

## On the Very Idea of a Metaphorical Scheme

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In this paper I would like to summon and prosecute together the two central theses of two papers by Donald Davidson. In the first, *On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme*, Davidson claims that there are no conceptual schemes, let alone incommensurable ones; in the second, *What Metaphors Mean*, he claims that metaphors have nothing more than mere literal meaning. Now, by summoning and prosecuting together these two theses, I will thereby also defend two theses of my own--naturally, the contradictories of those of Davidson: first, that there are conceptual schemes, even incommensurable ones; and second, that metaphors have more than mere literal meaning. Furthermore, by defending these two theses together, I ultimately hope here to defend a third thesis concerning their interdependence: that there are conceptual schemes, even incommensurable ones, precisely *because* metaphors have more than mere literal meaning, just as metaphors have more than mere literal meaning precisely *because* they are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes, even incommensurable ones. In the end, then, as I hope to show, Davidson's two theses must be prosecuted together because their failures are likewise interdependent.

### Davidson on Conceptual Schemes

In order to argue that there are no conceptual schemes, let alone incommensurable ones, Davidson begins by characterizing the idea of a conceptual scheme. Following writers like Whorf who believe that there are indeed conceptual schemes, even incommensurable ones, he does this with two criteria, an existence criterion and an individuation, or incommensurability, criterion. First of all, he observes, a conceptual scheme would exist

insofar as, and only insofar as, there were something to mediate between people and the objects of their experience. Thus, believers in conceptual schemes call them, for example, 'organizing forces for experience,' 'systems of categories that give form to the formless data of sensation,' or 'points of view from which we survey the passing scene' (pp.66,72). Secondly, he observes, because conceptual schemes would always be embodied in languages, one conceptual scheme would be incommensurable with another insofar as, and only insofar as, the languages in which these conceptual schemes were embodied were non-intertranslatable (p.67,68).

Davidson's first argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme suggests that these two criteria which characterize that idea conflict. For the existence criterion, on the one hand, requires that if there are conceptual schemes, there must be something in common between all of them that is 'organized', 'categorized', or 'surveyed', whether it be called 'experience', 'the formless data of sensation', or 'the passing scene'. However, the incommensurability criterion, on the other hand, requires that if there are incommensurable conceptual schemes, they must be embodied in non-intertranslatable languages. But, Davidson argues, if there is something in common between even apparently incommensurable conceptual schemes, they cannot be genuinely incommensurable, since the languages which embody them should be intertranslatable by reference to this very thing they have in common.

Let us consider a simple example of intertranslation in order to elicit the model of translation with which Davidson works in the more complex cases of apparently non-intertranslatable languages. Arabic has several words which finely discriminate that thing for which we, in English, have only one word, 'camel'. But, Davidson would say, our languages are nonetheless intertranslatable, since we can intertranslate them by reference to "an ontology common to the two languages," (p.74) in this case, to that *thing* about which we all speak, under whatever name or description. In this way, so long as we English-speakers and those Arabic-speakers can select the same object or objects about

which we commonly speak, we can establish that their several Arabic words for the camel can be translated by our one English word 'camel', just as our one English word 'camel' can be translated by any one of their words for the camel. Notice, though, that the process by which we mutually select the object or objects about which we commonly speak will have to be linguistic in some way or other; after all, we will make this mutual selection by mutually understood description or significant gestures. In order to intertranslate, then, or to even establish that a failure of communication that requires intertranslation has occurred, we must already share some descriptions or significant gestures. Thus, as Davidson writes, "a background of generally successful translation provides what is needed to make the failures intelligible." (p.74) In the case of camel trading between British imperialists and nomadic Arabs, the significant gesture of pointing no doubt sufficed for this purpose.

Now, following the structure of this simple example, let us consider, with Davidson, the model of intertranslation it assumes on analogy with an organized closet. On the one hand, the contents of a closet can be likened to 'experience', or 'the formless data of sensation', insofar as they are those things which are organized. On the other hand, the prosaic schemes according to which different people organize these contents can be likened to 'organizing forces', or 'systems of categories'--in short, to conceptual schemes--insofar as they are those things which organize. Yet, as we will see, such prosaic schemes cannot be incommensurable, so to speak, because they can always be commensurated by reference to the individual contents of the closet.

For example, a wife likes to organize the closet that she shares with her husband according to scheme *A*, in which shirts are together with other shirts, shoes with other shoes, and so on; but her husband likes to organize the same closet according to scheme *B*, in which red items are together with other red items, blue items with other blue items, and so on. These schemes might appear incommensurable, so to speak, since the item closest to the door in one scheme could be different from the item closest to the door in

the other scheme, so that the husband, thinking the closet to be organized according to scheme *B*, might send his daughter to fetch the item closest to the door, thinking this to be his slippers, when unbeknownst to him his wife has since re-organized the closet according to scheme *A*, in which the item closest to the door is now her silk kimono. Such a misunderstanding would be analogous to a failure of translation, and perhaps as embarrassing.

Yet the two prosaic schemes of our example can be commensurated, so to speak, by directly correlating how an item is organized in one scheme with how it is organized in the other--by drawing lines on a map, say, from a depiction of its location in scheme *B*, through a depiction of the item itself, to a depiction of its location in scheme *A*. After all, if the daughter had such a map, she could find the location closest to the door within her father's preferred scheme, follow the line from it through a depiction of the item found there, to a depiction of this same item's location within her mother's preferred scheme, fold the map, look for his slippers there and bring them to him. Such a daughter, with such a map, would be analogous to a translator, and might even promote the sort of peace such people sometimes do.

Davidson's first argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme assumes, as we will see, this sort of cartographic model of intertranslation. To begin with, he argues that if there is something in common between even apparently incommensurable conceptual schemes--be it 'experience', 'the formless data of sensation', or 'the passing scene'--they cannot be genuinely incommensurable, since they can be commensurated, just as the languages which embody them can be intertranslated, by reference to this very thing they have in common, whatever it is. So, as with the analogy to the closet, if one person organizes them according to scheme *A*, and another person organizes the objects of experience according to scheme *B*, these two schemes can be commensurated, just as the languages which embody them can be intertranslated, by directly correlating how an object of experience is organized in one scheme with how it is organized in the other.

Now it might seem at first that such direct correlation can be achieved, as with the analogy to the closet, by drawing lines on a map--a no-doubt complex conceptual map--from a depiction of the object's location within scheme *A*, through a depiction of the object-itself, to a depiction of the object's location within scheme *B*. But there is a fatal disanalogy between the correlation of locations of items of clothing within different prosaic schemes and the correlation of locations of objects of experience within different conceptual schemes. For as Davidson himself observes, the very idea of a conceptual scheme presumes that insofar as one thinks, one speaks a language, and insofar as one speaks a language, one occupies a conceptual scheme--the very conceptual scheme that that language embodies. Therefore, there is "no chance that someone can take up a vantage point for comparing conceptual schemes by temporarily shedding his own." (p.68) In other words, there is no chance that someone can take up a vantage point from which to experience the object-itself.

According to the very idea of a conceptual scheme, then, the object itself, or the formless data of sensation, or whatever it is that even incommensurable conceptual schemes have in common, is necessarily inaccessible. As a result, there is no chance that anyone could draw a map commensurating apparently incommensurable conceptual schemes, or intertranslate apparently non-intertranslatable languages, even if there were something in common between them which they organized, systematized, surveyed, or described. For unlike English speakers and Arab speakers trying to intertranslate their words for the camel, and unlike the daughter trying to commensurate her parents' prosaic schemes, when someone tries to commensurate apparently incommensurable conceptual schemes, or intertranslate apparently non-intertranslatable languages, there is not "an ontology common to the two languages" (p.74). And yet, following the existence criterion, there is nonetheless something common to the two languages--namely, the collection of objects-themselves, the objects-as-they-exist-outside-their-organization-by-particular-languages-or-conceptual schemes. We must therefore distinguish between the

ontology of a conceptual scheme, on the one hand, and the beings that are organized by it, on the other: the former is accessible to those, but presumably only those, who inhabit that conceptual scheme, while the latter are inaccessible to all. But this is a distinction Davidson overlooks, betraying an implicit and thus undefended verificationism--that is, "an inference from the fact that we cannot *verify* that something is the case to the conclusion that we cannot conceive as a genuine possibility that it *might* be the case." (Blackburn, p.61; cf. Davidson, p.77). In the absence of arguments for this verificationism, though, we should reject this first argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme.

