Chapter IV

THE SEMANTICAL STRUCTURES: TRUTH, MEANING AND THE WORLD

This chapter explores the semantic structures of language in order to explain how the structures of truth and meaning reveal the structure of the world. Both the truth-conditional semantics and the non-truth conditional ones do underline the fact that the understanding of meaning and truth is an understanding of the world as well.

1. MEANING AND TRUTH

Major approaches to the question of meaning in the contemporary scene are divided over the truth-conditional theory of meaning and its realist metaphysics on the one hand, and an antirealist alternative to that on the other. Whether meaning can be accounted for in terms of truth-conditions, where truth is understood in an objective realist sense, or in an alternative conception, based on 'verifications,' is required to serve as the key concept in the theory of meaning.

Philosophers, starting from Frege, Wittgenstein, Carnap,
Quine, Davidson and others believed that the meaning of a sentence can be given by stating the conditions under which it is true.

Frege asserted that names have both references and senses. And likewise, sentences, as complex names, have as their references either the True or the False. The thought or sense of a sentence is determined by the conditions under which the sentence designates the True.

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein also gave expression to the more or less same idea—'To know the meaning of a sentence is to know what is the case if it is true', and, in the same vein Carnap later articulated that 'to know the meaning of a sentence is to know in which of the possible cases it would be true and in which not.'

This basic idea finds a prominent place in Davidson's formulation of theories regarding language and truth-conditional theory of meaning. Davidson believes that by the investigation of language one thereby investigates the world. He says, 'in making manifest large features of our language, we make manifest the large features of the world.' Therefore, according to him, 'what we must attend to in language, if we want to bring into relief general features of the world, is what is in general for a sentence in the language to be true.'

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1 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 4.024.
2 Carnap, Meaning and Necessity, Chicago, 1956, p.10.
4 Ibid., p.201.
Davidson draws inspiration from the works of Frege, Quine and Tarski. Frege did not formulate any general truth theory for natural language, rather he thought that natural language is defective and recalcitrant. In spite of this, Frege thought that his account could be applied to the natural language. Frege gave expression to the ideas of how the truth of a sentence is determined by the semantic constituents of the sentence, and to the construction of an improved language for which he derived a notation. Because of the artificiality of certain ideas, like treating sentence as name, and the pessimism inherent in his view about natural language, Frege's work cannot be applied, Davidson thought, directly to the investigations of meaning of natural language.

Quine has a holistic approach to the problems of language understanding. This holism furnishes the much needed empirical foundations of the theory. Unlike Quine, Davidson wants to draw metaphysical conclusions from a theory of truth and, consequently, an holistic approach to the language and truth would be handy. "If metaphysical conclusions are to be drawn from theory of truth in what I propose, the approach to the language must be holistic."

As a matter of fact, Quine does not see much in holistic approach to language so that we will be able to draw some metaphysical conclusions. Rather it is Davidson's convenience taking this approach to language, since it goes very well with his assumption that investigating language amounts to investigating the world. Quine has it that he developed his

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logic and much of his metaphysics is attached to his logic. Anyway what we are looking at is the realist conception of truth and its metaphysics, in which Davidson's perspective occupies an important position and how other philosophical thinking of more or less the same stream contributes to the overall realist perspective.

As far as truth is concerned, Davidson draws much, to construct his own theory of truth, from Tarski's work on truth. The Tarskian theory consists in an enumeration of semantic properties of the items in a finite vocabulary, together with a recursive characterisation of the infinity of sentences which can be generated from that vocabulary. This characterisation turns on the subtle and powerful concept of satisfaction which relates both sentences and non-sentential expressions to objects, in the world. But Tarski did not foresee much application of his theory for natural language. Contrary to this, Davidson's purpose of using Tarski's truth-theory is that, he thinks, it allows the truth-theory for a language to do what is centrally required, viz., to reveal and articulate structures in the language, which are just what is required to draw results on meaning and metaphysics.

2. THE SEMANTIC THEORY OF TRUTH

Tarski's semantic theory of truth made such a wide impact in contemporary analytic philosophy, especially on the proponents of truth-conditional theory of meaning who drew heavily from it. Though Tarski did not find much relevance of his theory in formulating semantics for a natural language, it
has it that a truth-conditional semantics could be developed to account for the natural language. His aim was minimal, i.e., to find a satisfactory definition of truth. He set mainly two criteria for a satisfactory definition, i.e., it should be 'materially adequate and formally correct.'\(^6\) His attempted definition of truth has a 'precise expression' of the intuition intrinsic to the Aristotelian conception of truth.\(^6\)

