

Davidson and Derrida on Intentions

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Donald Davidson's approach to meaning can be understood as a synthesis of the divergent positions of Grice and Derrida. I argue, following Davidson, that intentions should be afforded a central role in determining meanings, but that this centrality does not mean that intentions absolutely fix the meaning of a language act. Davidson borrows heavily from Grice, who, I contend, is committed to some version of logoi or self-interpreting units of meaning unmediated by a system of signifiers. Derrida, taking the contrasting view, argues against any notion of logoi. Derrida argues further that truth, as philosophers have typically thought of it, depends on the existence of self-interpreting signs. Derrida's rejection of logocentrism seems to entail a rejection of truth as traditionally conceived by philosophers. Davidson, on the other hand, makes truth central in his account of meaning by providing an account of truth that does not depend on the existence of logoi. My central claim is that Davidson, although relying on a Gricean view of speaker intentions and affording truth a central role, does not violate any of Derrida's primary theses about truth and the nature of meaning.

Indications, Expressions, and Wanting-to-Say

Derrida argues that intentions cannot be foundational on Husserl's own account. Derrida contends that Husserl's attempt to marginalize a system of signifiers in order to gain access to a realm of pure meanings is untenable. What Derrida's arguments show is that there cannot be a realm of speaker intentions that are separable from language or language-like structures. Language and intentions are necessarily connected for Derrida. Derrida begins his criticism of Husserl with a discussion of the latter's distinction between indication and expression. Indications are signs that point or signify, but may be devoid of *Sinn* or *Bedeutung*. Expression, in contrast, is a pure wanting-to-say or a meaning divorced from any system of indication. For Husserl, language is essentially the relationship between meanings, the idealization of pure logicity. Admittedly, in the reality of language use, expression is necessarily intermingled with indication, but this is not language proper for Husserl.¹ Expressions are the meanings conveyed or indicated through a system of signs, whether phonetic or graphic. The difference between indications and expressions is functional. Signs are merely indications when they express nothing, and they express nothing when they have not been animated by the subject's intentions—the wanting-to-say.²

Husserl exemplifies a view of meaning and language in which writing is derivative of speech and speech is a medium that indicates meanings, which are then immediately and intuitively obvious to the speaker.³ Derrida's goal is to show that this is not the case, and that the distinction between indication and expression is untenable. This is to deny that there is a realm of logos. For Husserl, communication occurs when sensible phenomena (phonetic and graphic) are animated by the meaning-giving intentions of the subject which are then understood by another subject. Speakers understand each other's intentions through sensible mediation. This is quite similar to the Gricean view of communication which will be explored later. Communication

is necessarily indicative since we cannot directly experience the intentions of others; we need external elements that point or indicate the private intentions of other subjects. The absence of presence calls for the need for indication. Thus, indication occurs when presence is unattainable. In order to understand pure meaning, we must suspend the communicative act. This occurs only in the soliloquy of phenomenological speech because here the meaning intentions are present to the subject. Hence, the relationship between indication and expression centers on the notion of presence:

All speech, or rather everything in speech which does not restore the immediate presence of the signified content, is inexpressive. Pure expression will be the pure active intention of an act of meaning that animates a speech whose content is present.... The meaning is therefore *present to the self* in the life of a present that has not yet gone forth from itself into the world ... (1973, 40).

Derrida questions whether this realm of pure meaning can in fact function without any elements of indication. In other words, is a phenomenological field of pure meanings present to the subject possible? If the subject's relation to himself contains any degree of non-presence, the need for indication (signs) will arise.