This, however, is only Davidson's first such argument; he marshals a second that is initially more persuasive. It begins by highlighting the following interdependence of attributions of belief and attributions of meaning. When we meet someone who speaks a different language than we do, whether this difference be complete or partial, we cannot make discriminations, let alone fine ones, among his or her beliefs unless we already know what he or she means by the sentences he or she uses to report those beliefs; yet neither can we make discriminations, let alone fine ones, among the meanings of his or her sentences unless we already know what beliefs he or she uses them to report (pp.68-9,77). In order to see this interdependence, let us consider the following simple example from Davidson himself (p.77).

You see a ketch sailing by and a stranger says to you, "Look at the handsome yawl." (Ketches characteristically have larger mizzen sails than yawls.) You are now faced with the following interpretive choice: *either* the stranger mistakenly believes that the mizzen sail of the boat is smaller than it actually is, and thus uses the word 'yawl' with its correct meaning--that is, for boats with characteristically smaller mizzen sails than ketches--*or* the stranger correctly believes that the mizzen sail is the size it actually is, but thus uses the word 'yawl' mistakenly--that is, for boats with characteristically larger mizzen sails than ketches. In many circumstances, of course, this choice need not be

arbitrary. For if, on the one hand, you know that this stranger is a sailor with bad vision, you should attribute to her sentence the correct meaning, while attributing to her the mistaken belief. Yet if, on the other hand, you know that this is a novice sailor, one with good vision, who has heard others talk about ketches and yawls but never studied the differences himself, you should attribute to his sentence the mistaken meaning, while attributing to him the correct belief.

In these ways and others, then, one alternative may gain favour over the other. Notice, though, how this favour results from your other assumptions about the stranger, and, most often, from your other attributions of belief and meaning to him or her. For you might once have assumed that she were a sailor as a result of things that she had earlier said, and thus of the beliefs and meanings that you had earlier attributed to her and her sentences; likewise, you might once have assumed that he were a novice as a result of things that he had earlier said, and thus of the beliefs and meanings that you had earlier attributed to him and his sentences. Thus notice, furthermore, that we not only attribute belief and meaning together, but also that we do not do this one sentence at a time; rather, we attribute them together by casting our nets widely, gathering in as many sentences as possible, and attributing meanings to them and beliefs to their speakers all together. For if the stranger whom we once assumed to be a sailor began wearing corrective glasses, but still consistently mistook ketches for yawls, we might attribute other meanings to her earlier sentences and other beliefs to her both then and now. Likewise, if the stranger whom we once assumed to be a novice began discoursing upon the history of mizzen sails, we might attribute other meanings to his earlier sentence and other beliefs to him both then and now.

Yet even such wide interpretation seems threatened by the same arbitrariness which threatened the narrower interpretation it was supposed to supplement. For when we cast our nets widely, gathering in as many sentences as possible, our attributions of meanings to such sentences still depend upon our attributions of beliefs to the people who

speak them, just as our attributions of beliefs to the people who speak them still depend upon our attributions of meaning to the sentences themselves. This problem, a problem of circularity, becomes especially acute in situations of radical translation, wherein we must begin by attributing either belief or meaning first, but obviously cannot do so without having already attributed the other. Davidson recognizes this circle and proposes to break into it by accepting "very general attitudes towards sentences as the basic evidence" (p.77). In other words, Davidson assumes that gestures like nodding and smiling, for example, might mean approval, whereas gestures like shaking-the-head-from-side-to-side and frowning, for example, might mean disapproval. Armed with such assumptions, then, the radical interpreter can exploit these gesture meanings in order to learn about strangers' beliefs, using these beliefs, in turn, to learn about strangers' more complex meanings, and so on, until an adequate attribution of both belief and meaning has been achieved.

Now, gestures of approval and disapproval vary from culture to culture: shaking-the-head-from-side-to-side, for example, means disapproval for us, whereas it meant approval in ancient Athens. Davidson recognizes this variability and counsels the interpreter to select and evaluate very general attitudes towards sentences by his famous principle of charity. According to this principle, "the only possibility at the start is to assume general agreement on beliefs." (p.78; cf. p.79) Thus, whichever gestures can be correlated with sentences which the interpreter thinks to be true he or she should assume, using the principle of charity, to mean approval; and contrarily, whichever gestures can be correlated with sentences which the interpreter thinks to be false he or she should assume, using the principle of charity, to mean disapproval. More generally, when the interpreter exploits these meanings in order to learn about strangers' other beliefs, and he or she uses these other beliefs to learn about strangers' more complex meanings, he or she must always seek to attribute to these strangers as many true beliefs as possible--that is to say, as many beliefs-which-he-or-she-assumes-to-be-true as possible. Interpretation will

not have succeeded, "until we have successfully established a systematic correlation of sentences held true with sentences held true." (p.78)

One might object, therefore, that this principle of charity precludes disagreement between speakers of different languages--that is, in situations of complete translation--or even between speakers of the same language--that is, in situations of partial translation. After all, it seems, even when you and I, speakers of the same language, disagree with one another, I may apply the principle of charity and assume that you mean yes by 'no' and no by 'yes'. So rigorous an application of the principle would, however, defeat itself. For imagine the ripples it would send out to my attributions of belief to you in other areas of your life, areas where the very same principle would no doubt require me to assume that you there mean yes by 'yes' and no by 'no', reflecting waves back to flatten its abuse in the case of our original disagreement. And yet, in some isolated areas, as when I assume that you mean ketch by 'yawl' or yawl by 'ketch', the principle may indeed occlude disagreement. Nevertheless, Davidson replies, this second argument requires the principle of charity as a necessary condition of communication, and, thereby, a necessary condition of meaningful disagreement, as well as meaningful agreement (p.78). If some minor disagreements are occluded, he would add, this is the price we must pay in order to insure that all disagreements are not precluded. Accordingly, then, when we use it, "we could not be in a position to judge that others had concepts or beliefs radically different from our own." (p.79)

This second argument is an argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme, Davidson thinks, because incommensurable conceptual schemes are supposed to be networks of radically different beliefs, just as non-intertranslatable languages are supposed to be spoken by people with radically different beliefs, but the principle of charity seems now to preclude us from judging that we have encountered such networks or people. As a result, Davidson concludes, "we have found no intelligible basis on which it can be said that schemes are different." (p.79) Yet even if we accept the principle of

charity, and grant with Davidson that we could not be in a position to *judge* that we have encountered such networks or people, we need not grant furthermore that we could not *be* in a position to encounter such networks or people. We must therefore distinguish between the existence of an incommensurable conceptual scheme, on the one hand, and our judgment or verification that an incommensurable scheme exists, on the other. Once again, this is a distinction Davidson overlooks, betraying his implicit and thus undefended verificationism. In the absence of arguments for this verificationism, again, we should reject this second argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme.

