

6 Davidson, Heidegger, and Truth

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1 Truth and Thinking Creatures

Could something, whether a sentence or a proposition, or whatever, be true if there were no sapient entities in the world? Unless one is a certain sort of idealist, it seems obvious that many entities would have many of the properties that they do, whether or not there were any sapient creatures around. If, for example, the Earth exerts a force of attraction on the Moon of a certain magnitude and with certain effects, then it does so whether or not there is anyone around to measure that magnitude or notice those effects. On the other hand, some properties are linked, in a variety of ways, to the existence of intelligence. Nothing could be an intelligent observation, for example, unless there were intelligent observers, and there are no intelligent observers that are not thinkers. So it is possible to ask whether truth is more like exercising a gravitational pull, or more like being an intelligent observation: Could there be things that were true even if there were no rational, intelligent beings to notice them?

There are some reasons to think that there would be. Here is one such reason. In general we use the word “true” in such a way that we say that the sentence “Okrent is currently speaking” is true just when Okrent is speaking. This sentence seems to express a proposition that can also be expressed by other sentences, and that proposition is true if and only if its referent actually has the property that the proposition says it has. So if Okrent can have the property of speaking even if there are no sentient creatures (I guess in this case there must be at least one such creature), then the sentence “Okrent is speaking” can be true even if there are no sentient creatures. And if the Earth exerts a pull on the Moon even though there are no thinkers, then the proposition expressed by the sentence “The Earth exerts a pull on the Moon” is true even when there are no thinkers.

Nevertheless, there is a long tradition that denies this possibility. In particular, both Heidegger and Davidson maintain that truth depends on sapient beings in the sense that were there no sapient beings there would be nothing in the world that was true. Davidson says this in so many words: "Nothing in the world, no object or event, would be true or false if there were not thinking creatures."¹ Heidegger comes close to saying the very same thing in the same way: "'There is' truth only in so far as *Dasein* is and so long as *Dasein* is."² And this assertion of the dependence of truth on thinking creatures by both Heidegger and Davidson leads to a certain interpretive puzzle.

Here is the puzzle. I can think of two arguments that might lead one to assert that there could be no truths without thinkers. One argument depends on the nature of truth bearers. The other depends on accepting a form of verificationism about truth. But at a certain point I came to believe that neither of these arguments could be correctly attributed to either Heidegger or Davidson.

Here is the first possible argument. Sentences are the primary truth bearers. There are no sentences without thinkers. Therefore, there are no entities that are true without thinkers. There is good reason to think that Davidson and Heidegger were both attracted to this argument, although in Heidegger it took a slightly different form, in which a certain definite kind of intentional comportment played the role of sentences. But there seems to be an obvious rejoinder to this argument. That rejoinder is that propositions, and not sentences (or assertions, etc.), are the primary truth bearers, and propositions can be true even in the absence of sentences and sentence users. And, it seemed to me, it was just impossible for either Heidegger or Davidson to miss this potential rejoinder, so they couldn't have used this argument.

The second possible argument to the conclusion that there are no truths without *Dasein*, or thinking creatures, turns on the suggestion that the cash value of truth is warranted assertibility. If one accepts, with Quine and Peirce, "that the meaning of a sentence turns purely on what would count as evidence for its truth,"³ then what it means to say that a sentence (or whatever) is true is specified by whatever would count as evidence for its being true, that is, by whatever would warrant us in asserting the sentence. And, since truth would then be associated with what would count as evidence for us, truth would be epistemically relativized to ourselves and our practices of verification, and there would be no truths without such practices. At one time I attributed this line of argument to both Heidegger and Davidson.⁴ And I still think that there is something to be said for both

of these attributions. There is only one problem with doing so: Both Heidegger and Davidson seem to reject this line of argument. Late in his career Davidson explicitly rejected epistemic views of truth in "Epistemology and Truth" and *Truth and Predication*. And, while as far as I know Heidegger never explicitly considered this form of verificationism regarding truth, in the context of a discussion of the relation between assertion and truth in *Basic Problems*, he did go out of his way to emphasize that even though truth is not "in things," "truth . . . is a possible determination of the being of the extant."⁵ And, in context, this at least suggests that for Heidegger, whatever truth is, and whatever things are true, truth has to do primarily with the way a thing is rather than with the status of our knowledge of the thing.

So, in the absence of an argument in favor of the thesis that without *Dasein*, or thinking creatures, there are no truths, we are left with the following puzzle: What do Heidegger and Davidson mean to assert with this thesis, and why would anyone believe it to be true?

The key to solving the interpretive puzzle, for both Davidson and Heidegger, is given in *Truth and Predication*, the second half of which is an argument to the effect that the primary bearers of truth cannot be propositions.⁶ If this is so, then we have reason to think that Davidson did use the first line of argument, which claims that there could be no truth bearers without thinkers, to argue that there is no truth without thinkers. For we now have Davidson's rejoinder to the suggestion that it is the meanings of sentences that are true or false, and what a sentence means could be true even if there were no sentences. And, armed with this Davidsonian argument it becomes possible to go back to *Basic Problems* and see that in that work Heidegger offers a surprisingly similar argument to a surprisingly similar, though not identical, conclusion.

There is one crucial difference between these two discussions of truth, however. All of Davidson's discussions of the concept of truth aim only at solving the following problem: How is it possible to assign truth conditions to all of the utterances of any speaker? Beyond achieving this goal, Davidson thinks that all theories of truth go astray. That is, Davidson wants to know how an observer could know, for any assertoric sentence uttered by a speaker, that that sentence would be true under such-and-such conditions. And, in effect, this amounts to knowing, for some language, that some particular Tarskian truth definition actually applies to that language. Saying anything about truth beyond this, Davidson thinks, is saying too much. "All attempts to characterize truth that go beyond giving empirical content to a structure of the sort Tarski taught us how to describe are empty, false,

or confused.”⁷⁷ For Davidson, truth is the most basic semantic concept, and there is no point in trying to understand it in terms of something else. All one can do is attempt to understand how we can *apply* the concept in interpreting what people say and do. Heidegger emphatically disagrees with this. And, once we have gone through both Davidson’s and Heidegger’s versions of the argument to the conclusion that there are no truths without thinkers, we will be able to understand why Heidegger thinks there is more to understand about truth than Davidson does, what he thinks there is to understand about truth that Davidson doesn’t understand, and why Heidegger is right to think this. Heidegger holds, correctly, that only the utterances of agents who satisfy the principle of charity can have truth conditions, and only agents who succeed in revealing, in what they do and how they cope with the world, the way things are, can satisfy the principle of charity. And for this reason the concept of truth can and should be understood in terms of a more basic concept, the unveiling of things that is part and parcel of being in the world.