Tarski's proposal of a definition of truth took shape from a solution advanced to solve a form of the Liar paradox.\(^6\) The crux of the solution proceeds from a distinction between what is said in a sentence of a language and what is said about this sentence in a 'metalanguage'. The metalanguage sentence is of higher order than the other which it takes as its object language. The paradox arises, Tarski argues, from the self-reference of the sentence, and the sentence belongs to a 'semantically closed' language, i.e., a language containing not only its expected stock of expressions, but the names of these expressions, and semantic terms like 'true' applicable to its sentences. Above all there is a tacit assumption that all sentences which determine the use of 'true' can be asserted in that language.\(^7\) Therefore, in order to avoid self reference Tarski drew the distinction between object language and metalanguage, and held that ascription of truth or falsity to sentences are metalinguistic. Truth in this way is construed as a predicate of metalanguage applicable to sentences of its object language.\(^7\)


\(^7\) Ibid., p.59.
Tarski's purpose was to provide a definition of the expression 'true sentence' for a given language in the metalanguage M of L such that it will entail all sentences of M of the form 'S is a true sentence of L if and only if P' where 'S' is the name or structural description of a sentence in L and 'P' is the translation of that sentence into M.\(^8\) Since M may include L as part of itself, such sentences of L are their own translations into M. The requirement that the definition entails sentences of this form constitutes a criterion of material adequacy for any satisfactory definition of truth, and it is called 'convention (T)',

Convention (T), being a criterion for material adequacy, has it that an acceptable definition of truth should have as consequence all instances of the schema--

(T) S is true in L if and only if P.

Tarski's example of the schema is: 'snow is white' is true (in English) if snow is white. 'Snow is white' on the left-hand-side is the name of the sentence on the right-hand-side. Convention (T) is not a definition of truth, but a materially adequate criterion such that all its instances must be entailed by any definition of truth which is materially adequate.

A proper definition of truth needs something more along with the material adequacy conditions--proof of formal correctness in respect of both the structure of the language in which truth is defined and the concept employed in the definition. Definitions of truth are given in an L's metalanguage M, and this is why is included in or translated

\(^8\) "The Semantic Conception of Truth," p.60.
into \( M \). Because all equivalences of the form \((T)\) must be implied by a definition of truth owing to the adequacy condition, not only must \( M \) contain \( L \) or translations into itself of all \( L \) sentences, but also the equipments to refer to \( L \)-sentences. Added to it, Tarski required that metalanguage sentence and object-language sentence should be 'formally specifiable'; we must be able to specify the well formed formulae of \( L \) in order to define truth in \( L \), since these are the items which predicate 'true-in \( L \)' qualifies. Tarski ruled out the possibility of truth definition for natural language because none of them is formally specifiable.

'Concept of Satisfaction' plays an important part in the actual definition of truth. This is a relation between objects and expressions called sentential functions. These expressions are sentential functions rather than sentences because they contain free variables making gaps into which suitable expressions or terms have to be substituted so that we will get proper sentences. The notion of 'recursive procedure' is involved in the definition of sentential function. Thus, a sentence can be defined as a sentential function which does not contain any free variables. The concept of satisfaction can be explained, say, that a given object satisfies a given function if the function can be turned into a sentence by replacing the free variable occurring in it by the name of the given object.

For example, the actual stuff 'snow' satisfies the sentential function '\( X \) in white' because 'snow is white' is true. But here we use 'true' in defining the satisfaction. Since our aim is to define 'true' another account should be given of
satisfaction which does not involve 'true'. This can be done, Tarski says, recursively by first indicating which objects satisfy the simplest sentential functions, and then by stating under what conditions given objects satisfy compound functions constructed out of these simple functions. The notion of satisfaction thus defined automatically takes care of sentential functions without any free variable, i.e., sentences. In the ultimate consideration, Tarski says, only two possible cases are there for a sentence, either it should satisfy by all objects or by no objects. In the first case sentence is true and in the second it is false.

3. DAVIDSON'S REALIST APPROACH TO TRUTH AND MEANING

An adequate theory of meaning, according to Davidson, must be able to satisfy some conditions and once these conditions are laid down, a theory of truth is the result which in turn satisfies all requirements for a theory of meaning. Davidson insists that an adequate theory of meaning should make it clear how the meanings of sentences in a language depend upon the meanings of their constituent words. Learning of language presupposes that sentence meaning is the function of word-meaning. A speaker or a language user has a capacity to construct and comprehend infinite number of sentences which have never been encountered before. Therefore, a theory should be able to explain how user of a specific language L is in a position to produce infinite number of sentences by making use of finite stock of words, and the rules governing their combination to produce sentences.
Hence, an adequate theory of meaning must satisfy the conditions: (a) it must enable us to give the meaning for each sentence of natural language L we are studying, (b) it must show how the sentences are semantically compounded from the finite stock of words by means of L's rules for combining those words, (c) it must show that the demonstration of how sentences of L mean is based on the same stock of concepts as L's sentences themselves, and (d) it must be empirically testable.

According to the form Davidson puts, an adequate theory of meaning would like to be

(1) S means M

where 'S' is a description of some sentence which specifies its structure, and 'M' is an expression which denotes that sentence's meaning. But appeal to the notion of sentence's meaning is ambiguous in nature and, hence, unhelpful. Therefore, a reformulated theory (1) would be

(2) S means that P

where 'P' is the sentence described by 'S'. But 'means that' is obviously no less problematic and, hence, another reformulation is needed. The idea in the second formulation is that 'P' is a sentence which means the same as the sentence described by 'S', but since the appeal to meaning is obscure, a more perspicuous

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9 Davidson, "Truth and Meaning" in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p.17.

