty-Five Years After", in *The Linguistic Turn*, 2nd edition, ed. R. Rorty (London: Hackett, 1992), pp. 371–74.

7. Rorty, "Twenty-Five Years After", p. 371.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

9. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 139.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

14. Davidson, "On the Very Idea of Conceptual Scheme", p. 190.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. S. Neale, "The Philosophical Significance of Gödel's Slingshot", *Mind* no. 104 (1995), pp. 761–825; *Facing Facts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

21. Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth", p. 309.

22. See P. F. Strawson, "Truth", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1950), suppl. vol. no. 24 (reprinted in *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 190–213; and Davidson, "Causal Relations", *Journal of Philosophy* 64 (1967): 691–703.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

24. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 2.

REPLY TO STEPHEN NEALE

Stephen Neale is right that my rejection of facts as entities correspondence to which can explain truth is central to my views of truth and meaning, to my rejection of the scheme-content distinction, representationalism, and much more. I am therefore grateful to him for exploring the argument against facts on which I have rested so much. His essay, "The Philosophical Significance of Gödel's Slingshot" (Neale 1995), shows in convincing detail how awkward it is to evade the argument. It can be done, as Russell's semantics did it, by making properties parts of facts and so the entities that correspond to predicates. This is a course against which I have argued on the grounds that it cannot be incorporated into a satisfactory theory or definition of truth, and entities that are made up in part of abstract entities can hardly be thought of as empirical truth-makers. Gödel's argument (an analogue of which Alonzo Church attributed to Frege) provides the best and clearest reason to abandon facts. It can be said to make explicit arguments to be found in C. I. Lewis, Strawson, and others who had no such formal considerations in mind.

The Slingshot (given its assumptions) doesn't prove there are no facts; it proves that there is at most one fact. It is this that makes appeal to facts useless for explaining truth, since the predicate "corresponds to The One Fact" might as well be considered an unstructured word, and we already have an appropriate predicate: "is true". The same can be said about representation. If there is only one thing to represent there is nothing interesting to do the representing, nor can the notion of representation allow us to make distinctions among the items that do the representing. Of course, the entities I am talking about here are sentences or utterances or beliefs, because these are the propositional entities that are most naturally thought to present, or re-present, something. Maps and pictures, as Neale remarks, can legitimately be said to represent what they picture or map. Many philosophers and others also speak of words as representing the things they name or describe. I have no strong objection to this use of the word, though "naming" and "describing" seem better ways to express the relation between names and descriptions and what

they name or describe. I do, however, bridle at the idea that any expression *re*-presents any object or event. The only direct manifestations of language are utterances and inscriptions, and it is we who imbue them with significance. So language is at best an abstraction, and cannot be a medium through which we take in the world nor an intermediary between us and reality. It is like a sense organ, an organizational feature of people which allows them to perceive things as objects with a location in a public space and time, or as events with causes and effects (Davidson 1997).

The Slingshot argument concludes that there is one fact at most, but it says nothing about that one. Frege called it The True, and took true sentences to name it. Many of us don't like the idea that sentences are names. But can't we say that true sentences represent, or better, correspond to, or are made true by, the world, as Neale suggests? As long as this way of talking isn't thought to explain anything about the concept of truth, it is harmless and may even make those happy who want to be sure that the truth of empirical sentences depends on something more than words and speakers. I'll come back to this point in a moment. Meanwhile there is the question raised by Neale: why isn't the fact that the world can be said to make our sentences true or false enough to justify the scheme-content distinction and conceptual relativism? Why, he asks, did I say in "The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" that "Nothing, . . . no *thing*, makes our sentences or theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true"? That was a mistake. I was right about experience and surface irritations, but I gave no argument against saying the world makes some sentences true. After all, this is exactly as harmless as saying a sentence is true because it corresponds to The One Fact, and just as empty. But isn't the pair, language (meaning the sentences of a language) and world, a fair version of the scheme and content pair? Maybe we can't locate a part of the world that makes an individual sentence true, but the world itself makes the true sentences true and is in some imprecise sense the subject matter of empirical sentences. Still harmless and trivial. The catch is that different languages vary, so if we consider such totalities of sentences as conceptual schemes, we seem to have reinstated conceptual relativism (and we get a lot of schemes if languages are construed as idiolects that differ from person to person and time to time). This is correct. But it reinstates conceptual relativism of a mild sort that I have always accepted. Schemes differ, but very little in their basic conceptual resources (see my reply to Evnine). Neale is right, though, that this requires a separate argument: the essential sameness of schemes does not follow from the Slingshot.

I find nothing to disagree with in what Neale says about my views on the need, in a theory of truth or meaning, to map some expressions onto objects and events in the world. This is one of the clear lessons of Tarski's truth definitions. Tarski's definitions of truth also bring out in a special way the

relation between such mappings and truth. Tarski introduces the notion of a sequence, which is a mapping of all variables (infinite in number) on to entities in the universe of discourse. He then gives a recursive account of the circumstances under which open sentences of any degree of complexity are satisfied by a sequence; in effect satisfaction is a fancy version of reference under an interpretation. The definition of the concept of a sequence can easily be extended to include names, in which case it maps each name on to some entity. Sequences thus distinguish clearly among predicates (except those that are coreferring) and between names (except those that name the same thing). These distinctions are preserved through the recursion on open sentences. But true (closed) sentences are defined as those satisfied by every sequence; all distinctions made by individual words disappear. Since every language has, in effect, general quantifiers, names, and predicates, what we learn is that if we follow Tarski's methodology, the functions of these expressions can be explained only by relating expressions to things. There is not, as Quine has shown, a unique interpretation of the concept of reference (or satisfaction), but this does not affect the conclusion that we cannot explain how language works without invoking an ontology and assigning objects to singular terms. There cannot in my opinion be a language that does not deal with particular entities (Davidson 1995). This is one reason I long ago asked Quine whether his language, which did away with the notation of quantifiers and variables ("Variables Explained Away", Quine 1966), could be given a semantics that dispensed with ontology. The answer was that it could not. Rorty has misunderstood me if he believes I ever thought otherwise, though I confess those three little words ("not the world") were seriously misleading.

D. D.

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