And yet even if this verificationism could be defended, we might still reject this second argument. For, accepting this verificationism, as well as the principle of charity, we might nonetheless be in a position to judge that we have encountered networks of, or people with, radically different beliefs. After all, as other commentators have observed, we may distinguish verification from the vantage-point of one's home language or conceptual scheme, on the one hand, and verification effected by abandoning the vantage-point of one's home language or conceptual scheme and simultaneously adopting the vantage-point of a non-intertranslatable language or incommensurable conceptual scheme, on the other (cf. MacIntyre, pp.374-5; Blackburn, pp.61-2). Let us call the first sort of verification *translation*, and the second sort *understanding*. If we accept verificationism, as well as the principle of charity, then, verification by translation alone would indeed preclude the existence of non-intertranslatable languages or incommensurable schemes. But verification by understanding would not.

So long as it is indeed possible to abandon one's home language or conceptual scheme and adopt an alien language or conceptual scheme, understanding, as distinguished from translation, should be possible. For understanding does not imply the noticed impossibility that one occupy a vantage-point outside any languages or conceptual schemes; it merely implies that people are flexible enough to simultaneously abandon and adopt languages and conceptual schemes, even non-intertranslatable and

incommensurable ones. What, then, is involved in adopting an alien language or conceptual scheme that makes it different from trying merely to translate such a language or scheme? Before this criticism of Davidson's second argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme can persuade, we should have an answer to this question. Such an answer emerges quite naturally when we summon and prosecute Davidson's central thesis about metaphors.

### **Davidson on Metaphor**

Concerning metaphors, Davidson wishes specifically to argue that they have no special meanings beyond their literal meanings. More generally, though, he wishes to argue that metaphors have no cognitive content whatsoever beyond that of their literal meanings--that is to say, there is nothing beyond their literal meanings "that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the message" (p.448). In order to fulfill both of these wishes, Davidson marshals three arguments designed to show that, "as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meaning of words." (p.444)

First of all, he claims, if there is a special metaphorical meaning, this meaning should disappear when the metaphor dies and becomes merely literal language (p.447). However, he adds, there is no difference in meaning between a dead metaphor and the same expression when it is used freshly. After all, the now-literal expression "He is harrowed," for example, means, and means only, that the person in question is disturbed. But when Shakespeare had Horatio freshly say that Hamlet's ghost harrowed him with fear and wonder, as if the ghost were a farmer who drew a harrow made of fear and wonder across his mind, would the then-metaphorical expression "He is harrowed" have meant anything more than it means now--namely, that the person in question is

disturbed? Davidson thinks not, and consequently concludes that there is no special metaphorical meaning. Notice, therefore, that any objection to his first argument against special metaphorical meaning will have to show that some meaning does indeed disappear when a metaphor dies.

Secondly, he claims, if there is a special metaphorical meaning, there should likewise be a special simile meaning. After all, he observes, a simile "may make us think deep thoughts, just as a metaphor does," (p.447) and when we choose a simile rather than a metaphor--as when we say that someone *is like* a pig rather than saying that she *is* a pig--we merely choose to communicate the same idea in a different way, since the only difference between a simile and a metaphor, Davidson thinks, is that all similes are trivially true, because anything is like anything else in at least one respect, whereas most metaphors are patently false, because, for example, no person is a pig (p.445). Yet there is no such thing as special simile meaning; consequently, Davidson concludes, there is no such thing as special metaphorical meaning. Notice, therefore, that any objection to his second argument against special metaphorical meaning will have to show that metaphors are different from similes in more than the simple respect that he highlights.

Thirdly, he claims, attempts to paraphrase metaphors always fail, since the paraphrase is always weaker in some way than the original. Consider the example he provides: "A famous critic said that Tolstoy was a 'great moralizing infant'" (p.440). Can this metaphor possibly be paraphrased? We might begin by specifying the properties which the adult Tolstoy shared with normal infants, but even if we could specify exactly those meant by the critic, that is, even if there were a determinate number of such properties, it still seems that such a list would be weaker than the original metaphor. And yet, Davidson wonders, if there were a special metaphorical meaning, why should such failure occur? After all, it seems, if there were a special metaphorical meaning--so that each metaphor masked a unique cognitive content: a belief, an intention or a representation of some fact--an adroit paraphraser should be able to capture the force of a

metaphor by unmasking its unique content. Advocates of special metaphorical meaning seem incapable, then, of explaining the failure of paraphrasing. At any rate, Davidson believes that he can explain this failure by appeal to merely literal meaning. In order to do so, he begins by distinguishing between what words *mean* and what they *do*, although he does not explain this distinction, except insofar as it pertains to metaphors (p.439).

Metaphors, he claims, do not have anything more than mere literal meanings, but they nonetheless do much more than mere literal language. For example, when Shakespeare has Horatio say that Hamlet's ghost "harrows me with fear and wonder," these words *mean* no more than that the ghost draws a harrow made of fear and wonder across him, a proposition patently false. Nevertheless, these metaphorical words *do* much more than semantically equivalent literal words would have done. After all, compare Horatio saying that Hamlet's ghost "harrows me with fear and wonder," on the one hand, with him saying that Hamlet's ghost "disturbs me," on the other. The metaphorical words cause us to imagine Horatio as a field, which Hamlet's ghost plows with a harrow that is somehow made of fear and wonder. Now this final element of our image, a harrow that is somehow made of fear and wonder, is of course odd, and thereby indeterminate, so that we might dwell upon it further, even embellishing it in innumerable ways according to our own imaginative inclinations. In sum, then, the metaphorical words are causally effective, indeterminately provoking in those who appreciate them multifarious images, feelings, or other thoughts. Contrarily, the literal words would not have been so causally effective. (Although even these so-called literal words, "disturbs me," provoke in some an image of Horatio as a calm pool of water that the stone of Hamlet's ghost disturbs. This subtlety does not, however, impugn Davidson's analysis, since, for him, the status of an expression as a metaphor might depend only upon the *degree* to which it is causally effective.)

Davidson thus argues that paraphrasing metaphors usually, and perhaps even always, fails because paraphrasers seek to expose some belief or intention hidden within,

or some fact coyly represented by, the metaphor (p.447-8). But, as he has hoped to show, metaphors do not hide beliefs or intentions, neither do they coyly represent facts; instead, they indeterminately provoke multifarious images, feelings or other thoughts in those who appreciate them--images, feelings and thoughts that are sometimes too indeterminate and multifarious as to be possibly recorded. Therefore, by the hypothesis that metaphors have no special *meanings* but nonetheless *do* something special, Davidson seems to have shown why paraphrasing a metaphor is so difficult, and perhaps even impossible to accomplish. In his words, "The common error is to fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into the metaphor itself." (p.447)

Accordingly, then, a good paraphrase should not aspire to unmask some belief or intention masked by a metaphor, nor should it aspire to expose some fact coyly represented by that metaphor; instead, a good paraphrase should aspire to provoke in those more lazy or ignorant than the paraphraser some of the same images, feelings or thoughts that the original metaphor provoked in him or her (p.448).

Now, the goal of Davidson's third argument against special metaphorical meaning, remember, was to show that one feature of metaphors--that is, that they cannot possibly be paraphrased--not only *may*, but also *must*, be explained by appeal to merely literal meanings of words (p.444). And it seems that he has indeed shown by this third argument that this one feature *may* be explained by appeal to merely literal meanings of words, but he has certainly not shown by it that this one feature *must* be so explained, except insofar as he has suggested that if there were special metaphorical meaning--so that each metaphor masked a unique cognitive content: a belief, an intention or a representation of some fact--an adroit paraphraser should be able to, but cannot, capture the force of a metaphor by unmasking its unique content. Notice, therefore, that any objection to his third argument against special metaphorical meaning will have to show, at least, that the failure of paraphrasing *may* be explained by appeal to some meanings beyond the merely literal--so that, if the objections against his first two arguments against

special metaphorical meaning are decisive, the hypothesis of special metaphorical meaning will not have suffered at all from Davidson's attack. And yet, a more powerful objection to his third argument against special metaphorical meaning--an objection that would not only vindicate this hypothesis from his attack, but also give us positive reason to endorse it--will have to show that the failure of paraphrasing *must* be explained by appeal to some meanings beyond the merely literal. By proffering a competing analysis of metaphors, that of Lakoff and Johnson, the next section of this paper aims to show, among other things, just that.