2 Davidson’s Discussion of Truth

The Basic View

Late in his career, Davidson’s discussions of truth, and his assertion of the dependence of truth on us, are oriented by his responses to and rejection of three distinctive ways of understanding the nature and character of truth. One of these ways of understanding truth, the “correspondence” view, has deep roots in the philosophical tradition. A second view, which Davidson labels “epistemic,” identifies truth with warranted assertibility, and, while in its current form it is a descendent of positivist verificationism, the position’s origins reach well back into the modern era. The third view, “disquotationalism,” is entirely a creature of the analytic tradition in the twentieth century. The correspondence theory of truth turns on the suggestion that a truth vehicle, a sentence, proposition, or whatever, is true, when it is true, in virtue of “corresponding” to, or “agreeing” with, some entity, usually thought of as a fact or state of affairs. From Davidson’s perspective, the correspondence view is the only way of giving content to a realist construal of truth. “The objective view of truth, if it has any content, must be based on correspondence as applied to sentences, or beliefs, or utterances, entities that are propositional in character.”⁷⁸ Since, for the correspondence theorist, truth consists entirely in the agreement between the propositional content of a truth vehicle and some aspect of the world, whether or not any sentient creature knows or can know about that status is irrelevant to

truth. The epistemic view of truth, on the other hand, denies that there is any coherent sense to be made of the notion that there are truths that are completely beyond the possibility of verification or justification, and in that sense this view relates the truth of a claim to its epistemic standing. Finally, over the last seventy-five years there has been a tendency to suggest that the whole issue regarding realism concerning truth is bogus. Davidson came to emphatically reject this disquotationalist tendency. On the disquotationalist view, there is no real issue about whether or not a sentence being true involves more than warranted assertibility because when one claims that a sentence is true one is not doing any more than asserting the sentence. The predicate "is true" is merely a metalinguistic device that allows us to talk about sentences, rather than talking about what the sentences talk about.

Both the tendency toward a correspondence theory of truth and the tendency toward a disquotational view of truth arise out of the same simple observation, the observation that it is correct to say of some truth vehicle that it is true just in case the conditions asserted in the proposition that it expresses actually obtain. The sentence "Okrent is currently speaking" is true just in case Okrent is currently speaking. What the sentence "Okrent is currently speaking" *says*, of course, is that Okrent, the person, is currently speaking; and the sentence is true just on those occasions when what the sentence says is going on in the world is really going on in the world. To the realist this fact suggests a way of cashing out the intuition that the truth of a sentence is radically nonepistemic: The sentence is true *because of*, the truth of the sentence is *explained by*, the correspondence between what the sentence says, its meaning, and the way the world is. But, the realist argues, the way the world is is surely independent of what we can know about it. And, even though the fact that some actual utterance has some definite meaning depends on how we use words, *that meaning itself* either agrees with or disagrees with the way the world is independently of the fact that we use words as we do and the fact that we have the cognitive abilities that we do. So whether or not what the sentence says corresponds with the way the world is is also independent of what we say or what we can know; so the truth of the proposition must also be independent of what we know, and realism regarding truth is guaranteed.

The disquotationalist starts with the same observation, that the sentence "Okrent is speaking" is true if and only if Okrent is speaking, and comes to a quite different conclusion. This trivial observation can be expressed in a single sentence: "The sentence 'Okrent is speaking' is true if and only if Okrent is speaking." This sentence is a truth-functional biconditional of

the two sentences, “‘Okrent is speaking’ is true” and “Okrent is speaking.” But what the single sentence says is that these two component sentences are true in just the same situations, the first is true just in case the second is true. But if we assume that the meaning of a sentence is fixed by its truth conditions, this suggests that the sentence that expresses our trivial observation assures that “‘Okrent is speaking’ is true” and “Okrent is speaking” have exactly the same meaning. According to the disquotationalist, this shows that the predicate “is true” is a mere device that adds nothing to the semantics of the original sentence. But from this she can go on to infer that both the realist and the antirealist are wrong about truth. Since for the disquotationalist “is true” adds nothing substantive to a sentence, and both the realist and antirealist assume that when one says that some sentence is true one is adding something to the mere assertion of the sentence, the disquotationalist concludes that both the realist and the antirealist are wrong.

Davidson is also struck by the apparently trivial fact that, for example, the sentence, “Okrent is currently speaking” is true just in case Okrent is currently speaking. Davidson is interested in this kind of trivial fact because these facts provide both the explananda of and the empirical evidence for Tarski-style definitions of truth in a language. “Tarski’s basic insight was to make use of the apparently trivial fact that sentences of the form ‘‘Snow is white’’ is true in L if and only if snow is white’ must be true if the sentence quoted is a sentence of the language used to state the platitude.”⁹ Tarski realized that if one could provide a definition of “true-in-L” that entailed such a “T-sentence” for every sentence in L, then one’s definition would pick out, using the resources of the metalanguage, the true sentences in L. But, Davidson holds, that is all that such a definition could do; it could pick out the extension of the predicate “true in L” by giving us, for every well-formed sentence of L, the conditions in which the predicate “true in L” is applicable to that sentence. But such a definition would not tell us what “true in L” means; it would not tell us what it is that one is saying when one says of a sentence that it is true. “He [Tarski] defined the class of true sentences by giving the extension of the truth predicate, but he did not give the meaning.”¹⁰ According to Davidson, a Tarski-style definition can’t tell us what is meant when one says that a sentence in a language is true, because that the definition adequately picks out the true sentences in any actual language is an empirical matter, decided by how the users of the language actually speak. That the English sentence “Okrent is speaking” is true in English if and only if Okrent is speaking, and not if and only if Rouse is flying, is a fact about how the sentence is used in English. So for a Tarski-style definition of truth in a language L actually to apply to English, the

T-sentences entailed by that theory must agree with the actual conditions under which the sentences of English *are true*. But in that case, the definition can't tell us what it is for the sentences of English to be true; there could be nothing that counts as the definition's being accurate of English if there were no prior sense in which the sentences of English were true or false independent of the definition. So there must be more to truth than is expressed by the systematization of the trivial insight that "Okrent is speaking" is true just in case Okrent is speaking, and, Davidson concludes, disquotationalism is false.