The inner monologue requires that the self-as-speaker and the self-as-hearer are immediately present to each other. If there is any occurrence of duration or difference, a gap between speaker and hearer, the need for indication arises. Yet is the self self-present in the way Husserl requires to make inner dialogue merely illusory? Derrida states: "If the punctuality of the instant is a myth, a spatial or mechanical metaphor, an inherited metaphysical concept or all that at once, and if the self-presence is not *simple*, if it is constituted in a primordial and irreducible synthesis, then the whole of Husserl's argumentation is threatened in its very principle" (1973, 61). Derrida's intention is to show that self-presence is fundamentally a synthesis, not a unity, and that this lack of pure unity requires indicative signs.⁴

Let us return to the relation between expression, the meaning filled "signs" in consciousness that enter into pure logical relations with each other, and the pre-expressive stratum of sense. Expressions are an "unproductive" medium that reflects the pre-expressive realm of sense. Expressions are ideal concepts that can *re-present* the original intention, the original wanting-to-say, in an ideal present. The present itself is an idealization of repeatability. The present is the same recurring "now-ness" across time. Expressions, which constitute any given present, necessarily contain an element of retention, i.e., having been present before. Expressions also contain an element of protention, i.e., the possibility of being present again as "the same" in a later present.

Expressions, as ideal objects of thought, are ideal in their repeatability and their independence from any particular wanting-to-say of an empirical subject. It is their independence that ensures their objectivity. The phenomenological voice, self-consciousness, is characterized by expressions, which have as their ideality their iterability. Iterability is repetition of the past and the projection into the future. If this is the case, and self-presence is the presence of expressions, self-presence as a punctual, temporal point derives from what Derrida calls "trace." Trace is the "play"

or fluctuation between retention and protention. A sign not subject to trace would not be a sign at all. Derrida uses the word "play" to indicate that there is no formula or rule for determining a term's meaning; its meaning depends not only on past usage, but on future usage. "Play" characterizes this movement or interaction between past and future uses. Signs have their essence in their repeatability in different contexts and times. If expressions are subject to the movement of trace, then meanings as expressions can never be "present" to consciousness. The ideal meaning of an expression is never complete, never fully here and now; it is always and essentially constituted by some "other." The totality of what the expression "is" cannot ever "be" at any one time. Not only does Derrida attack a notion of meaning, his criticism further implicates the notion of *Being* as presence.

If what Husserl calls "indicative signs" are signs because of their iterability, i.e., they can act as the same in different places and times, it appears expressions are a class of indicative signs. The ideality of expressions is the essence of any sign whatsoever. One may want to object that the difference between signs and expressions is that the latter do not mediate between the sign (as indication) and the intended meaning (sense). The difference, then, is that in the phenomenological voice there is no sound or other medium through which we must pass to get to the intended meaning. The indicative residue fades away immediately in inner dialogue. If signs function even at the level of expressions then perhaps at the pre-expressive stratum of sense we shall find the self-presence Husserl requires. Can there be pure intentions present as a wanting-to-say?⁵

The first thing to notice is that because signs in the phenomenological voice seem to convey meanings differently or more directly than outward speech or writing does not itself entail that signs are unnecessary.⁶ Let us examine what conditions make it possible for Husserl to posit this pre-expressive stratum of sense. The phenomenological voice is a unique form of what Derrida calls "auto-affectation." The seeming unity of speaking/hearing is unique because it does not enter the world in any way. There is no physical mark, nor is there any sound; the phenomenological phoneme is purely temporal. There is nothing limiting the proximity of signifier and signified. The intended meaning is not tainted by anything unessential in the signifier. Because of this proximity, Husserl views expressions as "unproductive" and "reflective." If the expression is purely and merely reflective, then Husserl asserts there must be a non-expressive realm of sense.

The realm of sense, as ideal objects immediately self-present, is an effect of auto-affectation. The experience of hearing oneself speak is not something that happens to a unified subject; auto-affectation produces the subject. "It produces sameness as self-relation within self-difference; it produces sameness as the nonidentical" (1973, 82). Sameness is made possible by difference that is then suppressed. Not only is sameness possible because of difference, presence is only possible because of absence or deferral. The temporality of the phenomenological voice as a series of "nows" is possible only when the "current" now is abstracted from the previous past-now and the not-yet. "The living present springs forth out of its non-identity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace" (1973, 85). A now that did not recognize

a past and a future would be unrecognizable as a now. The play or functioning of both difference and deferral characterizes what Derrida famously terms "*différance*."