### **Metaphorical Schemes**

In order to appreciate the significance and superiority of this competing analysis of metaphors we must begin obliquely, by distinguishing, with Alasdair MacIntyre, two sorts of languages: thick and thin (p.374).

Thick languages, on the one hand, are strongly tied by their vocabulary or other linguistic devices to a particular set of beliefs, whereas thin languages, on the other, are only weakly so tied. Now, as limiting cases of this distinction, let us abstractly present the thickest and thinnest languages which we can abstractly imagine--abstractly, we must say, since such languages might not be concrete possibilities. On the one hand, we can abstractly imagine a language so thick that its vocabulary or other linguistic devices grapple it to a particular set of beliefs with hoops of steel, so to speak, so that, were such a language concretely possible, it would be impossible to express within it anything but that particular set of beliefs. On the other hand, we can abstractly imagine a language so thin that its vocabulary or other linguistic devices liberate it from all particular sets of belief, so that, were such a language concretely possible, it would be possible to express within it any set of beliefs whatsoever. This section aims to show, among other things,

that an actual language like present-day English is thicker than this latter limiting case. In other words, this section aims to show that an actual language like present-day English is to some degree tied by its vocabulary or other linguistic devices to a particular set of beliefs. In order to introduce this aim more sharply, though, let us begin by briefly considering, in contrast, a language which some say to be thicker than present-day English, indeed thicker than most present-day languages: the Hebrew of, say, *Jeremiah*.

Now the concept of divinity within present-day English is only very weakly tied to any particular set of beliefs. After all, in a theological debate between, say, an atheist, a deist and theists of various denominations, each may use the English word 'god', or perhaps 'God', and only rarely would any one of them find that word inadequate for expressing his or her beliefs about divinity. As another symptom of the same condition, when we translate the following line of Horace into our language there is no obvious difficulty: "Caelo tonantem credidimus Jovem regnare: praesens divus habebitur Augustus . . ." For, following MacIntyre, we can translate it in this way: "We have believed that Juppiter thundering reigns in the sky; Augustus will be held a present divinity . . ." (p.380). And this translation does no obvious injustice to the Latin, precisely because the present-day English concept of divinity is only very weakly tied to a particular set of beliefs.

Contrarily, the concept of divinity within the Hebrew of *Jeremiah* is so strongly tied to a particular set of beliefs, MacIntyre claims, that any translation of the same line into that language would have done obvious injustice to the Latin. In fact, he claims, such a line "could only have emerged in Hebrew as at once false and blasphemous" (p.380). And yet, we might ask, if we do not understand the Hebrew of *Jeremiah*, why should we believe this claim? Would it not rather have been the case, properly speaking, that a Jew of that era would *him or herself* have found the line of Horace false and blasphemous, not that the line could only have emerged as false and blasphemous in the Hebrew *itself*? MacIntyre does not answer either of these questions, since he both ignores the possibility

proposed by the second one and curiously omits an explanation of the claim queried by the first. His omission, however, is advised. After all, such an explanation would have to be in present-day English, so that it would have to begin with something like the following words, "This line could only have emerged in Hebrew as at once false and blasphemous because . . .," where the ellipsis would be filled by an explanation in the words of a language within which, as we have seen, this line does not emerge as false and blasphemous.

Now, as Davidson has noted, Whorf and Kuhn encountered similar problems in their separate attempts to defend the existence of incommensurable conceptual schemes. For Whorf tried to explain how Hopi metaphysics was and is incommensurable with our own metaphysics, just as Kuhn tried to explain how the pre-scientific-revolution paradigm was and is incommensurable with our own paradigm, each using present-day English to do so--present-day English, with its own unique metaphysical, post-scientific-revolution idiom, and the incommensurable conceptual scheme they supposed that idiom to embody (Davidson, p.67). It seems, then, that their explanations would have been self-refuting, just as it seems that any attempt to explain in present-day English why the line of Horace could only have emerged in Hebrew as at once false and blasphemous would be impossible. In order to show, however, that such explanations must be neither self-refuting nor impossible, let us consider another, less obscure, example of a thick language and some of the thick concepts it embodies: names.

Within thick languages, MacIntyre observes, people are characteristically not named by merely referential expressions, as people are characteristically named within thin languages, but instead by expressions that are both referential and descriptive. Within thick languages, accordingly, the name of a particular person not only selects him or her as an individual--so that someone may refer by it to him or her, and refer by it to him or her alone--but that name also describes him or her as, first of all, a member of a general set of things, and, secondly, as occupying a specific position within that general

set of things. So, for example, on Tory island--a small, predominantly Irish-speaking island off the northwest coast--people have names characteristic of a thick language like Irish. Thus, first of all, they have names that describe them, generally, as people. (We, of course, might find the need for such a description ridiculous; yet inhabitants of Tory island must find it more ridiculous that some English-speakers share their names with months-of-the-year, galaxies, plants, and many other non-human things.) But secondly, and more importantly, the inhabitants of Tory island have names that describe them, specifically, as particular sorts of people: as members of a particular lineage, going back at least four generations, or as figures of authority, legitimate or illegitimate, etc. (see Fox ff.; cf. MacIntyre, pp.377-8).

Notice, then, that these names are thick. After all, they are each strongly tied to a particular set of beliefs: in the least, beliefs about the nature of kinship and the status it grants or denies, and often beliefs about the nature of authority and the status it grants as well. Consequently, no mere *translation* of such a name into our language would provide enough information to convey to us an *understanding* of it, since those strong ties to these beliefs would thereby be lost (Fox, no.192). Consider, for instance, the following name: Máire Ní Dhubhghain bean Shéamius Mhic Ruadhraigh. We cannot understand it, not only because we do not know what it literally means, but also because we do not appreciate the information which its literal meaning could convey about the person in question, were we given a sufficient amount of other knowledge. For a literal translation telling us that the person in question is Mary, daughter of Doohan, wife of James the son of Rory may teach us the literal meaning of the name, but it nevertheless conveys to us no real understanding of it.

What is required in order to convey that understanding, then, in addition to a literal translation, is a gloss: a footnote that explains the beliefs which such a name embodies, and thus the genealogical and political significance, for an inhabitant of Tory island, of being the daughter of Doohan and the wife of James the son of Rory. And yet,

for most purposes, such an explanation will require moving beyond the beliefs that this particular name embodies to further explain, first of all, the whole scheme of naming itself in which this particular name gains its meaning, and therefore, secondly, the practices of kinship and authority from which this whole scheme of naming gains its meaning. In sum, then, someone off Tory island will often need more than a short footnote to understand such a name; he or she will need a work of anthropology.

With similar works of anthropology, though, Whorf, Kuhn and our imaginary translator of Horace into the Hebrew of *Jeremiah* might have conveyed to their respective readers, in their own language, understanding of the thoughts of their respective aliens. If so, such understanding would have been sufficient to show that it is not impossible to make the thoughts of an untranslatable language or incommensurable scheme known to thinkers of another language or conceptual scheme. For such *understanding* would not thereby have refuted the claim that those languages are untranslatable or those conceptual schemes are incommensurable, since neither Whorf nor Kuhn nor our imaginary translator of Horace either did acquire and convey, or would have acquired or conveyed, such understanding by mere *translation*--that is, by seeking to correlate expressions in their respective alien languages with expressions in their respective home languages. Each did acquire or convey, or would have acquired and conveyed, this understanding by abandoning as impossible such a search, following instead the path of the anthropologist, seeking thus to appreciate and explain, first of all, the scheme of concepts of the alien language in which these respective individual concepts gained their meaning, and therefore, secondly, the practices of that alien culture from which those respective schemes of concepts gained their meaning.