But Davidson is also committed to the rejection of the realist understanding of the way in which there is more to truth than the trivial understanding systematized in a Tarski-style definition. According to the realist, the fact that the sentence "Okrent is speaking" is true just in case Okrent is speaking is explained by the fact that what the sentence says, its meaning, corresponds with the way the world is when Okrent is speaking. The basic realist suggestion is that what it is for a sentence to be true does not depend on us, or on what we can know, but rather that the truth of the sentence is in some way an objective fact. If this suggestion is to have any "content," to use Davidson's term, the realist must specify what the predicate "is true" positively adds to the sentence, or else the realist runs the danger of falling into disquotationalism. That is, to avoid disquotationalism, the realist must tell us just which fact "is true" tracks. Her response to this demand is that "is true" tracks correspondence, thereby giving content to realism.

Throughout most of his career, Davidson's explicit objection to correspondence views was that they are unintelligible, because there *is* nothing for sentences to correspond *with*. That is, his objection is to the ontological commitments of correspondence: "the real objection is rather that such [correspondence] theories fail to provide entities to which truth vehicles (whether we take these to be statements, sentences, or utterances) can be said to correspond. As I once put it, 'Nothing, no *thing* makes our statements true.'"¹¹ That is, Davidson holds that since the world doesn't come divided into propositionally structured chunks, it can't be the case that what makes a sentence true is that it "agrees with," or "corresponds with," some worldly, propositionally structured chunk. And, since realism regarding truth only gets content through this suggestion of correspondence, Davidson claims that realism is "unintelligible."

It is obvious that the pivot of this argument is the assertion that there is nothing for a truth vehicle to correspond with. Throughout most of his career, Davidson's explicit support for this assertion was the "sling-shot" argument that he variously attributes to Frege, Alonzo Church, and

C. I. Lewis. The slingshot argument starts from two assumptions: “if two sentences are logically equivalent, they correspond to the same thing, and what a sentence corresponds to is not changed if a singular term is replaced by a coreferring singular term.”¹² Given these assumptions, and the further assumption that definite descriptions are singular terms, the slingshot argument shows that any two arbitrary sentences with the same truth-value correspond to the same thing. The argument proceeds by using two devices to transform a sentence into another while, given the assumptions, the fact that is corresponded remains the same. First, one can substitute one definite description for another, without changing what the sentence corresponds to, as long as both descriptions actually apply to the entity referred to by the subject. To use a familiar example that Davidson actually cites, “Sir Walter Scott is the author of *Waverly*” corresponds to the same fact as “Sir Walter Scott is the man who wrote 29 *Waverly* novels altogether.” Second, one can transform a sentence so that it comes to make a statement about some aspect of the identifying character of the previous predicate, a statement that is logically equivalent with the original sentence, also without changing what the sentence corresponds to. So, “Sir Walter Scott is the man who wrote 29 *Waverly* novels altogether” corresponds with the same fact as “The number, such that Sir Walter Scott wrote that many *Waverly* novels altogether is 29.” But then, using the first device to transform this last sentence, and transitivity, “Sir Walter Scott is the author of *Waverly*” corresponds with the same fact as “The number of counties in Utah is 29.”¹³ But, as Davidson says, “this is to trivialize the concept of correspondence completely.”¹⁴

So Davidson rejects both correspondence forms of realism and disquotationalism. There is something more to the notion of truth than is captured by disquotationalism, but that “something more” is not captured by the realist notion of correspondence. But what, then, is this “something more”? The antirealist has a ready answer. For the antirealist, when one understands what it is for a sentence to be true, what one understands are the conditions under which a speaker would be warranted in asserting the sentence. Davidson’s main objection to this antirealism is that one can’t make out the requisite notion of “warrant.” And, we might as well add, that one can’t make out that requisite notion is a function of the content of our intuitive concept of what it is for a sentence to be true. If one simply identifies what is warranted with what we currently accept as warranted around here, then, since we believe that our methods for warranting assertions seem to develop and improve, it appears obvious that what we warrant as assertible today, might not be so warranted tomorrow, whereas

our fundamental intuition is that truth is not variably dependent on our contingent practices of justification. On the other hand, if “warrant” is understood as “ideally warranted,” then the ideal can be associated either with what *we* could discover ideally, given our own contingent cognitive faculties, or with what an ideal observer could discover. But if we take the first interpretation, then it seems that there is still the possibility of error, thus undercutting the identity of truth and warranted assertibility. And if we take the second interpretation, then the suggestion comes to lack content, as we no longer have any sense of what must be the case for a sentence to be true, as we lack any sense of when it would be the case that a sentence was really warranted. Although Davidson recognizes that none of these considerations amount to a conclusive refutation of antirealism, he thinks that these concerns are sufficient to give us reason to believe that it is false.¹⁵

So Davidson rejects all three of the conceptions of truth that were offered to him by the tradition in which he operates. But how, then, does Davidson himself supplement Tarski’s account of truth? According to Davidson, the key to the correct understanding of truth is to recognize the systematic connections among the concepts of truth, meaning, and belief.

First, I assume that there are inescapable and obvious ties among the concepts of truth, belief, and meaning. If a sentence *s* of mine means that *P*, and I believe that *P*, then I believe that *s* is true. What gives my belief its content, and my sentence its meaning, is my knowledge of what is required for the belief or the sentence to be true. Since belief and truth are related in this way, belief can serve as the human attitude that connects a theory of truth to human concerns.¹⁶

Let’s say that I assert the sentence “Okrent is currently speaking,” and I understand what I am saying. Why do I say what I do, as opposed to, say, “Rouse is flying”? Well, if in my mouth “Okrent is speaking” meant Okrent is speaking and I believed that Okrent is speaking, then that *would* explain why it is that I assert the sentence “Okrent is speaking.” So alluding to these two factors provides a possible explanation of the fact that I hold the sentence “Okrent is speaking” true.

Davidson holds that of these three putative facts, that what I say when I say “Okrent is speaking” means that Okrent is speaking, that I believe that Okrent is speaking, and that I hold the sentence “Okrent is speaking” to be true, only the last is observable, because only the last is an overt, if complex, fact about what I do. But, according to the above, if I believed that Okrent is speaking and “Okrent is speaking” meant that Okrent was speaking, these two facts together could *explain* that I held “Okrent is speaking”

to be true, or at least they could explain this if for “Okrent is speaking” to mean Okrent is speaking is for “Okrent is speaking” to be true if and only if Okrent is speaking. And it is this linkage that supports Davidson’s strategy for showing how Tarski’s view of truth must be supplemented.