What Derrida has shown is that there is no pre-expressive realm of sense immediately present to the subject using Husserl's own account of meaning. The subject, as the experience of self-sameness, is constituted by difference—the phen-omenological voice as auto-affection. Within the phenomenological voice, expressions have as their essence their repeatability, which is to say expressions are necessarily non-present. Expressions are a class of indicative signs and their iterability extends beyond any one empirical subject. Their functioning as expressions liberates them from any specific intended meaning. If Derrida is correct, the characteristics of writing as absence or non-presence, far from being supplementary or derivative, constitute meaning through and through. The notions of presence and sameness result from the suppression of *différance*. The point of origination for meanings is a non-origin; "it"⁷ does not exist. Simply put, there is no single, completely transparent origin for the meaning of a word or phrase.

Logoi in the Gricean Mechanism

Grice begins his 1968 article, "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word-Meaning" with the following introductory remark: "My aim in this paper is to throw light on the connection between a notion of meaning which I want to regard as basic, namely the notion which is involved in saying of someone that by doing such-and-such he meant so-and-so ... " (1968). Grice's project takes a speaker's intentions as the basic determination of what a language act means; word-meaning and sentence-meaning are to be analyzed in relation to this most primitive form of meaning. As with Husserl, the public act of communication is secondary to a more primitive realm of speaker intentions.

Grice begins with occasion meaning, what a speaker means on a specific occasion by uttering *x*. This notion of meaning something by *x* is analyzed as the speaker intending to produce an effect in an audience by their recognition of the speaker's intention to get them to respond because of their knowledge of such intention. Thus, there are three intentions at work: the intention to produce an effect such as believing or acting; the intention for the audience to recognize that first intention; and the intention that the audience's recognition of the first intention will bring about the result.

Communication of non-natural meaning appears to be the speaker's attempt to convey a certain content in the proper manner—namely, a structure of intentions. What is presupposed in this account is that the speaker has total responsibility or ownership of the intended meaning. There is no doubt from the speaker's perspective as to what the content is. Speakers know immediately and without ambiguity what they intend or mean. There appears to be a pure signified within the Gricean mechanism, which is then aimed at in the communicative act. Grice admits that speakers may often produce utterances in the absence of intentions, however in ambiguous cases one can still refer to the speaker's intention to determine the meaning. Even conventional uses of utterances depend on speakers intending a meaning using "common" signifiers as their mode of expression. Although meaningful utterances can occur without specific

intentions, the point of origin for all forms of non-natural meaning is within the speaker's intentions. It is this role of intentions as absolute origins with which Derrida disagrees.

Grice wishes to analyze the meaning of speech acts in terms of more basic (non-linguistic?) intentions which he takes to be primitive. If public language and meaning derive from speaker meaning, and speaker meaning is the product of speaker intentions, it appears that intentions are in some sense prelinguistic. The speaker's intentions somehow animate the graphic or phonetic element with meaning. Grice does not offer an explanation as to how these nested intentions function in order to animate the language act. Moreover, Grice does not explain how we are able to have such fine-grained intentions, prior to any public meaning, which could act to differentiate all the subtle shades of meaning we find in places like metaphor, jokes, and poetry. I shall say more about this difficulty later.

Intentions are primary for Grice in the sense that what a *speaker* means is what he or she intends, regardless of an audience's interpretation.⁸ Thus, Grice is committed to some pre-expressive, self-interpreting stratum of intentions that determine speaker meaning. I contend that Davidson embraces a hermeneutic approach to intentions rather than a foundationalist approach. Davidson does not place thought, belief, intentions, and other mental states in a position prior to meaningful speech, and so avoids many of the difficulties posed by Derrida. In the following section I examine Davidson's view of intentions in relation to meaning.