We are now in a position, then, to see how MacIntyre could have explained, even in present-day English, his claim that the line of Horace could only have emerged in the Hebrew of *Jeremiah* as false and blasphemous. For, if challenged, he could have filled this omission with a work of linguistic anthropology, or, more accurately, a work of

comparative linguistic anthropology, with one section about the concept of divinity in Latin, another about the concept of divinity in Hebrew, and a third comparing the two. His omission, therefore, was indeed advised. After all, his point was similar to ours, and we do not seek to show anything about either Latin or Hebrew in particular; rather, we seek to show that any actual language, including even present-day English, is to some degree tied by its vocabulary or other linguistic devices to a particular set of beliefs. Such a point could probably be made more sharply by such a work of comparative linguistic anthropology, but perhaps it can be made more economically by a little examination of our own language and the thick concepts it disguises.

A thick language, because it is strongly tied to a particular set of beliefs, is always spoken by a community which, to a large degree, shares that particular set of beliefs--like the Irish of Tory island, the Hopi, or the ancient Jews. Consequently, if we seek thick concepts within a predominantly thin language like English--which is spoken by many different communities, and even by cosmopolites who are more or less without communities--we must examine the dialects of those communities within the English-speaking world that nonetheless share many beliefs.

Theoretical disciplines like physics are among such communities. After all, even though there are disputed beliefs within the discipline of physics, so that there are even many things about the physical world which some physicists believe and others do not--and why else would there be a discipline of physics?--there are nonetheless also many shared beliefs within that discipline. Not surprisingly, then, we find within it many concepts that function in a way similar to names on Tory island, in that they cannot be directly translated into English--that is, into lay English--while conveying any understanding. For like names on Tory island, each such concept is a part of a scheme, a physical theory, which is strongly tied to a particular set of beliefs. Similarly, then, in order to convey understanding of any one such concept to a lay-person, what is required is a gloss: a footnote that explains, first of all, the physical theory in which such a

concept gains its meaning, and secondly, therefore, the physical world from which that theory itself gains its meaning. In sum, then, the lay-person will often need more than a short footnote to understand such concept; he or she will need a lesson in physics. As Simon Blackburn writes, for example, "A physicist can only show what he means by spin, charge, field, and so on by having the learner come to understand the overall theory." (p.62)

Needless to say, physics, and specifically quantum physics, presents a very striking example of this phenomenon because it is so alien to the lay-person. Yet most other theoretical disciplines present many other, only somewhat less-striking, examples. Thus a psychologist, a Freudian for example, can only show what she means by complex, libido, repression and so on by having the learner come to understand her overall theory. For these psychological concepts gain their meaning from this overall theory, just as this overall theory gains its meaning from the mental phenomena about which it theorizes. Although Freudianism with its concepts, unlike quantum physics with its concepts, is not so alien to us because it has to some degree entered the idiom of English, as well as other European languages; indeed, these three terms are quite common in everyday English conversation. As a result of this familiarity, the scheme of Freudian concepts has to some degree infused and thereby constituted the concept of the mind in present-day English. In this way, then, the concept of the mind in present-day English is to some degree tied to its particular set of beliefs. In other words, the concept of the mind in present-day English is to some degree a thick concept.

Even present-day English, then, is tied to particular sets of belief; for as we have seen, some arcane English terms have been intricately linked by specialists to form complex schemes, theories, which embody particular sets of belief, and each one of these arcane terms then gain their meanings by means of their positions within these schemes, so that these terms are in turn tied to those beliefs; moreover, as we have also seen, some of these terms have eventually entered the everyday idiom, so that even some everyday

concepts are thus thick. It seems, then, that even present-day English is thick to some degree. One might object, however, that a few such thick concepts do not make the language of which they are only minor parts any thicker; for these arcane concepts are relatively isolated--even when, one might add, they manage to enter the everyday idiom--so that one might therefore discount them as anomalies. And yet, everyday thick concepts that function much like these arcane examples are far too prevalent to be discounted as anomalies. After all, even thin languages like present-day English abound with such concepts, since even thin languages like present-day English abound with metaphors. In order to show that many metaphors are in fact thick concepts, and that such metaphors are far too prevalent to be discounted as anomalies, we may now introduce the competing analysis of metaphors offered by Lakoff and Johnson. Let us begin, then, by considering present-day English metaphors for the mind.

As Lakoff and Johnson show (pp.27-8), we speak of the mind in present-day English according to at least two metaphors: the *machine* metaphor, and the *brittle-object* metaphor. With the first we say, for example, "We're still trying to *grind out* the solution to this equation," or, "I'm a little *rusty* today," or, "We've been working on this problem all day and now we're *running out of steam*," or, "My mind just isn't *operating* today," or finally, "He *broke down*," etc.; with the second, the *brittle-object* metaphor, we say, for example, "He *cracked* under cross examination," or, "Her ego is very *fragile*," or, "You have to *handle him with care* since his wife's death," or, "The experience *shattered* him," or finally, "Her mind *snapped*," etc. Now, the fact that we so often speak about the mind with metaphors should not surprise us: the mind is something both complex and not directly perceived, so that we cannot describe it directly, and as a result we use metaphors in order to describe it indirectly, not by reference to its perceivable effects so much as by comparison with simpler and perceivable things which we think it resembles. Not surprisingly, then, we use metaphors to describe other complex things that we cannot perceive directly.

Let us consider, for example, present-day English metaphors for the specific mental phenomenon of love, though we might just as well consider metaphors for other mental phenomena, like other emotions and ideas, or even some non-mental phenomena, like time or life, since examples of all of these and many other such concepts are well-documented by Lakoff and Johnson (e.g., pp.7-8, 41-3, 46-51). Now, as they show (p.49), we speak of love in present-day English according to at least five metaphors: the *physical force* metaphor, the *patient* metaphor, the *madness* metaphor, the *magic* metaphor, and, finally, the *war* metaphor. With the first we say, for example, "I was *magnetically drawn* to him," or, "They *gravitated* to each other," or, "His whole life revolves around her," or finally, "They lost their momentum," etc.; with the second, the *patient* metaphor, we say, for example, "This is a *sick* relationship," or, "They have a *strong, healthy* marriage," or, "The marriage is dead--it can't be revived," or finally, "It's a *tired* affair," etc.; with the third, the *madness* metaphor, we say, for example, "I'm *crazy* about her," or, "He *drives me out of my mind*," or, "She constantly *raves* about him," or finally, "He's gone *mad* over her," etc.; with the fourth, the *magic* metaphor, we say, for example, "She *cast her spell* over me," or, "The *magic* is gone," or, "I was *entranced* by him," or finally, "She is bewitching," etc.; with the fifth, the *war* metaphor, we say, for example, "He is known for his many rapid *conquests*," or, "She *fought* for him, but his mistress *won out*," or, "He *fled from* her *advances*," or finally, "He *enlisted the aid* of her friends," etc.

Now, when we have been presented with such a schematic array of examples--not all of which, notice, would have seemed to us as metaphorical, let alone as schematically metaphorical, had Lakoff and Johnson not drawn our attention to them as such--we must begin to wonder whether these metaphorical ways of describing the mind or love are more than mere artful embellishments upon concepts which could exist independent of them. For Davidson, as we have seen, would think that they *are* nothing more than mere artful embellishments, since according to him, remember, there are literal ways of talking about, say, the mind or love, and then there are metaphorical ways of talking about these

same things, but the concepts of the mind or of love themselves, as literal, exist independent of the metaphorical ways we artfully embellish them.