The Davidsonian recipe for understanding truth involves the construction of two systematically linked holistic theories to explain the actions of speaking agents. The first theory involves treating an agent’s beliefs and the truth conditions on her words as the two aspects of a two-factor theoretical explanation of what sentences she holds to be true. Here is the recipe. Assuming the principle of charity, start out by assuming that the agent holds a sentence to be true only when she should, that is, only if the sentence is true. Construct a Tarski-style truth definition that allows you to infer T-sentences for all of the sentences in the speaker’s language, including both those that she actually utters and all other possible sentences, and do so in such a way that the definition is maximally compatible with all of the sentences the speaker holds being true, according to the constructed definition. At the same time, using the evidential resources of both which sentences the speaker holds true and the remainder of her behavior, construct *another* two-factor theory, in this case a teleological theory, to explain the total behavior of the agent, both verbal and nonverbal, appealing to the beliefs and desires of the agent. Again taking the principle of charity for granted, assume that an agent mostly does what she has good reason to do given the situation and the kind of creature she is. But an agent acts for good reasons only if most of her beliefs are true, most of her desires are justified, and most of her inferences are rational, given her situation and desires. So the theory that is constructed involves assigning the maximum of true beliefs, justified desires, and rational inferences to the agent, compatible with her actual behavior, and using that assignment of beliefs and desires to explain the behavior.

These two theories are interconnected by the concept of belief. The agent’s beliefs, together with a Tarski-style truth definition that fits her language, explains why it is that she holds just those sentences true that she holds true. The agent’s beliefs, together with her desires and her instrumental rationality, explain why the agent acts as she does. Because the theories are linked in this way, the verbal behavior of the agent can serve as evidence for constructing an explanation of the nonverbal behavior of the agent, by providing evidence for the agent’s beliefs, via our theory of the truth conditions on her utterances. And the nonverbal behavior of the agent can provide evidence for our ascription of meaning to her utterances, via our theory of her beliefs and desires.

It is this same concept of belief that allows us to overcome the major weakness of both of the theories. That weakness, of course, is that no agent is fully rational and no agent holds a sentence true only if it is true. According to Davidson, the role of belief in both theories is to take up the slack between these idealizations and actuality. Again, the recipe is straightforward. Having constructed one's interlocking theories, adjust one's attribution of beliefs to the agent so as to make some of them false, in such a way as to maximally explain the agent's actual behavior and which sentences she holds true.

To accurately understand Davidson's views concerning truth, it is crucial to correctly understand the ontology that he associates with the elements in these two theories. About the beliefs, desires, and truth conditions that appear in these theories, Davidson is a scientific *realist*, not an instrumentalist or verificationist. Beliefs, truth conditions, and desires are as real as atoms and geological plates, and that is as real as it gets. But what these real things *are*, what it is to be a belief, a desire, or a truth condition, is just what the theory says they are. What it is for an agent or her utterances to have any of these features is fixed by the role of these features in the theoretical explanations in which they appear. From this, however, it immediately follows that nothing in the world, no object or event, would be true or false if there were not thinking creatures, that is, if there were no agents with beliefs and desires. For Davidson, no agent can hold any overt behavior or utterance to be true, and thus to be a sentence or assertion which might be true, unless that she holds it true can be explained by appeal to her beliefs and the meaning, that is, the truth conditions in her language, of the utterance.¹⁷ And, because what it is for some behavior to have truth conditions is tied to the conditions under which it is held to be true, no behavior can count as having truth conditions, that is, can be a candidate for truth, unless it is held to be true by some agent. For Davidson, nothing could be true or false if there were no thinking creatures because only entities that are true under certain conditions can *be* true, only objects or events that are *held* true can have conditions under which they are true, and entities, objects, or events can only be held true by entities that have beliefs and desires, by thinking creatures.¹⁸ So, if there are no thinking creatures, no entity, object, or event can be true or false.

Predicates, Propositions, and Sentences

Much of what Davidson has to say about truth turns on the singular fact that he is committed to the view that the primary truth vehicles are things that sentient beings do (or, in the case of sentences, types of things that

they do), the utterances, assertions, or sentences of thinking creatures, rather than the meanings or propositions expressed or represented by those sentences. Because he has this commitment, his principal discussions concern the relations among an actual agent's beliefs, the sentences that she utters and hears that she holds true, and the conditions under which those sentences would be true, rather than the relations between sentences and the propositions that they mean, represent, or express. In taking this approach, Davidson is rejecting an alternative tradition that focuses on propositions as the primary vehicles of truth and explains the truth of sentences in terms of the relation between sentences and the propositions they express. It is only from the perspective established by this Davidsonian commitment to sentences, rather than Platonic entities such as propositions, as the bearers of truth, that it seems obvious that there is nothing in the world that would be true or false if there were no thinking creatures.

As we saw above, during the bulk of his career Davidson offered an argument against treating propositions as the primary truth vehicles that turned on the slingshot argument. If there are no facts or states of affairs for propositionally structured entities to correspond with, as the slingshot argument concludes, then it makes no sense to speak of propositions whose identity conditions depend on their representing such facts. "If we give up facts as entities that can 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."¹⁹ But the slingshot argument itself is shaky. It depends on the assumption that definite descriptions are singular terms, which is a distinctly minority view, and on intuitions about which sentences can correspond to which facts that are hazy at best. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, the slingshot argument has not been notably successful in deflating those who believe that propositions are the primary bearers of truth.

It is striking that the last thing that Davidson was preparing for publication when he died was a book on truth and predication, which is designed to combine two sets of lectures, one on truth and the other on predication, into a single volume. This juxtaposition is explained by the way in which Davidson characterizes the traditional "problem of predication." That problem has to do with how a predicate contributes to a sentence in such a way that the sentence could ever succeed in *saying* something. But from Davidson's perspective, to ask how a sentence could say something is really the problem of "what is required of a sentence if it is to be true or false."²⁰ That is, the problem of predication is the problem of how predicates function so that sentences can say something, and the problem of how sentences say something is the problem of how sentences can be truth vehicles. But, as

we have seen, Davidson's earlier discussions of truth are incomplete precisely insofar as they leave unanswered the question of whether sentences can be true or false in virtue of their relation with the beliefs of those who utter them, or in virtue of representing propositions. So, since the problem of predication is the problem of how predicates allow sentences to say something that is true or false, the problem of predication is another way for Davidson to approach the nature of the primary truth bearers. Do predicates contribute to the possibility of a sentence's being true or false through their representative power, which in some way allows the sentence to represent or express some proposition, or do predicates function in some other way to make sentences capable of saying something?