Davidson on Intentions

Davidson represents a synthesis of the Gricean and Derridean positions. He makes use of intentions while avoiding the pitfalls of subscribing to some version of logoi. Davidson's denial of logoi places him in accordance with many of Derrida's views on meaning. He denies that intentions and beliefs can independently fix the meaning of an utterance. Beliefs, intentions, and the performance of speech acts form a holistic relationship. Intentions are arrived at hermeneutically as part of a family of concepts, rather than foundationally. Moreover, Davidson denies that the purpose of speech is simply to express thought, and contends that in fact beliefs and intentions depend on public speech.

For Davidson, beliefs, intentions, and meanings form an interpretive circle. We cannot infer a speaker's beliefs and intentions without knowing the meaning of what he or she says, but we cannot know the meaning of the particular speech act without knowing the speaker's beliefs and intentions. From the perspective of radical interpretation, intentions and beliefs cannot be interpretive tools in understanding speaker meaning because we have no reason to infer their existence unless we already know the meaning of utterances.⁹ We learn of the beliefs and intentions of others by understanding what they mean by their speech acts. Even if we know the speaker holds the utterance as true, this by itself does not tell us what the utterance means, nor what his beliefs are.

We break into this interpretive circle by trying to understand the conditions in which the utterance would be true. This approach takes us beyond the discussion of beliefs and intentions. If we can understand the truth conditions for what a speaker

has said, given that we have reason to believe that the speaker is asserting something, we can begin to understand what he holds true, i.e., what his beliefs are. (I shall say more about the role of truth in a theory of meaning in the next section.) By finding widespread agreement within a language community about when an utterance is true, we can limit interpretations to a few "best" choices. For Davidson, speakers need not all speak the *same* language, but they must relate to an objective world.¹⁰ We can develop a working theory about what groups of speakers believe. As we progress, we can apply these background beliefs while striving for a measure of consistency in interpreting new utterances.

It is important to note that from this interpretive perspective there is nothing that can guarantee only one "best" interpretation; there may be many. "If interpretation is approached in the style I have been discussing, it is not likely that only one theory will be found satisfactory" (1984, 153). Davidson's view of intentions as tools of interpretation is consistent with Derrida's position that intentions cannot determine meanings absolutely. This is not to say that intentions do not determine meanings at all, or that meanings are completely indeterminate in most cases. However, there is always, and essentially, the possibility of new interpretations. Many philosophers will wish to maintain that with respect to interpretation intentions cannot be basic, yet as far as the speaker is concerned what is "meant" is what the speaker intends to mean.¹¹ Thus, speech becomes the vehicle for expressing thoughts, beliefs, and intentions. The latter are prior to, and do not depend on, the former.¹²

Davidson challenges the view that there can be thought without speech. Recall that for Derrida the realm of thought, the self-presence of the signified, is an effect of auto-affection as inner dialogue. Derrida has given us an account of why we intuitively wish to assert that thought can occur without speech. While Derrida has offered a genealogical argument against this view, Davidson offers us different reasons for rejecting the view that there can be thought without speech.

I begin with a passage from Davidson's article, "Thought and Talk" for the reason that it expresses a particularly Derridean theme: that of non-origin. Davidson states his thesis thus: "Neither language nor thinking can be fully explained in terms of the other, and neither has conceptual priority. The two are, indeed, linked, in the sense that each requires the other to be understood; but the linkage is not so complete that either suffices, even when reasonably reinforced, to explicate the other" (1984, 156). Language and thought go together, yet neither can fully explain the other. The conceptual relationship between language and thought is characterized by a lack of priority; there is no pure, distinct origin for one or the other. Language and thought begin in a play of differences; the relationship between thought and language is primordial and not reducible to any other prior unity.