To be fair to Davidson, he would not concede that all of these examples are indeed examples of genuinely *metaphorical* ways of describing the mind or love. After all, he claims that metaphorical ways of describing something should differ from literal ways of describing the same thing only insofar as the metaphorical ways are usually false and indeterminately provoke in us conscious images, feelings or other thoughts. Most of these examples, however, might be true, given some quite common circumstances, and not all of them indeterminately provoke *conscious* images, feelings, or other thoughts, since, as we have seen, not all of them would have seemed extraordinary enough--or, specifically, extra-literal enough--to have done so, had Lakoff and Johnson not drawn our attention to them as such.

But why should we ignore the *unconscious* feelings and other thoughts which these ways of describing the mind or love might have indeterminately provoked in us? After all, for example, these ways of describing love--even those which would not have seemed to us as extra-literal enough to provoke conscious images, feelings or other thoughts, had Lakoff and Johnson not drawn our attention to them as such--doubtlessly provoked feelings or thoughts in us long before Lakoff and Johnson drew our attention to them as such, for even those ways of describing love which would not have seemed to us extra-literal enough to provoke conscious images, feelings or other thoughts doubtlessly provoked unconscious feelings or thoughts, feelings and thoughts whose existence could even have been verified by careful observation of the ways in which we, as speakers of present-day English, and thus users of these particular metaphorical descriptions, have behaved, especially toward beloveds.

At any rate, by sharply distinguishing between, on the one hand, those of the above examples which indeterminately provoke conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts, calling them metaphors, and, on the other hand, those of the above examples

which do not, calling them literal uses of language, Davidson sacrifices an opportunity to explain the intricate links that exist between them, as we will shortly see. Let us therefore assume for the moment that all of these examples are indeed examples of genuinely *metaphorical* ways of describing the mind or love, even by Davidson's own criteria for metaphor, suitably broadened. And let us therefore ask once again: Can the present-day English concepts of the mind or of love exist independent of these metaphorical ways of describing them? In other words: Are these ways of describing the mind or love mere artful embellishments, or do they somehow infuse and thereby constitute the present-day English concepts of the mind and of love?

In order to answer this question, let us put it in the following, more specific, way, focusing upon the concept of love: Is there a concept of love in present-day English that is *both* substantive enough to account for the diverse applications of the word "love" by speakers of present-day English, *and* nonetheless independent of at least the *physical force* metaphor, the *patient* metaphor, the *madness* metaphor, the *magic* metaphor, and, finally, the *war* metaphor? In other words: Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of this concept which express only its inherent properties, that is, only those of its properties which exist independent of its metaphorical relations in present-day English to these other concepts? Following Wittgenstein, who observed the impossibility of isolating a definitive set of such conditions even for the relatively simple concept of a game (ss. 68-71), we should answer that there is likewise no definitive set of such conditions for the more complex concept of love. Notice, though, that if there is no definitive set of such conditions for the concept of love in present-day English, this concept is indeed constituted, to some degree, by its relation to these other concepts. In short, as Lakoff and Johnson are fond of saying, this concept is, to some degree, metaphorically structured.

Metaphorically structured concepts, like the concept of love in present-day English, thus resemble names on Tory island, or terms within physical or psychological

theories, in that they gain some of their meaning by their relations to other concepts, just as names on Tory island gain some of their meaning by their relations to other names, or terms within physical or psychological theories gain some of their meaning by their relations to other such terms. Thus, we should expect, in order to understand a particular metaphorically structured concept, one must understand its metaphorical relations to other concepts, just as in order to understand a name on Tory island one must understand the name's kinship and political relations to other names, or in order to understand a term within a physical or psychological theory one must understand the term's theoretical relations to other such terms.

And yet, as we have seen, in order to understand a particular name's kinship and political relations to other names, one must often go beyond both it and them, understanding, first of all, the whole scheme-of-naming in which this particular name gains its meaning, and therefore, secondly, the practices of kinship and authority from which this scheme-of-naming itself gains its meaning. And likewise, as we have seen, in order to understand a particular term's theoretical relations to other such terms, one must often go beyond both it and them, understanding, first of all, the overall theory in which this particular term gains its meaning, and therefore, secondly, the world of phenomena from which that theory itself gains its meaning. Thus, we should expect, in order to understand a particular concept's metaphorical relations to other concepts, one must often go beyond both it and them, understanding, first of all, the whole scheme of metaphorical relations from which this particular concept gains its meaning--that is, the language of which it is a part--and therefore, secondly, the culture from which that scheme itself--that is, that language itself--gains its meaning. In short, then, in order to understand a particular metaphorically structured concept one must understand far more than its literal meaning; for, as we have seen, metaphorically structured concepts, and thus metaphors, have far more than literal meaning.

Now, understanding the whole scheme of naming on Tory island requires, as we have seen, a work of anthropology, just as understanding an overall theory requires a lesson in the discipline of the particular theory; what, then, does understanding the whole scheme of metaphorical relations from which a particular concept gains its far-more-than-literal meaning require? Although the lists of examples we have examined for the metaphorically structured concepts of the mind and of love have been sufficient to show that these concepts are indeed metaphorically structured, and although these lists have even been sufficiently schematic to show that these concepts are structured by distinguishable metaphors, such lists have nevertheless been insufficient to help us understand the precise nature of the relations between these metaphors--those relations from which, after all, these particular concepts gain their special metaphorical meanings. Something more than such lists is therefore required. In order to elicit what is required, though, let us introduce another, simpler, example of a metaphorically structured concept, that of *argument*, since these two concepts which we have been examining, those of the mind and of love, each occupy such notoriously tangled positions in their scheme that it would be too difficult for us to use them here to show what this special understanding requires.

As Lakoff and Johnson show (pp.4, 90-2, 98), we speak of arguments in present-day English according to at least four metaphors: the *journey* metaphor, the *container* metaphor, the *building* metaphor, and, finally, the *war* metaphor. For simplicity's sake we will restrict ourselves to examples of only the first two metaphors. With the first, the *journey* metaphor, we say, for example, "We have *set out* to prove that bats are birds," or, "When we get to the next point, we shall see that philosophy is dead," or, "So far, we've seen that no current theories will work," or, "We have *arrived at* a disturbing conclusion," or finally, "This observation *points the way to* an elegant solution," etc. With the second, the *container* metaphor, we say, for example, "Your argument doesn't have much *content*," or, "Your argument is *empty*," or, "That argument *has holes in it*,"

or, "That argument *won't hold water*," or, "You won't *find* that idea *in* his argument," or, "That conclusion *falls out of* my argument," or finally, "I still haven't gotten to the *core* of the argument," etc.

Once again, although such lists might be sufficient to show that the concept of argument is indeed metaphorically structured, and although they might be sufficiently schematic to show that it is structured by distinguishable metaphors, they are nevertheless insufficient to help us understand the precise nature of the relations between these metaphors--the relations from which, after all, this particular concept gain its special metaphorical meaning. Specifically, these lists tell us neither the ways in which these two metaphors can be mixed when we talk about arguments, nor why we can mix them in the ways in which we can mix them but cannot mix them in other ways that are apparently similar. For when we mix these metaphors, the result is either permissible or impermissible present-day English. We say permissibly, for example, "*At this point* our argument doesn't have *much content*," or, "*In* what we've done *so far*, we have provided the *core* of our argument," or, "If we keep *going the way we're going*, we'll *fit all the facts in*," etc. But we also say impermissibly, for example, "We can now follow the *path* of the *core* of the argument," or, "The *content* of the argument *proceeds* as follows," or, "The *direction* of his argument has no *substance*," or, "I am disturbed by the *empty path* of your argument," etc. What is at least required, then, in order to understand the scheme of metaphorical relations from which a particular metaphorically structured concept, like that of argument, gains its special metaphorical meaning, is an explanation of why the various metaphors which structure the concept can be mixed in the ways in which they can be mixed but cannot be mixed in the ways in which they cannot.