As Davidson sees it, the problem of predication arises when we ask what is involved in a sentence's saying something. If we assume that sentences say something in virtue of the meanings of their parts, and that their parts are meaningful in virtue of standing for entities, we are confronted with the following problem.

The sentence "Theatetus sits" has a word that refers to, or names, Theatetus, and a word whose function is somehow explained by mentioning the property (or form or universal) of Sitting. But the sentence says that Theatetus *has* this property. If referring to the two entities Theatetus and the property of Sitting exhausted the semantics of the sentence, it would be just a string of names; we would ask where the verb was. The verb, we understand, expresses the relation of instantiation. Our policy, however, is to explain verbs by relating them to properties and relations. But this cannot be the end of the matter, since we now have three entities, a person, a property, and a relation, but no verb.²¹

That is, if we understand the role of predicates in sentences as being explained by their standing for entities, even if those entities are thought of as properties, or universals, or whatever, that are ontologically different in kind from particulars, then we can't see how a sentence differs from a string of names, a string that *says* nothing—for in that case the words just stand for a group of entities. And if we treat the role of predicates as not merely indicating some entity, but also indicating that the particular referred to in the subject stands in some relation, say, instantiation, to the entity named in the predicate, then we have still failed to understand how the words *say* anything. Now we have a list that includes, for example, Theatetus, the property Sitting, the relation Instantiation, but no verb.

What the intractability of the problem of predication shows is that what predicates refer to, or whether they refer to anything at all, is irrelevant to their ability to facilitate the ability of sentences to say anything at all. But if this is the case, then the strategy of explaining the truth of sentences by

first explaining the truth of propositions and then understanding the representation relation between sentences and the propositions they express is a nonstarter. This strategy is a nonstarter because any such representational account will leave unexplained how it is that anything, sentence or proposition, can say anything of anything, and thus leave unexplained how a sentence could be true or false. The detour through propositions adds nothing, and we are left with the original problem: How can sentences be true or false?

Davidson's own solution to the problem of predication turns on treating truth as the primary semantic concept: "Truth is the prime semantic concept; we could not think or speak in the sense of entertaining or communicating propositional contents without it."²² Instead of focusing on what the parts of a sentence represent, we should focus on how the sentence says something that might be true or false. And a sentence says something just in case it *can* be true or false. So if we could explain how a predicate contributes to the truth or falsity of the sentences in which it appears, we will have explained the functional role the predicate plays in aiding the sentence to say something. But, in a sense, this is precisely what a Tarski-style definition of a truth predicate for a language does. Such a definition explains the roles of all of the particular predicates in a language by specifying the conditions under which those predicates are *true of* objects, and thus serve as part of an explanation of the truth or falsity of sentences containing those predicates. If "'Okrent is speaking' is true if and only if Okrent is speaking" is a T-sentence of English, then what explains that "Okrent is speaking" is currently true is that this T-sentence holds and that Okrent is currently speaking. And this is a sufficient account of how the predicate "is speaking" contributes to the ability of a sentence to be true or false. "[I]f we can show that our account of the role of predicates is part of an explanation of the fact that sentences containing a given predicate are true or false, then we have incorporated our account of predicates into an explanation of the most obvious sense in which sentences are unified, and so we can understand how, by using a sentence, we can make assertions and perform other speech acts."²³

As Davidson recognizes, this solution to the problem of predication has the air of hocus pocus. In effect, Davidson gives us an account of how *each* predicate contributes to the truth conditions of the sentences in which it appears (by inferring those conditions from a Tarski-style definition of the truth predicate), without telling us *how*, in general, predication introduces truth conditions at all. Davidson professes not to be bothered by this result. His position is that this is all we can get in the way of a solution to

the problem of predication, because any more we might add would just reintroduce the classic puzzles.

It may be objected that it [Davidson's account] gives an account of how each predicate in a language contributes to the truth conditions of the sentences in which it occurs, but that it gives no general explanation of predication. It is true that no such general explanation emerges. What does emerge is a *method* for specifying the role of each and every predicate in a specific language. . . . What more can we demand? I think the history of the subject has demonstrated that more would be less.²⁴

3 Heidegger on Truth

The ways in which Heidegger's manner of approaching issues relating to truth is markedly different from Davidson's approach are immediately evident. Nevertheless, there are at least two significant ways in which the contours of Heidegger's discussion coincide with Davidson's. First, there is the doxographic agreement that I have been emphasizing regarding the dependence of truth on sapient being. Second, there is a certain methodological coincidence between the way Davidson approaches truth in *Truth and Predication* and the way Heidegger approaches truth in *Basic Problems*. In *Truth and Predication* Davidson implicitly argues that the concept of truth can be grasped only through its links with the concepts of meaning and *belief*. Because of this connection between truth and belief, Davidson thinks that only occurrences that are explicable by appeal to the beliefs of agents can count as true or false. (This isn't quite true, of course, as Davidson thinks that both beliefs themselves and types of actual and possible utterances in a language, i.e., sentences, can be true and false.) In *Truth and Predication* (as opposed to the rest of his works) Davidson argues for the centrality of the relation between truth and belief by way of excluding the only conceivable alternative, that it is propositions, or the meanings of sentences, that are true or false, and that such propositions can be true even if they are neither sentences in a believer's language or ever uttered by believers. *Truth and Predication* argues against this alternative by showing that, because of the problems involved in explaining predication representationally, the representational features of sentences, by themselves, are insufficient to account for the ability of sentences to say something that might be true or false. And for that reason, sentences become capable of saying something that might be true or false only through their being uttered by believers or by being linked in the appropriate way to actual utterances by believers. In *Basic Problems*, Heidegger uses a similar strategy to reach the conclusion that truth has *Dasein's* kind of being.