10 "On Saying that", Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p.93.


surrogate needs to be found. Davidson sees that an arbitrary predicate T can be a replacement to 'means that' to the effect that 'is T iff' does much better job than 'means that'.

If 'S' is a structure specific description and 'P' is the sentence itself, the reformulated theory involving the predicate T is

\[(3) \text{ S is T iff P}\]

This formulation is a Tarskian style of formulation and what satisfies the arbitrary predicate T is the materially adequate truth predicate. This outcome is so positive to a theory of meaning which Davidson envisages because, for him, what a theory of meaning should provide is just a definition for such a truth predicate. This boils down to the fact that the meaning of a sentence is to be given by stating its truth-conditions.

Davidson's truth-theoretical approach resembles very much with Tarski's semantic theory of truth. In spite of this, Davidson is interested only in a species of truth theory which entails a statement of conditions under which every sentence of language is true. Thus Davidson's demand is for a truth theory which entails infinite number of biconditional statements of the form

\[(4) \text{ S is true iff P.}\]

In this formulation the arbitrary predicate 'T' has vanished in favour of 'true' and, hence, we get an explicit formulation of the truth-conditions.

It seems that Davidson's proposal that 'is true iff' is an alternative meaning of 'means that', But in reality it exceeds
more than that. There are lots of difficulties involved in considering that 'is true iff' and 'means that' are not synonymous. Moreover, 'is true iff' is contextually truth-functional, but that is not the case with 'means that'.

Davidson's whole endeavour is to give a more tractable theory of meaning via a theory of truth as against the conventional theories. Hence, the demand that 'means that' is synonymous with 'is true iff'. What Davidson really wants is the elimination of 'means that' altogether and to treat the question extensionally so that we would have a tractable theory of truth rather than an obscure theory of meaning. Therefore, the question of meaning could be settled, according to him, via the consideration of truth and truth-condition under which a sentence is true.

Davidson's this idea of treating the theory of meaning has its background in Quine's separation of semantic notion into two, i.e., theory of reference and theory of meaning. Accordingly, theory of reference basically entails the considerations involving notions like 'designates', 'satisfy' and 'is true'; whereas the second involves the notions of synonymy and analyticity. In other words, semantics has got two parts, i.e., extensional theories and intensional theories. Quine believed and proceeded in such a way that extensional theories are philosophically more promising.

Now let us see how Davidson makes use of these ideas of Quine in developing his theory. He writes:

The theory will have done its work if it provides, for every sentence 'S' in the language under study, a matching sentence
(to replace 'P') that, in some way yet to be made clear, gives the meaning of 'S'. One obvious candidate for the matching sentence is just 'S' itself, if the object language is contained in the metalanguage: otherwise a translation of 'S' in the metalanguage! As a final bold step, let us try treating the position occupied by 'P' extensionally; to implement this to sweep away the obscure 'means that', provide the sentence that replaces P with a proper sentential connective and supply the description that replaces 'S' with its own predicate. The plausible result is (T) S is T iff P.\footnote{13}

It is crucial to Davidson's programme of developing a theory of meaning that it treats the position occupied by 'P' extensionally. Accordingly he thinks that leaving 'means' and looking at truth as a solution to semantical problems are handy in solving a number of issues hitherto related to the talk of meaning. This goes in accordance with Quine's perception of the matter. Also it is a bold attempt in solving a number of semantic concepts which Quine considered obscure and problematic.

Davidson envisages that the formulated theory which has 'is T' as truth predicate, and a theory of meaning should place constraints on the predicate 'is T' such that the theory will entail all (T)-sentences. (T)-sentences are biconditionals in which 'S' is a standard structural description of 'P'. Davidson's this formulation of a theory of meaning is precisely in accordance with Tarski's proposed criterion of adequacy for any formal truth definition. The predicate 'is T' and the truth predicate are co-extensive. All true sentences will be entailed

\footnote{13 Davidson, Truth and Meaning, p.23.}
by the application of "is T".

Accordingly, a theory of meaning must demonstrate how the truth conditions for sentences are determined by the semantical features of the constituents of those sentences together with the semantic significance of their structure. Davidson demonstrates it by arguing that we have to sweep away intentionality in total and have to make the whole context extensional. Therefore, a theory of meaning should provide pairings between sentences of the object language with sentences of meta-language. As argued by Davidson, once we sweep away intensionality and treat the whole affair extensionally, it amounts to that we adopt truth-functionality, obviously, in the biconditional form since the aim is to arrive at equivalence of meaning between S and P.