Davidson argues that beliefs are basic to any thought. To know, to fear, to expect, etc. all require certain beliefs. Moreover, the presence of any one belief presupposes "that there be endless interlocking beliefs" (1984, 157). This endless interlocking is another way of describing the movement of trace. The identity of a belief is never contained in the present or in the "uniqueness" of the belief. The belief can only be that belief because of an infinite string of other beliefs which can never be completely apprehended. The question remains: How, according to Davidson, can an individual

come to have beliefs? Davidson's answer, roughly, is that for an individual to have beliefs, and therefore thoughts, he or she must be an interpreter of the speech of another (1984, 157). The first reason Davidson gives is that without language, fine-grained intentional distinctions could neither exist nor function. I can intend to bite the apple without intending to bite the only apple with a worm in it, or one can intend to discover a creature with a heart without wanting to discover a creature with kidneys, to use Davidson's examples. This is the problem for philosophers who wish to ground linguistic meaning in non-linguistic intentions or thoughts. If you think intentions animate speech acts in a foundational sense, you are forced to give those intentions the same structure as the linguistic phenomena you are trying to describe.

This argument is equally applicable to Derrida's critique of Husserl, if it is not already in some sense an argument Derrida himself makes. If expressions are "unproductive" and merely "reflective" then the pre-expressive stratum of sense must have the same system of signifiers as the expressive stratum. There is a system of signs at each level. We cannot separate the communicative intention from the forms of signification it employs. On the other hand, we cannot talk about meaningful signs without recognizing, in some fashion, the intention to use them in meaningful ways.

Davidson's second argument is more complex. First, we only come to the notion of belief through the interpretation of speech acts. Knowledge of beliefs depends on knowledge of what others mean by their speech acts. Therefore, individuals must be members of a speech community, at least in the role of interpreter, to have the concept of belief. Further, if other thought attitudes (fearing, wanting, intending, etc.) depend on beliefs, having the concept of thoughts also depends on public speech. This is a clear rejection of the Gricean view that intentions are primary.

How does the status of having beliefs relate to having the concept of belief? Davidson's answer is that having a belief entails recognizing the possibility of being mistaken, which means recognizing the possibility of truth and falsity. Recognition of the difference between true and false beliefs can only occur in a public context; a public context is a necessary condition for the idea of objective truth. Having the belief (p) is believing that (p) is true, and this presupposes a public context. As Davidson says, truth is not part of the semantic content of the belief, but rather is part of the framework necessary for having beliefs (1984, 170).

Davidson, Derrida, and Truth

Is there a tension, or outright conflict, between Derrida and Davidson over the notion of truth in a theory of meaning? I argue in this final section that Davidson's use of truth does not violate any of Derrida's central theses about truth. Derrida denies any essentialist account of what signs mean while Davidson makes truth conditions essential to understanding meaning. To know what an utterance means is to know its truth conditions. I maintain, however, that Davidson's account avoids the difficulties Derrida attributes to other philosophers.

Derrida characterizes the relationship of truth to language in the Western tradition as marked by a sense of deficiency. Words, sentences, and other signs point to or indicate the truth because the truth is not present in them. "The 'symbol' always points

to 'truth'; it is itself constituted as a lack of 'truth'" (1973, 97). The symbol here is the graphic or phonetic element that represents some inner meaning or logos, which in turn captures or represents some relation in or to the world. Truth is a relation among meanings or meanings and the world, and the meanings are present in consciousness as thoughts or pure signified units. Thus, truth is defined in relation to some form of logos. The purpose of language is merely to point to or assert what is true. On this view, truth is essentially nonlinguistic. Language is at best a hazardous vehicle for the expression of truth since the medium, whether graphic or phonetic, may taint the meaning and cause misunderstanding.¹³

It would be uncharitable to attribute to Derrida the belief that there is no truth at all.¹⁴ Derrida is clearly aiming at a view of truth and meaning that underpins various dichotomies in philosophy: intelligible/sensible, literal/metaphorical, logical/rhetorical, etc. Derrida is criticizing an inflated notion of truth created by philosophers through the suppression of *différance*.¹⁵ Moreover, to criticize Derrida as denying any truths at all because there are no absolute or foundational truths is to commit the very error that Derrida criticizes—namely, the belief that all truths are of the logocentric sort.