Just as in the Davidsonian strategy, Heidegger begins with a critical discussion of the history of attempts to solve the problem of the way in which the subject and predicate are related in the assertoric sentence. Heidegger starts his history with Aristotle's definition of the *logos apophantikos*, a term that he translates into German as *Aussage*, and we will translate into English as "assertion." The *Logos apophantikos* is "an articulate sound in words that is capable of signifying something and in such a way that each part of this verbal complex, each single word, already signifies something for itself, the subject concept and the predicative concept."²⁵ The distinctive mark of this semantic formation, that it is *apophantikos*, is articulated by Heidegger as its *exhibiting* ability, and only discourse "in which trueness and falseness occur" is exhibitiv. Grammatically, the mark of the assertion is that its two main parts, the subject concept and the predicate concept, are linked by the "is" of the copula. So "being" in the sense of the copula and being in the sense of being-true are connected in the structure of the assertion: The ability of the assertion to say something that could be true or false is somehow linked with the predicative structure in the assertion. "In the logos as assertion there is present, for one thing, in conformity with its form S is P, the 'is,' being as copula. For another, each logos as assertion is either true or false."²⁶

As Davidson as well as Heidegger pointed out, Aristotle, following the late Plato, already noticed that the fact that both the subject and the predicate term of the assertion represent or stand for entities does not account for the fact that the assertion says something that could be true or false. This is the way Heidegger sums up Aristotle's point:

All these verbs *mean something* but they do not say whether what they mean *is* or *is not*. If I say "to go," "to stand," "going," "standing," then I haven't said whether anyone is *actually* going or standing. Being, not-being, to be, not to be, do not signify a thing—we would say they do not in general signify something which itself *is*. Not even if we utter the word "being" *to on*, quite nakedly for itself, for the determination being, in the sense of to-be, in the expression "being" *is nothing*; being is not itself *a being*.²⁷

That is, what the assertion asserts is the *being* so and so of some entity; this is what is indicated by the copula that is the mark of the assertion's ability to say something true or false. But the "is" doesn't function like the other parts of the assertion. It doesn't represent any thing, any entity. In that sense, *being* so and so is not *a being*.

Since the assertion only says something that might be true or false by asserting that something *is* so and so, and the entities that the various parts of the sentence represent taken together do not contain this assertoric

aspect of the sentence, Aristotle concludes, as Heidegger notes, that truth is not “in things.” Rather, truth must be “in thought.” About this “is” Aristotle says, summarized by Heidegger: “For falsity and truth are not in things . . . but in ‘thought,’ what this ‘is’ means is not a being occurring among things, something present like them, but *en dianoia*, in thinking.”²⁸ We will see that although there is a sense in which Heidegger accepts this Aristotelian dictum that truth is not in things, from Heidegger’s perspective it must be seriously qualified and modified.

After concluding his tour of the history of logic Heidegger returns to the direct consideration of the nature of assertion, and through that consideration, his discussion of truth. One of the key implications Heidegger draws from the history of the problem of predication is that attempts to solve that problem have been warped by the tendency to treat assertion as primarily a *verbal* phenomenon. Such a way of taking the problem suggests that the ability of an assertion to say something of something that might be true or false is in some way dependent on a structural feature of the sentence in which the assertion is uttered. But from Heidegger’s standpoint, no such structural feature could ever account for the assertoric character of assertion. For it to do so would require that the representational aspects of the sentence by themselves could explain why it is that it is an assertion, and this, we have seen, is impossible. So whatever it is that allows the assertion to say something true or false is not contained in the verbal string itself just as a verbal string, and thus that the assertion is actually uttered is an *inessential* aspect of the assertion as assertion. “Spoken articulation can belong to the logos, but it does not have to.”²⁹

This Heideggerean emphasis on the possibility that assertions need not be uttered would seem to mark a crucial difference from Davidson. In fact, however, the gap between Heidegger and Davidson on this point is not as wide as it might seem. Both Heidegger and Davidson are reacting against the traditional program that attempts to understand the ability of assertions to say something primarily in terms of the representational quality of their parts. For Davidson, as well as Heidegger, this program must fail, because the most important aspect of assertion taken strictly as a verbal unit, its predicative structure or copula, does not itself represent anything. So, for Davidson, what is uttered in the sentence actually *says* anything, that might be true or false, only through its relations to the *beliefs* of the speaker—that is, through the fact that the sentence has an intentional character through its being explained by its links with the intentional states of the speaker. And, for Heidegger, the most fundamental fact about assertion is that it itself *is* a specific kind of intentional comportment. “Asserting is

one of the Dasein's intentional comportments."³⁰ That is, what makes an assertion an assertion, a *logos apophantikos* that can be true or false, is nothing about its verbal structure, but rather that it is a certain kind of intentional comportment of a certain type of agent.

To say that asserting is an intentional comportment is to say that all acts of assertion are about something. Assertion shares this in common with all types of intentional comportments. Assertion is differentiated from those other comportments, however, by the kind of comportment it is. For Heidegger the differentia of assertion has three aspects. "We can define assertion as *communicatively determinant exhibition.*"³¹ Notice, the differentiae of assertion are characterized in terms of what the comportment that is assertion *does*. An assertion is a kind of *exhibition*, and, as intentional, it is an exhibition of something. "The basic structure of assertion is the exhibition of that about which it asserts."³² The two other differentiae serve to distinguish assertion from other types of exhibition. Assertion exhibits by showing the going together of different specifications of the very thing that is exhibited: "it displays the belonging-together of the manifold determinations of the being which is asserted about."³³ That is, assertion essentially exhibits what it is about by predicatively determining it *as* this or that. And assertion is essentially communicative insofar as it has the function of sharing among different agents this determining predicative way of comporting toward the entity that the assertion is about.

So, for Heidegger, assertions are a kind of intentional comportment that counts as communicatively determinant exhibition. And assertions can be true and false. But what does it mean to say that an assertion is true? What does the truth of an assertion consist in? For Heidegger, the capacity of the assertion to be true or false is tied to its function as an intentional comportment rather than to its internal structure. Assertion is an intentional comportment in the sense that it has a function and as such aims at accomplishing an end. The end it aims at is that the entity it refers to be exhibited *as it is*. When this is accomplished, Heidegger says that the entity is *unveiled*. When the assertion does its job, it exhibits or unveils what it is about; that is, the assertion itself succeeds in unveiling its referent. This successful completion of its job by an assertion, its unveiling of what it is about, is what it is for an assertion to be true. "This unveiling, which is the *basic function of assertion*, constitutes the character traditionally designated as *being-true.*"³⁴

But notice, on this view, what it is for an assertion to be true is fixed in terms of the assertion accomplishing a task, and that task has to do with achieving something regarding its referent, in this case that the referent be

unveiled. Just as my painting a house is an intentional comportment that has *that the house is painted* as its success condition, my making an assertion in regard to Okrent (say, “Okrent is speaking”) is an intentional comportment that has Okrent being unveiled *as speaking* as *its* success condition. “The *intentum* of the *intentio* of . . . assertion has the character of unveiledness.”³⁵ What assertion intends is *unveiledness*, but the unveiledness that is intended by assertion is always “*the unveiledness* of that to which the assertion refers.”³⁶ When an assertion intends the object to which it refers, it intends the “being-unveiled,” the “unveiledness” of that object. That unveiledness is what it is to accomplish, and if the assertion accomplishes this task, then it is true.