4. SOME DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN DAVIDSON'S PROPOSAL

Davidson envisions a theory of meaning in which the truth-conditions determine the semantic structure of the sentences for language. Here, as we have seen, one side of the biconditional stands for the sentence 'S' of which the meaning should be given by metalanguage sentence 'P'. This idea invariably relates to the notion of translation or interpretation which Tarski successfully employed in defining the truth predicate. In Tarski's construal it is a condition on 'S is true iff p' that 'P' be a translation of 'S'.

Davidson tried to employ this notion of translation or interpretation so that his theory of meaning, fashioned in Tarski's truth definition, would be applicable to the whole
spectrum of natural languages. Accordingly, we have to interpret that a sentence 'P' of metalanguage has the meaning possessed by the sentence uttered by someone and described by 'S'. This interpretation that depends upon Tarskian condition is met by some such sentence as 'Snow is white is true iff snow is white'. The idea, according to Davidson, is that one discovers the meaning of a speaker's utterance by invoking a notion of what the speaker holds true; meaning is discovered by holding the speaker's belief constant.

Davidson's this idea of employing interpretation to construct a theory of meaning goes awry because though it is true that his notion holds well with Tarski's attempt in defining truth predicate, it cannot be used in constructing a theory of meaning. Davidson's formulation gives the idea that translation or interpretation is part and parcel of a theory of meaning. While the perceived aim of a theory of meaning is to find way how an object language sentence is true and acquires its meaning, the interpretation or translation is supposed to be the consequence of such a theory, not an integral part of it. Therefore it appears to be a mistake that Tarski's truth predicate does the work we require of a theory of meaning.

Tarski was very much sceptical about the application of his formal truth theory to natural languages? He felt that semantic closedness, which leads into paradoxes, and the amorphous state of natural language are the main hindrances in grafting his truth definition onto natural language. But Davidson claims that this can be done with his modified versions of truth theory and, as generally perceived, his theory does not aim to reform the
natural language but to describe it. The application of his theory made progress, he claims, in solving, for example, the problem of indexicality. Any way, all these claims depend on settling the basic questions whether truth could be considered central to a theory of meaning.

5. IS TRUTH CENTRAL TO A THEORY OF MEANING?

The whole project, for Davidson, of constructing a theory of meaning depends upon the notion of truth. His formulation, as we have seen, is a modified version of Tarski's truth definition in order to suit the natural language. In making truth a central concept in formulating a theory of meaning we acquire, according to him, a theory which is empirically testable.

This truth-conditions approach has it that any selected sentence is true given what the theory avers to be truth-conditions really are. A typical case might involve deciding whether the sentence "Snow is white" is true if and only if "snow is white". Here what essentially is involved in the decision procedure is the ability to recognise as true the T-sentences entailed by the theory. For the simplest cases it is no harder to test the 'empirical adequacy' of the theory "than it is for a competent speaker of English to decide whether sentences like "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white" are true." And this procedure is simple and straightforward as the homophonous cases concerned and ultimately the ability to recognize rests on speakers "linguistic

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14 Davidson, "Semantics for Natural Languages," in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p.62.
intuitions'. In homophonic cases the testing of theory involves determining whether object-language and metalanguage of the either side of the biconditional has the same truth value. But when it comes to the cases in which object and metalanguage differ, Davidson takes the help of the method of radical translation. He writes:

We will notice under which conditions the alien speaker assents to or dissents from, a variety of his sentences. The relevant conditions will be what we take to be the truth-conditions of his sentences. We will have to assume that in simple or obvious cases most of his assents are true, and his dissents from false, sentences--an inevitable assumption since the alternative is unintelligible.15

It seems that an empirically testable theory is well grounded on the appeal to assent and dissent pattern, and there is a strong relation between the truth and the notion of assent and dissent. This could not be argued as the ground for forging link between truth and a theory of meaning.

This claim of Davidson's is acceptable only if he had fashioned his theory fully in accordance with the Tarskian definition. Tarski's formulations shows how truth-conditions of sentences depend upon their parts, and this entails not only the sentence is true but also that every sentence of given form is true. This means to say that Tarski's theory entails generalisation based on the sentence structure, and therefore, entitles to be plausible candidate for a theory of logical form. Of course, Davidson maintained that a theory of truth should

give an account of logical truth, equivalence, entailment for
the object language. Davidson holds that the theory should
entail not only the given sentences are true but also under any
significant change in their logical parts, they remain true. He
states, "It is hard to imagine how a theory of meaning could
fail to read a logic into its object language to this degree;
and to the extent that it does, our intuitions of logical form,
equivalence, and entailment may be called upon in constructing
and testing the theory."\(^{16}\) Therefore, the testability of the
theory goes with this; it has been said that at the bottom the
testability is nothing but its dependence upon speaker's assent
to or dissent from the sentence uttered. This is to say that
speaker's intuitions become the sole test for the theory.

Other compelling reason for thinking that the Tarskian
truth-definition will do the required trick in constructing a
theory of meaning is that the Tarskian theory shows with
precision how the truth-conditions of sentences are determined
by the truth-conditions of their constituent items. Hence, the
talk of truth gets substituted by the talk of meaning.
Therefore, meaning of sentences should somehow be explained as
the function of the meanings of their constituents. Considerable
success can be achieved by doing this, since the Tarskian
devices equip us to deal with potentially infinite number of
sentences in the language.