Derrida claims that there are no meaningful systems of signs that cannot in principle be interpreted.¹⁶ He also claims that meaning is a product of trace—the movement of retention and protention. If we deny that meanings are entities present to the mind, how are these aspects of communication possible and even *necessary*? Signs are iterable, and therefore meaningful and interpretable, because they have truth conditions.¹⁷ Truth conditions are not properties of timeless entities such as propositions; they are properties of contextually and temporally relative actions by language users. Truth, then, involves the publicly observable conditions necessary to have meaningful content. Since truth conditions are potentially socially recognizable contexts of language use, there are no ahistorical, language-independent truths.

Without self-interpreting signs, we can always misinterpret or reinterpret the truth conditions of a text. None of this makes truth any less objective. Moreover, if there were self-interpreting signs or concepts immediately present to consciousness, in order to be objective they must be publicly available and beyond any one subject's control. To be a meaningful interpretation is to be essentially public. Without a self-verifying grasp of reality, the only test of objectivity and truth is intersubjectivity. Writing, as interpretability in the absence of the author, makes objectivity and therefore truth possible. But, at the same time, writing undermines the possibility of absolute truths not open to revision. Deconstruction is objective and truthful because it recognizes the permanent possibility of re-evaluation in a public space.

The primary point to notice about Davidson is that truth does not have a prior status to meaning and speech acts. Derrida denies that there is truth in the realm of logos prior to a system of signs. Davidson makes truth an interpretive tool to be used along with intentions, beliefs, and action. Truth's hermeneutic role is discussed in Davidson's 1990 article.¹⁸ Since truth is a feature of meaningful utterances, there is no truth prior to true beliefs, but beliefs and truth can occur only in a speech community relating to an objective world. Further, as we have seen, behavior only counts as meaningful speech when we attribute thoughts and beliefs. Davidson's treatment of truth is another way of denying a realm of logos.

The idea of the signifier as the absence of truth, and truth as that which is untainted by any signifier, is not found in Davidson's view. For Davidson, truth is essentially a linguistic notion as it requires public communication. There is no appeal to "facts," "logoi," or raw "sense data" that would make a sentence true. These notions add nothing to an account of why an utterance is true. As Davidson argues in a number of places,¹⁹ statements "are true or false because of the words used in making them, and it is words that have ... connections with the world" (1984, 43). Davidson's point is that an account of truth needs to take a linguistic turn, i.e., to recognize the language systems in which it occurs. Davidson also denies that truth applies to timeless entities like propositions; instead, truth applies to utterances, that is, concrete actions by speakers.²⁰ Sentences are true in a particular language, but their being true depends on how the world is set up. Truth is not in general relative to a language, but depends on speakers relating to an objective world.

Davidson argues that an explication of truth requires providing the truth conditions of particular utterances in a language, not an appeal to facts. There are no facts, according to Davidson, in an ontological sense. The result is that "'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white." When we combine this view of truth with Davidson's treatment of what he has called the "third dogma of empiricism,"²¹ we are presented with a very Derridean picture. The third dogma of empiricism is the distinction between conceptual scheme and empirical content. Davidson argues that such a distinction cannot be made tenable. Conceptual schemes do not fit, nor do they organize something—the world, sense experiences, etc. The denial of this dichotomy has interesting implications. There can be no uninterpreted reality; learning a language is learning how the world is. By the same token, learning about the world involves learning a language, or more language. All experience is conceptual; to recognize something as an experience is in some way a recognition of its language-like qualities. Experiences, like meanings, are never fully present; they are a product of trace, the memory of the past and the projection into the future. Moreover, if Davidson is correct in rejecting the distinction between empirical content and conceptual scheme, changes in language amount to changes in facts. Saying something is a "fact" does not add any ontological weight that was not in the initial characterization of the statement as true. The experiential, being indivisible from the conceptual, is subject to, and a product of, *différance*.²²

Truth is not the telos of language, a view against which Derrida has argued. Meaningful language employs truth in order to do a wide variety of things. Truth conditions, for Davidson, are essential to meaningful discourse, but meaningful utterances do not always assert truths. Davidson has abandoned the foundationalist element in Gricean thought and simultaneously has maintained a primary role for truth in a theory of meaning. Derrida's view of truth seems to require rejecting truth

as part of rejecting a foundationalist view of intentions and meanings. Davidson gives us truth without logoi.