This is a strange way to characterize a class of intentions. What is strange about it has to do with the way that the *intentum* of the act of asserting is characterized. Consider: When I see the color of the plant in my office, I intend the plant *as green*; I intend the plant’s *being green*, or the *greenness* of the plant. Similarly, when I intend to paint my house, I intend that my house comes to have been painted. The paintedness of the house or the greenness of the plant are both possible ways in which an entity itself might be. They are potential properties of things, and in that sense “among things.” But the *being-unveiled*, or the “*unveiledness*” of the plant as green, is no property of the plant, and the assertion in which I claim that the plant is green *says nothing* about the plant as unveiled. That the plant be exhibited as it is, or unveiled, is no part of the *content* of the assertion. If it were, then every assertion would need to have some content in common. But the truth of the assertion about the plant consists, according to Heidegger, in the assertion succeeding in unveiling the plant. So truth is not “present among things” as Heidegger puts it, echoing Aristotle. It is no property of things that a thing might have even if there were no assertions. Truth, at least the truth of assertions, depends on the existence of beings that can make assertions that can, at least potentially, unveil entities.

As we have seen, Aristotle jumped right from the conclusion that truth is not “in things” to the implication that truth must be “in thought.” But Heidegger rejects this implication: “It thus will emerge that truth is neither present in things nor does it occur in a subject but lies—taken almost literally—in the middle ‘between’ things and *Dasein*.”³⁷ To say that truth is “in thought” or “in a subject” must mean, Heidegger suggests, that “truth is in some sense a determination of the mind, something inside it, immanent in consciousness.” This suggestion, which takes some sort of Cartesian or German idealist conception of subjectivity as the antagonist to be defeated, clearly leaves out a different alternative. Truth might be “in

thought” in the sense that truth is defined in terms of the collective procedures of justification that offer warrants for assertions within the games of giving and asking for reasons that are played by communities of intentional agents. Nevertheless, even though Heidegger in the 1920s was blind to this possibility, I don’t think it would have made much of a difference to his judgment that truth can’t be “in thought” in this or any other sense. Heidegger’s argument here is essentially the same as Davidson’s. He thinks that the intentional structure of assertion guarantees that truth is not “in the mind” in the sense of being a feature of some intentional entity that makes no essential reference to the *intentionum* of that entity, as is the case for the warrant for an assertion. As an intentional comportment, an assertion is a communicating, determining exhibition of its referent itself. It is successful only if the thing itself is displayed, exhibited, unveiled as *it* is. The assertion “The plant is green” succeeds in its job only if it succeeds in displaying the plant as it is, the plant being green. For that reason, any mere epistemic characteristic of the assertion itself, such as the assertion’s being warranted assertible, must be distinct from the aim of the assertion, that the plant itself be shown as it is. Since for an assertion to be warranted has to do with the assertion and not what it is about, the plant, it is always possible that the assertion is warranted even if the assertion is not true. For truth, the assertion must successfully exhibit the plant.

So, Heidegger concludes, truth is neither present among things nor in the mind. But, then, “where” is it? As he has articulated the notion, the truth of an assertion is its unveiling character, that it succeeds in exhibiting, bringing to unveiledness, displaying, the thing it is about. And truth itself is “unveiledness” as such. But for Heidegger, things can be unveiled only if there is a being that does the unveiling, a being capable of intending entities, that is, *Dasein*. The unveiling, truth, happens only in and through *Dasein*. It immediately follows from this that there is no truth without *Dasein*. “There is truth—unveiling and unveiledness—only when and as long as *Dasein* exists.”

But isn’t there an enormous gap in this argument? Hasn’t Heidegger neglected to exclude another possibility? Can’t truth be a property of propositions, rather than an epistemic property or a property of things? In fact, in *Basic Problems* Heidegger does raise this possibility, only to reject it, apparently without argument, with ridicule and contempt. Having rejected both an objectivist and a subjectivist interpretation of truth, Heidegger mentions meanings as a third realm of being: “The consequences of this impossible predicament of inquiry appear in the theory’s being driven to every possible device—for instance, it sees that truth is not in objects, but also

not in subjects, and so it comes up with a third realm of meaning, an invention that is no less doubtful than medieval speculation about angels."³⁸ But, of course, Heidegger has already given us the argument that justifies this ridicule. It is just the argument that he shares with the Davidson of *Truth and Predication*. The meaning of the assertion, what the proposition expresses, can't be what is true and false, because the only way to cash out that proposition in a way that divorces it from actual intentional agents intending the world is through the representational aspects of the parts of the assertoric sentence, and, we have seen, those representational aspects of those parts, by themselves, are inadequate to ever *say* anything. So the conclusion stands. There is no truth without *Dasein*, even though truth cannot be identified with what is warranted for *Dasein*.

4 Conclusion

As I have been telling the story, there is a great deal in common in Heidegger's and Davidson's understanding of truth. They both reject realist notions of truth for very much the same reason. Given the problem of predication it is impossible to comprehend the ability of a sentence to say something true or false solely on the basis of the representational properties of the internal structural parts of the sentence, and, because this is so, it is impossible to make coherent sense of the notion that a sentence can have a meaning that might be true or false independently of the role of the use of the sentence in the ongoing activity of an intentional agent. And for that reason there cannot be any thing in the world that might be true or false in the absence of acting, thinking creatures. But Heidegger and Davidson also agree on the limited character of the dependence of truth on sentient being. Although there is nothing in the world that could be true or false without thinkers, *which* of these items *are* true depends exclusively on the things in the world, not on the epistemic powers of its thinking inhabitants.