6. DUMMETT'S CRITICISM OF THE TRUTH-CONDITIONS THEORY OF MEANING

Dummett says any theory which has it that the meaning of

\(^{16}\) Davidson, "Truth and Meaning", p.33.
sentences is to be specified in terms of truth-conditions is equivalent to realism concerning the subject of that class of sentences. Realism, he says, is the thesis that the world is determinately constituted, that is, has its character independently of any knowledge or experience of it, so that sentences about the world are either determinately true or false in virtue of the way things are in the world, whether or not we can come to know those sentences to be true or false. On a realist thesis, truth conditions of sentences in a given class of sentences may transcend our capacity to recognize whether or not they obtain. Consequently, realism with respect to a class of sentences may be characterised that, irrespective of what the truth-values of these sentences have, the principle of bivalence holds for that class. This principle states that every sentence in a given class of sentences determinately possesses either one or other of the truth-values, i.e., 'true' and 'false'.

This transcendent notion of truth, as realists conceive, could not do well in our attempt in constructing a theory of meaning for a language. Why because our capacity to recognize truth or falsity is limited and so much of the sentences in our language are beyond our recognisational capacity, therefore will have to be left unaccounted. This is not acceptable. Moreover, the transcendent notion of truth will not do, Dummett argues, because our demand is that a theory of meaning should tell us what speakers of a language know when they understand their language. Again, if truth-conditions determine the sense of the sentences then the theory should be able to tell how that knowledge of truth-condition equip the speaker to know every
aspects of the use of sentences. Dummett says that the realist thesis of truth-condition fails to account for the connection between the knowledge and its use.

The anti-realist demands that a theory of meaning must tell us what speaks of a language know in knowing what sentences of that language mean and also must show how that language enable the speaker to use. In short, the question is, how are truth-conditions, if truth is taken as the basic concept of a theory of meaning, related to the actual language use. This demand is all the more important to any theory of meaning since an acceptable theory of meaning has to meet mainly two requirements; that the theory must tell us what counts as a speaker's manifestation of his knowledge of the meaning of sentences, and what its speakers know in knowing their language must not only be publicly observable but also acquirable in the public context. Because language is considered to be a tool of communication, sense must be public. Dummett's objection to a realist theory of meaning based on the truth-conditions becomes more discernible here, since the notion of transcendence of truth does not conform to this basic demand for any acceptable theory of meaning.

If knowledge of truth-condition is held to consist in an ability to know when a given sentence is true or false, i.e., to recognise whether or not the sentences' truth condition obtain, then the connection between knowledge and use is unproblematic, for we have a practical capacity connecting the condition of sense for sentences and the use to which those sentences can be put. Because being able to recognize whether or not truth-
conditions obtain constitutes a practical mastery of a procedure for settling what truth-value a sentence has, understanding a sentence comes down to having this recognisional capacity. This grasp of the sense of sentence determines and is determined by the uses to which the sentences can be put. Hence connection between knowledge and use is manifest. However, if truth-value is construed as a recognition—transcendent property of sentences, as realists do, then what account is to be given of what it is to know the truth-conditions of sentences whose truth values we are not able to establish? It is impossible to associate grasp of transcendent truth-condition with the possession of an ability to recognise what their truth-values are, precisely because their truth-conditions are transcendent. For such sentences, then, we have no way of saying how knowledge of truth-condition can be manifested. If we cannot say this, then the theory does not show how sense and use connect—how sense and use determine each other. Therefore, Dummett concludes, any theory of meaning based on the transcendent concept is useless.

This does not mean that the notion of truth is totally irrelevant. Truth is to be thought, Dummett says, of as a product of the verification procedure we employ in exercising our capacity to establish truth-value.

7. TRUTH-CONDITION AND USE

Philosophical questions about meaning, Dummett holds, are best interpreted as questions about understanding: a dictum about what the meaning of an expression consists in must be
construed as a thesis about what is to know its meaning." Accordingly, if truth is taken to be the key concept, then a truth-condition theory is to be construed as one which states that to know the meaning of a sentence is to know the condition for it to be true. But what is to know the truth condition of a sentence?

Whatever is knowing the truth-conditions of a sentence, it has to depend upon an understanding of the words constituting the sentence and the significance of their arrangement. Problem, therefore is: what is it that a speaker knows when he knows a language, and what, in particular, does he thereby know about any given sentence of the language? Answer to this will constitute a theoretical representation of a practical ability, viz., the ability to speak the language. That theoretical representation will consist in a set of deductively connected propositions, and will be an explicit setting-out of the speaker's linguistic knowledge. Of course, the speaker will not himself have explicit knowledge of these propositions, but it is enough to attribute implicit knowledge of these propositions to anyone who has mastery of a given practice. Therefore the theory of meaning must specify not merely what is it that the speaker must know, but what counts as a manifestation of that knowledge, for if the theory does not do this, it would fail to be an account of the practical ability it is supposed to be a theory of.