Davidson, remember, claims that "as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meaning of words." (p.444) However, nothing about either literal journeys or literal containers or both explains the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed

metaphors. Following Davidson, then, this difference, which is inexplicable by appeal to the literal meaning of words, must not be explicable by meaning at all. Of course, he may explain it instead by appeal to the conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts that these literal meanings provoke in us. However, if these separate metaphors provoke any conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts in us, they presumably do so equally in the cases of the permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors. And yet, if this is the case, the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors cannot be explained by appeal to the conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts that these metaphors provoke in us.

Now Davidson could retort, of course, that these separate metaphors do not equally provoke conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts when they come in the cases of the permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors. For, he could argue, these separate metaphors might be alive in the cases of the impermissible mixed metaphors and thus provoke conscious images, so that in these cases we have simultaneous inconsistent images of journeys and containers, whereas these separate metaphors might be dead in the cases of the permissible mixed metaphors and thus not provoke conscious images, so that in these cases we have no inconsistent images of journeys and containers. In this way, he could explain the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors; however, another problem would thereby arise for his analysis of metaphor.

After all, if these impermissible mixed metaphors were indeed alive, unlike their dead, permissible counterparts, they should be so because the separate metaphors within them are each alive. In this way, then, the sentences, "We can now follow the *path* of the *core* of the argument," and, "The *content* of the argument *proceeds* as follows," and, "The *direction* of his argument has no *substance*," and, finally, "I am disturbed by the *empty path* of your argument," would each contain two live metaphors. Consequently, for example, "the *content* of the argument . . .," would be a live metaphor, as would be, ". . . the argument *proceeds* as follows . . .". According to Davidson, though, live metaphors

are usually false. As a result, any sentence that mentioned either the *content* of an argument, or that the argument *proceeds* in a certain way, would, not just usually, but furthermore, always be false, since these live metaphors would allow sentences which contained them to be true only if arguments could literally hold their contents like sacks, or could literally proceed like trains. But this is absurd, since arguments can do neither, and yet are nonetheless true in quite common appropriate circumstances. Therefore, Davidson cannot explain the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors either by appeal to their literal meanings, or by appeal to the conscious images, feelings or other thoughts provoked in us by these literal meanings. Contrarily, then, we should try to explain this difference by appeal to something other than either their literal meanings or the effects of their literal meanings.

Let us therefore follow Lakoff and Johnson and explain the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors by appeal to their special metaphorical meaning--by appeal, specifically, to the special sort of entailments that exist within and between their metaphors (pp.89-96). They begin this explanation by noticing the following, straightforward entailment about literal journeys: as we make a journey, more of a path is created; a path is a surface; therefore, as we make a journey, more of a surface is created. When they combine this literal entailment with the *journey* metaphor, though, they notice the following, interesting entailment about the concept of argument as it is structured by this metaphor: an argument is a journey; as we make a journey, more of a surface is created; therefore, as we make an argument, more of a surface is created. This entailment is interesting because of the following, parallel entailment about the concept of argument as it is structured by the *container* metaphor: an argument is a container; as we make a container, more of a surface is created; therefore, as we make an argument, more of a surface is created.

Thus, although there is no consistent image between the *journey* metaphor and the *container* metaphor, there is nonetheless a significant similarity between them: each

imputes to an argument the creation of a surface; moreover, each imputes to an argument the creation of a surface which corresponds to the argument's form. With the *journey* metaphor, on the one hand, this surface, the path, corresponds to its form, whereas the ground the path itself covers corresponds to its content. With the *container* metaphor, on the other hand, this surface, the bounding surface of the container, corresponds to its form, whereas what is inside this bounding surface corresponds to its content. In the manner of the *journey* metaphor, then, an argument with a lot of form but little content will create a lot of path but cover little ground. A classic example of such an argument is the so-called "circular" argument, like a circular path that continues infinitely over the same ground. And in the manner of the *container* metaphor, then, an argument with a lot of form but little content will have a large bounding surface with little inside. A classic example of such an argument is the so-called "vacuous" argument, like a large but empty vessel.

In these ways, therefore, both metaphors involve this same distinction between form and content, although each highlights it differently: the *journey* metaphor emphasizes a progressive aspect of argument, whereas the *container* metaphor emphasizes an amount aspect of argument. As a result of this similar distinction, whenever a mixed metaphor about argument uses an element from one metaphor to correspond to the form and then uses an element from the other metaphor to correspond to the content, it is permissible; indeed, such mixtures are common and important. For in this way, as Lakoff and Johnson observe, "The progress aspect of the *journey* metaphor and the amount aspect of the *container* metaphor can be highlighted simultaneously." (p.95) Let us review two of our examples of permissible mixed metaphors to confirm this: "*At this point* [on the path: *journey* metaphor, form] our argument doesn't have much *content* [within itself: *container* metaphor, content]," or, "*In* [the container: *container* metaphor, content] what we've done *so far* [along the path: *journey* metaphor, form], we have provided the *core* [of what is inside: *container* metaphor, content]."

But whenever a mixed metaphor about argument uses an element from one metaphor to correspond to the form and an element from the other metaphor to correspond to the content, and, furthermore, mixes them so as to speak of the form of the content or the content of the form, it is impermissible. Let us review two of our examples of impermissible mixed metaphors to confirm this: "We can now follow the *path* [*journey* metaphor, describing the form] of the *core* [of what is within: *container* metaphor, content] of the argument," or, "The *content* [*container* metaphor, content] of the argument *proceeds* [*journey* metaphor, describing the form] as follows." The *journey* metaphor and the *container* metaphor do not share an entailment that permits the conflation of form and content, and so sentences that metaphorically conflate them in this way are impermissible.

We can therefore explain the difference between these permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors by means of a special sort of entailments, metaphorical entailments. For, as Lakoff and Johnson show, metaphorically structured concepts, like that of *argument*, have a special sort of coherence, metaphorical coherence, so that the various metaphors that structure such a concept harmonize or clash according to illuminable, coherent schemes. As we might expect, these schemes become more complex for a particular concept as that concept becomes structured by more metaphors. Now the concept of argument, remember, is actually structured by at least two additional metaphors, the *building* metaphor and the *war* metaphor, so that a full illumination of the metaphorical scheme in which it gains some of its meaning would be far more complex than that which we have provided (for the beginnings of such an illumination, though, see Lakoff and Johnson, chapter 17).

And yet still further complexity is added when, as is often the case, a concept is structured by metaphorical relations to still other metaphorically structured concepts. For in order to illuminate such a concept, notice, we would also have to illuminate those other concepts. Thus, as we should expect, in order to fully illuminate metaphorically

structured concepts we must often go beyond the local metaphorical schemes in which they gain some of their meaning, and further understand the whole metaphorical scheme of which these local schemes are parts. But, as we have seen, such schemes are not obvious. They may be consciously revealed by illuminating, for example, the difference between permissible and impermissible mixed metaphors, but this complex task requires the skill of a linguist. Does understanding a metaphorically structured concept therefore require this sort of illumination?

As Wittgenstein famously observed (ss.149), the hallmark of understanding a particular concept, and thus, by extension, of understanding a particular metaphorically structured concept, is the ability to go on from a finite list of paradigm applications of it to make acceptable, novel applications of it. Now, we speakers of present-day English show that we understand all sorts of metaphorically structured concepts, since we do precisely this all the time--in poetry most saliently, but in everyday conversation as well. But we do this without having ever studied the complex metaphorical schemes illuminated by our linguists. Apparently, then, we speakers of present-day English understand the scheme in which all sorts of metaphorically structured concepts gain some of their meaning; only, our understanding of this scheme must be unconscious. Thus, understanding a metaphorically structured concept in present-day English usually involves unconsciously understanding its position within this scheme of concepts. And, as we have seen, understanding this position involves understanding its metaphorical coherence with these other concepts--specifically, the precise metaphorical entailments it shares with these other concepts.