Having emphasized the commonality between Heidegger and Davidson, however, it is time to acknowledge the deep disagreement between them. This truly deep difference shows itself in two Heideggerean assertions concerning truth for which there are no Davidsonian analogues. First, Heidegger holds that assertion is not the primary truth bearer; for Heidegger, assertions can be true or false only because something else already unveils entities, and in that sense, is true. "Assertion does not as such primarily unveil; instead, it is always, in its sense, already related to something antecedently given as unveiled."³⁹ Second, Heidegger holds that the entity

that does this unveiling prior to assertion, and in that sense is true in the most basic way, is *Dasein*, or sapient being itself. Here is one of the ways Heidegger puts this familiar point in *Basic Problems*:

Intentional comportment in the sense of assertion about something is founded in its ontological structure in the basic constitution of the Dasein which we described as being-in-the-world. Only because Dasein exists in the manner of being-in-the-world is some being unveiled along with the Dasein's existence in such a way that what is thus unveiled can become the possible object of an assertion. So far as it exists, the Dasein is always already dwelling with some being or other, which is uncovered in some way or other and in some degree or other.⁴⁰

We can get at what Heidegger is driving at in these dark sayings by focusing on the limitations of the Davidsonian project. As we have seen, what it is for a sentence to say something must be seen in terms of its ability to say something that might be true or false. But an utterance can be true (or false) only if it has associated truth conditions. Any given utterance has truth conditions only if it is the act of an agent whose verbal and nonverbal behavior, taken as a whole, is explicable by appeal to two interlocking sorts of theory, one of which explains verbal acts by alluding to a Tarski-style theory of truth conditions for a language and the beliefs of the agent, and the other of which appeals to those same beliefs and the desires of that agent to explain her acts. Armed with these theories, an observer is in a position to understand what the agent says, in the sense that she can assign conditions under which what she says would be true, for anything she should happen to say. Now, of course, the observer must have an understanding of what is involved in a sentence being true *prior* to her construction of any such theory. She needs this prior understanding for two reasons. First, in order to construct the theory the observer must be in a position to recognize that what the agent says is mostly true when she says it, and to do that the observer must have some sense of what it is for a sentence to be true. Second, for an observer to construct her theories of the agent, the observer must be able to attribute beliefs to the agent, and to do that the observer must be able to detect the falsehoods that the agent speaks. And to tell that what an agent says is false, the observer must have some sense of what it is for a sentence to be true.⁴¹

Davidson holds that "all attempts to characterize truth that go beyond giving empirical content to a structure of the sort Tarski taught us how to describe are empty, false, or confused."⁴² And he continues by listing a series of attempts to characterize truth that he rightly thinks are empty, false, or confused. But Davidson's own views push us in a different direction. The task of "giving empirical content to a structure of the sort Tarski

taught us how to describe” is just the task of constructing an overall theory that explains the behavior, verbal and nonverbal, of an agent by treating that agent as having intentional compartments such as beliefs and desires, that put the agent into vital contact with the world. This vital contact is ensured by the necessity of the principle of charity. For Davidson himself, it is a necessary ontological condition on being an intentional agent that most of the agent’s acts must be successful, most of her desires must be appropriate given the kind of being that she is, and most of her beliefs must be true. That is, the condition *sine qua non* for having an intentional life is that an agent’s intentions, in general, successfully uncover the entities in the world. This successful uncovering, however, can’t be primarily linguistic. As Davidson himself shows, sentences can’t say anything unless they have truth conditions; sentences can’t have truth conditions unless the speakers of those sentences have beliefs; and speakers can’t have beliefs unless they are also agents who successfully cope with things by acting in order to get what they desire. Only agents who successfully uncover the entities in the world in and by coping with that world with their perceptual, inferential, and motor intentional capacities, can uncover the world by making assertions. That is, it is a condition on making Davidson’s project fly that “assertion does not as such primarily unveil; instead, it is always, in its sense, already related to something antecedently given as unveiled,” and “intentional compartment in the sense of assertion about something is founded in its ontological structure in the basic constitution of the Dasein which we described as being-in-the-world.”

So there is something substantial to say about truth beyond what Davidson is willing to commit himself to, and Heidegger has gone a long way toward saying it. Truth is uncovering, and it is tied ontologically to the existence of a being whose very definition consists in the ability to unveil the world by actively and successfully coping with it perceptually in a motor-intentional way. Davidson comes close to saying something similar to this, but is prevented from doing so by the limitations of his vision and philosophical upbringing.

Notes

1. Donald Davidson, *Truth and Predication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 7.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 269.

3. W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in W. V. O. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 80.
4. Mark Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
5. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 217.
6. I borrowed the outlines of this interpretation of *Truth and Predication* from Jeff Speaks, who suggested it in a review of that book in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (August 2006), at <<http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=7224>>.
7. Donald Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 177–191, 190.
8. Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," p. 185.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
10. Davidson, *Truth and Predication*, p. 27.
11. Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," p. 184.
12. Davidson, *Truth and Predication*, p. 128.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128.
14. Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," p. 184.
15. See Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," pp. 185–188.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 188–189.
17. It is another implication of Davidson's commitments that no agent can have beliefs and desires who does not make assertions that can be true or false. This follows from the linkages between the two theories, via belief. For what it is worth, I think Davidson is wrong about this, and that the belief/desire system can be autonomous from the language system, as it is when we attribute propositional attitudes to non-speaking animals.
18. Strictly speaking, sentences in a language, taken as potential utterance types in that language, that are never instantiated in any actual utterances, can on this view also be true or false. On Davidson's view, however, that there are such truth-bearing uninstantiated utterance types in a language is a function of the fact that the best truth theory for that language assigns truth conditions to those types of potential utterances. And, since truth conditions pertain to any utterance type only in light of the actual utterances of actual teleological rational agents, were there no such agents nothing could have such truth conditions and nothing could be a truth vehicle.
19. Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," p. 184.
20. Davidson, *Truth and Predication*, p. 86.

21. Ibid., pp. 84–85.
22. Ibid., p. 155.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 161.
25. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, p. 180.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 181.
28. Ibid., p. 182.
29. Ibid., p. 207. This conclusion doesn't actually follow from the argument as I have presented it. All that follows is that the verbal string is insufficient to explain predication, not that it is inessential.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 210.
32. Ibid., p. 209.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 215.
35. Ibid., p. 217.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 214.
38. Ibid., pp. 214–215.
39. Ibid., p. 208.
40. Ibid.
41. Davidson attempts to understand this prior sense of what it is for something to be true in terms of the agreement or disagreement between the agent and the observer. As far as I can tell, this stratagem immediately tips Davidson's views over into verificationism, and makes it the case that Rorty was right about Davidson: Truth is whatever is warranted by the justificatory rules of our club.
42. Davidson, "Epistemology and Truth," p. 190.