According to Dummett, any theory of meaning, which takes

the notion of truth as basic, consists of (a) a theory of reference couched within a theory of sense and (b) a theory of force giving us an account of different linguistic acts which can be performed by utterances of the language's sentences. Part (a) which Dummett calls 'theory of reference' will be a theory of truth consisting of inductive specification of the truth-conditions for sentences of the language. While some of the theorems of the theory of reference or truth state the truth-conditions of sentences, its axioms will assign reference to those individual words. The surrounding theory of sense specifies what a speaker knows in knowing the theory of reference, by correlating the speaker's practical linguistic abilities to certain propositions of the theory. This characterisation of a theory of meaning shows that knowledge of truth-conditions is not alone that a speaker has to know; but it is also that a speaker has to know specifically, in connection with any given sentence, because the rest of what he has to know is general in nature, viz., a set of general principles which enables him to derive any aspect of a sentence's use from its truth-conditions. This is how things stand with any theory of meaning which postulates that there is a single feature of a sentence, its truth-condition, such that awareness of it amounts to a grasp of the sentence's meaning.

At this point Dummett raises the important question 'Whether the concept of truth is the right choice for the central notion of a theory of meaning... or whether we need to employ some other notion in this role.' In his view, as long as

18 "What is a Theory of Meaning?" p. 76.
the notion of truth is taken for granted it serves as the right notion for a theory of meaning but all problems will crop up when we cease to take truth for granted and when we subject it for investigation, the intuitive sense of its aptness vanishes.¹⁹

When does the notion of truth enter in the process of mastering a language, or what sort of analysis should be given to the notion of truth? The argument that we can stipulatively introduce, while mastering a language, the notion of truth does not hold why because that assumption presupposes possession of a large fragment of the language already. The notion forwarded by Davidson and other realists states that language learning consists in the learning what it is to a sentence of the language to be true. This is to say that we must be able to state what it is to know that a sentence is true without having any prior knowledge of the sentence. If we depend on the prior understanding to know what it is to sentence of the language to be true, then the theory, we have to say, would be a circular one.²⁰ In the ordinary way of mastering a language we depend on other words to explain the meaning of a sentence. This verbal method of giving meaning of a sentence by stating under what conditions the sentence is true is apt to describe the state only after we acquired a particular level of language learning. But this will not do its job when it comes to the lower or primitive level of language learning. Since a theory of meaning should take into account the basic or primitive language acquisition, a theory based on the idea that meaning of a

¹⁹ "What is a Theory of Meaning?", p.78.

²⁰ Ibid., p.78.
sentence can be given by specifying its meaning in other words, would be circular.

It does not mean that the language learning consists in the specification of meaning of sentences by only verbal methods. In contrast a large chunk of language we learn by specifying the truth-conditions under which sentences are true. The truth-conditions of sentences are satisfied by stating what constitutes the speaker’s recognition capacity of the fact. But there are ‘decidables,’ according to Dummett, where what constitutes the speaker’s recognition capacity could be decided both in practice and principle. The difficulty at issue is that "natural language is full of sentences which are not effectively decidable, ones for which there exists no effective procedure for determining whether or not their truth conditions are fulfilled."\(^{21}\) The point Dummett raises is not whether we might discover some effective procedure for such undecidable, but rather that ‘we cannot equate a capacity to recognise the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of the conditions for the sentence to be true with a knowledge of what condition is’ because, "by hypothesis, either the condition is one which may obtain in some cases in which we are capable of recognizing the fact, or it is one which may fail to obtain in some cases in which we are incapable of recognizing that fact, or both: hence a knowledge of what it is for that condition to hold or not hold, while it may demand an ability to recognize one or the other state of affairs whenever we are in a position to do so, cannot be exhaustively explained in terms of that ability. In

\(^{21}\) "What is a Theory of Meaning?", p.81.
fact, whenever the conditions for truth of a sentence is one that we have no way of bringing ourselves to recognize as obtaining whenever it obtains, it seems plain that there is no content to an ascription of implicit knowledge of what that condition is, since there is no practical ability by means of which such knowledge may be manifested."

According to Dummett the theory of sense, which is the 'shell' and the theory of truth, which at the 'core', are the two components of a theory of meaning; and any theory has to satisfactorily explain how these two relate to each other in the language learning process. What a speaker learns, in learning a language, is a practice. Acknowledgement of whether a sentence is true or false is part of that practice and what the speaker knows should manifest in the practice. 'But knowing the conditions which has to obtain for a sentence to be true is not anything which speaker does, nor something of which anything that he does is the direct manifestation.'

Though in some cases we are able to ascribe knowledge of truth-conditions to speaker in some other cases we cannot and consequently fail to attain a genuinely explanatory account of speaker's mastery of language.

This is the crucial point at which, according to Dummett, the transcendent notion of truth, hence realism, fails.