Yet in this respect there is nothing unique to present-day English: the same unconscious process must also occur for understanding other languages. However, if the same process does occur when understanding other languages, and if--as anyone who speaks another language will confirm--the metaphorical schemes of different languages are different from the metaphorical scheme of present-day English, then learning another

language will involve learning a different scheme of concepts. In other words, learning another language will involve learning a different conceptual scheme.

In the strictest sense, then, all other conceptual schemes will be incommensurable with ours, just as all other languages will be non-intertranslatable with ours, if by commensurability and intertranslation we mean, as Davidson does (p.78), a correlation of sentences in the language which embodies our conceptual scheme with sentences in the languages which embody those alien conceptual schemes. After all, most sentences of our language or any language contain, as we have seen, metaphorically structured concepts; insofar as the metaphorically structured concepts of the alien languages gain their meaning from the metaphorical schemes of the alien languages, then, there will be few, or no, correlate concepts in our language, since the concepts in our language gain their meaning from the different metaphorical scheme of our language. To the degree that the metaphorical scheme of a given language differs from the metaphorical scheme of our language, then, a translation of a given passage of that language will require more interpretive gloss in our language. For, as we have seen, a metaphorical scheme gains its meaning from the culture which thinks in terms of it, so that to the degree two cultures differ, intertranslations of their languages will require more and more linguistic anthropology. There will no doubt come a point, however, at which two cultures differ so much that it then becomes more efficient for someone who wishes to understand passages in the alien language to learn at first hand the metaphorical scheme in whose terms the culture thinks, rather than read a cumbersome and ultimately limited commentary upon it. As classicists know, for example, the cultures of modernity, on the one hand, and the cultures of ancient Israel, or Greece, or Rome, on the other, are examples of such radically different cultures.

### **Criticisms of Davidson**

Let us return to Davidson's two central theses, finally, and see how, as promised, their failures are interdependent. First of all, as we saw in the first section of this paper, his argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme fails because he overlooks a distinction between *translation* and *understanding*. For understanding, we then said, involves abandoning one's home language or conceptual scheme and adopting an alien language or conceptual scheme. We then wondered, however, what precisely is involved in adopting an alien language or conceptual scheme that makes it different from trying merely to translate such a language or scheme?

With what has just been concluded about thick concepts, and about metaphorically structured concepts in particular, though, we now have an answer to this question ready-to-hand: merely *translating* an alien language or conceptual scheme involves, according to Davidson, correlating sentences in the alien language with sentences in our home language; contrarily, adopting or *understanding* an alien language or conceptual scheme involves understanding its thick concepts. Now, as we saw, examples of such concepts include names in traditional societies or terms in theoretical disciplines, but also, more prevalently, and thus more importantly, metaphorically structured concepts. Focusing, then, on metaphorically structured concepts: understanding them involves appreciating the metaphorical schemes in which they gain their meaning. And understanding the metaphorical schemes in which such concepts gain their meaning involves understanding the metaphorical coherences that exist between them and the other concepts with which they are related by means of metaphors--specifically, understanding the precise metaphorical entailments they share with these other concepts, whether consciously with the linguists or unconsciously with the learners.

We can now see that if this account of understanding is correct, Davidson thus overlooks the distinction between translation and understanding because he fails to recognize the role thick concepts--and most importantly, metaphorically structured

concepts--play in drawing this distinction. Moreover, he fails to recognize the role metaphorically structured concepts play in drawing this distinction because of his thesis about metaphors--that is, that they have nothing more than mere literal meaning. Consequently, the failure of his argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme depends upon this thesis about metaphors. Secondly, then, how do the failures of his arguments against special metaphorical meaning depend upon his thesis that there are no conceptual schemes? Let us recall each of them in turn.

First of all, he claimed, if there is a special metaphorical meaning, this meaning should disappear when the metaphor dies and becomes merely literal language. But according to him, remember, the difference between a live metaphor and a dead one was that a live metaphor is both usually false and always provokes in us conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts, whereas a dead one both may be true or false equally, depending upon the circumstances, and does not so provoke us. Yet the superior analysis of metaphors that we have examined draws the boundaries between metaphor and merely literal language somewhat differently. For according to it, on the one hand, many sentences that would be literal according to Davidson are in fact metaphorical; indeed, most of the examples we examined were like this--of such a nature, that is, that they gained special metaphorical meanings by means of their schematic relations to other concepts, regardless of whether they provoked in us conscious images, feelings, or other thoughts. And thus according to it, on the other hand, dead metaphors, or merely literal uses of language, would gain no such special meanings, even if they were to provoke in us conscious images, feelings or other thoughts. Now, following this superior analysis of metaphors, some meaning does indeed disappear when a metaphor dies, just as Davidson observed. For if a concept that was once metaphorically structured loses its relations to other concepts, due to some shift in the metaphorical scheme, so that this concept no longer gains a special metaphorical meaning by means of schematic relations to these other concepts, then it both dies and loses some of its meaning--its special metaphorical

meaning. With this superior analysis of metaphors, then--according to which metaphors are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes--Davidson's first argument against special metaphorical meaning turns out to be innocuous.

Secondly, he claimed, if there is a special metaphorical meaning, there should likewise be a special simile meaning. After all, Davidson suggested, the only difference between similes and metaphors is that all similes are trivially true whereas most metaphors are patently false. But because there is no such thing as special simile meaning, he argued, there should be no such thing as special metaphorical meaning. Now, we then noticed that any objection to this second argument against special metaphorical meaning would have to show that metaphors are different from similes in more than this one way which Davidson has suggested. However, we have already seen how metaphors are indeed different from similes in more than this one way: metaphors, on the one hand, help structure many of the most important concepts of our, or any, language; similes, on the other hand, do not--for they simply cannot grammatically connect concepts within an intricate, often unconscious, scheme the way metaphors do. In order to see why not, consider the several metaphorically structured concepts we examined in the third section of this paper and try to imagine how similes could have played the roles which metaphors played in structuring them. With this superior analysis of metaphors, then--according to which metaphors are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes--Davidson's second argument against special metaphorical meaning also turns out to be innocuous.

Thirdly, he claimed, attempts to paraphrase metaphors always fail, since the paraphrase is always weaker in some way than the original. Moreover, he claimed that this feature of metaphors not only *may*, but also *must*, be explained by appeal to merely literal meanings of words. Now, we then noticed that the most powerful objection to this third argument against special metaphorical meaning--an objection that would not only vindicate the hypothesis of special metaphorical meaning from his attack, but also give us

positive reason to endorse it--would have to show that the failure of paraphrasing *must* be explained by appeal to some meanings beyond the merely literal. However, we have already seen how an understanding of metaphorically structured concepts requires understanding their special metaphorical meanings, and thus, first of all, the metaphorical schemes in which these concepts gain their meaning, and therefore, secondly, the cultures from which these metaphorical schemes gain their meanings. In short, then, we have already seen how a paraphrase of a metaphor which seeks to convey understanding of that metaphor *must* provide an extensive, often linguistic-anthropological gloss in the style of Lakoff and Johnson. Their superior analysis of metaphors has thus provided us with the most powerful objection to Davidson's third argument against special metaphorical meaning. With this superior analysis of metaphors, then--according to which metaphors are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes--this final argument also turns out to be innocuous.

In sum, Davidson's three arguments against special metaphorical meaning have all failed because they have all failed to recognize that metaphors are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes. But, as we saw above, his one argument against the very idea of a conceptual scheme correlatively failed because it failed to recognize that metaphors have more than mere literal meanings. These two failures are thus interdependent. So too are the claims that there are indeed conceptual schemes and that metaphors have more than mere literal meaning: for as we can now see, there are conceptual schemes, even incommensurable schemes, precisely *because* metaphors have more than mere literal meaning, just as metaphors have more than mere literal meaning precisely *because* they are the bricks and mortar of conceptual schemes, even incommensurable ones.

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