8. DUMMETT'S ANTI-REALIST ALTERNATIVE

All difficulties, in constructing a theory of meaning, have

22 "What is a Theory of Meaning?" pp. 81-82.
23 Ibid., pp.82-83.
24 Ibid., p.82.
to be ascribed, according to Dummett, to the realistic interpretation of sentences in our language. In a realistic fashion we assume that all statements, made by use of those sentences, are determinately either true or false, independently of whether we can know them to be so. Dummett thinks that this assumption of bivalence, with respect to the statements, is true so far as we take into account only 'decidable' statements. That is not so when we apply this notion of bivalence to 'undecidable' statements, and, therefore, we find ourselves 'unable to equate an ability to recognise when a statement has been established as true or false with a knowledge of its truth-conditions.' There are cases in which speaker's knowledge of a sentence's truth conditions can be represented as explicit knowledge. But if that is not the case, we do not know how to explain what constitutes speaker's implicit knowledge of a sentence's truth-condition because mere actual usage of that sentence alone does not exhaustively explain what that knowledge is.

The solution Dummett proposes is to abandon the bivalent theory of truth and proposes to construct an alternative semantics for those sentences which is not based on the truth-conditions. If we do not do this we are bound to attribute to ourselves a grasp of concept of truth which transcends any knowledge we might manifest in our actual use of language.

Dummett sees a prototype of such a theory of meaning, which does not take the notion of objectively determined truth as its central concept, in intuitionist account of meaning of

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mathematical statements. He envisages the possibility of adopting the basic idea of intuitionist account of meaning of mathematical statements into the realm of semantics for the natural language. The crux of the intuitionist account is that an understanding of mathematical statements does not rest on our having to know, what has to be the case for those statements to be true. Rather, it rests on having an ability to recognise, with respect to any mathematical constructin, whether or not it constitutes proof of a given statement. Hence, what we look for in an assertion of mathematical statements is not whether it is true or not, but whether there is proof of a given statement of it or we can devise a proof of it. At the same time, understanding of a mathematical expression consists in knowing how it contributes to determining what counts as a proof of any statments. In other words, the grasp of any mathematical statements is fully manifestable in a mastery of the use of mathematical language; hence, grasp and use are directly connected or related.

Understanding a statement does not consist in being able to find a proof, but in recognising a proof, and the negation of statement is not in finding but in the recognition of a proof of the negation. Intelligibility of statements does not guarantee a decision procedure.

Dummett's project is one of developing a generalisation of intuitionist account of meaning of mathematical statements to the non-mathematical cases, i.e., our language with some changes in idioms. Verification replaces the proof in the new formulation. Therefore, an intuitionist theory, "generalises
readily to the non-mathematical case. Proof is the sole means which exists in mathematics for establishing a statement as true: the required general notion is, therefore, that of a verification. On this account, our understanding of a statement consists in a capacity to recognise whatever is counted as verifying it, i.e., as conclusively establishing it as true. It is not necessary that we should have any means of deciding the truth or falsity of statements, only that we be capable of recognizing when its truth has been established. 26 What is the advantage of this formulation over the truth-condition theory if meaning and its realist interpretation of sentences as either true or false? Dummett argues:

The advantage of this conception is that the conditions for a statement's being verified, unlike the condition for its truth under the assumption of bivalence, is one which we must be credited with the capacity for effectively recognizing when it obtains; hence there is no difficulty in stating what an implicit knowledge of such a condition consists in—once again, it is directly displayed by our linguistic practice. 27

If we take this theory of meaning as an alternative, then we must take into account the 'interlocking or articulated character' of language as emphasised by Quine. 28 Dummett places his verificationist theory of meaning in contrast to the holistic picture of language presented by Quine. He, like Quine, offers an essentially verificationist account of language

26 "What is a Theory of Meaning?" pp.110-111.
27 Ibid., P.111.
28 Ibid., P.111.
without committing the logical positivist error of supporting that the verification of every sentence could be represented as the mere occurrence of a sequence of sense-experience.29 This idea is relevant to only a restricted class of statements, which are, in Quine's picture, situated in the periphery. But method of verification with respect to non-peripheral sentences is different, for any non-peripheral sentence, our grasp of its meaning will take the form, not of a capacity to recognize which have sense-experiences to verify or falsify it, but of an apprehension of its inferential connection with other sentences linked to it in the articulated structure formed by the sentences of the language.30

There are problems related to the verificationist theory of meaning. This theory is conceived on the intuitionistic meaning of mathematical statements model, and therefore, differences between mathematics and language should be remarked. Understanding a mathematical statement does not involve both an ability to recognize a proof of it and ability to recognise a refutation of it, since there is available, within the theory, a uniform way of explaining negation. But when we apply this model onto the language we should have provision or means to recognize both verification and falsification. Nevertheless, Dummett says, "all will remain within the spirit of verificationist theory of meaning, so long as the meaning of each sentence is given by specifying what is it to be taken as conclusively establishing a statement made by means of it, and

29 "What is a Theory of Meaning?", p.111.

30 Ibid., p.111.
what as conclusively falsifying such statements, and so long as this is done systematically in terms of conditions which speaker is capable of recognizing.\textsuperscript{31}

Dummett's this anti-realist account of a theory of meaning does not obliterate the notion of truth altogether. In fact he admits that concept of truth has its role in a verificationist theory of meaning. The notion of truth has its place that we require it to give an account of deductive inferences, which we recognize as valid just in case it is truth-preserving.\textsuperscript{32} But it is far from easy to explain exactly what account should be given of the notion of truth in terms of a verificationist theory of meaning. It is clear that, in terms of our capacity to recognize statements as true, rather than truth-condition which transcends our capacities, the notion of truth could be explained within verificationist framework of a theory of meaning.

9. SOME DIFFICULTIES WITH THE ANTI-REALIST THEORY OF MEANING

Main proponents of an anti-realist alternative, like Dummett and Wright, are in agreement with its stringent critics that though a theory of meaning has been forwarded as an alternative to the truth-condition theory, it lacks details and specificities. All the implications of antirealism have not been derived, so whether it is a global theory or not has not been sufficiently established.

The difficulties involved in a truth-based theory of meaning are of difficulties of principle. Although we know what

\textsuperscript{31} "What is a Theory of Meaning?" p.114.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.115.
the theory looks like, we do not know whether it can be made to work. Anti-realists think that it does not work. Though they agree that much work has to be done to their theory, in which truth is not a central concept, to meet all challenges, Dummett argues that 'on our present exceedingly in perfect comprehension of these matters, reflection should make us admit that a verificationist theory of meaning is a better bet than a thoroughgoing realist one.'

One of the trenchant objections to Dummett's anti-realism was offered by MacGinn who made best out of the occasion provided by Dummemtt himself when he expressed doubts over the possibility of inclusive or global anti-realism. Dummett wrote that "a number of reasons for doubting whether global anti-realism is coherent, for instance, behaviourism is one species of anti realism, namely the rejection of realism concerning mental states and process; phenomenalism is another species, namely the rejection of realism concerning physical objects and processes; it immediately makes us to wonder whether it is possible to consistently maintain an anti-realist position simultaneously in both regards."

MacGinn's attempt is to show the inconsistencies involved, and to assert that a realist stand would be better with respect to both species of anti-realism. Let statements about ineterial objects and statements about mental events be called 'M-statements' and 'P-statements' respectively. According to him, antirealism about M-and P-statements is the view that such

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33 "What is a Theory of Meaning?" p.137.

statements possess whatever truth-value they possess 'in virtue of the truth-value of statements drawn from certain other classes of statements not trivially different from the given.' 35 When we apply anti-realist yardstick, then M-statements can be characterised as phenomenalism, and P-statements would be behaviourism. Therefore, we can discern that a reductionist thesis is applied on both M-statements and P-statements. Accordingly M-statements are true or false, when we adopt a reductionist thesis, with respect to the truth-value of statements about experiences (E-statements), and the truth-values of P-statements, likewise, depends upon the truth-values of statements about behaviour (B-statements).

These E-and B-statements are the 'basal statements' according to MacGinn, for M-and P-statements respectively, and therefore are those statements which are 'barely true'. 36 MacGinn proceeds further from here with the argument that phenomenalism and behaviourism cannot be affirmed jointly because they, "offer competing proposals as to what statements comprise the basal truths: Phenomenalism takes E-statements, a sub class of P-statements, as basic, while behaviourism takes B-statements, a sub class of M-statements, as basic. The result is that, where one reductive thesis represents a statement as not itself requiring the application of a reductive operation, the other insists that such a reduction be performed. Since a statement that is basal for one antirealism is derivative for the other,

36 Ibid., p.118.
it is plain that a vicious regress is generated by the conjunction of the two doctrines."^37

MacGinn rejects the plausibility of antirealism in relation to either statements conjoined with a realist attitude, because of the fundamental 'independence thesis' of realism. Since realism consists in the view that there can be recognition-transcendental facts, it is possible to obtain M-facts without there being any experiences of their obtaining, i.e., it is not necessary for the truth of M-statements that some B-statements should be true. Moreover, since no B-statements entail the truth of M-statement, it cannot be considered as sufficient condition for the truth of M-statements that some corresponding B-statements are true. The same line of argument is possible in the case of B-statements. Hence, the realist thesis that M-facts are not reducible to B-facts and P-facts are not reducible to B-facts gives sufficient reasons to say that anti realism regarding either species conjoined with realism does not work in the expected way.

Antirealist defence of this criticism mainly centred around the fact that in order to be antirealist it is not necessary to hold any variety of reductionism, and, hence, the question regarding apparent vicious regress does not arise. Dummett even goes further by stating that, though often it took the form of reductionism, it is not necessary to adopt a reductionist thesis to uphold one's realistic interpretation of whether a given class of statements should be accepted or not.