Derrida and Davidson, while exhibiting radically different styles and philosophical points of reference, come to similar conclusions. Davidson, who in some respects relies heavily on a Gricean theory of meaning, is also quite similar in philosophical orientation to Derrida. The principal aim of this paper has been to show that Derrida and Davidson agree that intentions cannot absolutely fix meanings. Part of what is important about this conclusion, and what gives it greater philosophical weight, is that the two figures mentioned here come from radically different contexts. Derrida is concerned with Rousseau, Heidegger, and Husserl, while Davidson represents a continuation of the Quinean perspective. The major difference between the two centers on the role of truth. This disparity may be overcome by a clearer understanding of both Derrida's and Davidson's projects. Davidson's treatment of truth is consistent with a Derridean line of thought. Finally, we need not abandon our use of intentions and truth in our discussions of meaning. If Derrida and Davidson are at least partially correct, we need only to reorient the framework in which these discussions occur.

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Notes

1. Although the intermingling of indication and expression is basic to communication, Husserl makes the distinction based on what he judges to be essential to language (expression) and that which is merely an existential addition. This is the distinction of fact and intention, according to Derrida (1973, 21). There are empirical facts regarding language, and then there are essential qualities of language

present in the meaning intentions of the subject. Husserl's task is to show that expression can be divorced from indication; meaning can occur independently of a system of signifiers.

2. There is a finer distinction to be made in Husserl's phenomenological account of meaning. Expression is involved in a tripartite structure. First, there is a pure, pre-expressive intention, the wanting-to-say, which aims at a sense as an ideal meaning. This ideal meaning takes the form of expression in the inner dialogue of conscious thought (phenomenological voice). The third stage is this expression "going forth" via an animating intention that infuses the indicative sign with meaning (1973, 33). "Expression is voluntary exteriorization; it is meant, conscious through and through, and intentional. There is no expression without the subject animating the sign.... In expression the intention is absolutely explicit because it animates a voice which may remain entirely internal and because the expressed is a meaning, that is, an ideality 'existing' nowhere in the world" (1973, 33). It is important to Husserl for expression (pure meaning) to remain in consciousness to prevent contamination with elements of indicative signs that could corrupt or distort the meaning intention. Speakers misspeak and readers can misinterpret the written word, but expressions in consciousness have their animating intentions (their wanting-to-say) immediately present. Phoneme and grapheme are not essential to the meaning. Only in the phenomenological voice is there no possibility of misunderstanding.

3. Husserl views indicative signs as necessary because they point to an empirical content—a worldly existence. The bracketing off of existence in phenomenological reduction eliminates the need for indication. The indicative sign cannot point to anything that is not already present in the subject's consciousness. Subjects imagine words, but the act of imagining words is neutralized. Subjects only *represent* themselves as communicating because the content of such imaginings is present. Thus, the imagination of a word animated with meaning, i.e., an expression, contains within the imaginative act the animating intention—the sense. The signified (*Sinn*) is prior to the imagining of the signifier, and this is why the signifier's role is neutralized.

4. By the term "self-presence" Derrida is referring to what we would normally call "self-consciousness" as inner dialogue. Thinking is not a unity of thinker and thought, or mind and pure units of meaning; the seeming unity of thinker and thought is derivative of the functioning of indicative signs.

5. Husserl's notion of "pure intentions as a wanting-to-say" would be that of a meaningful unit that was somehow immediately present in the mind, that could not be misinterpreted, and was absolutely independent of any non-essential elements (the materiality of the signifier).

6. As I shall argue later, Davidson offers good reasons for thinking that beliefs, intentions, and thoughts (particularly those related to language acts) require a speech community.

7. I place the word "it" in quotation marks to emphasize, as Derrida would, that *différance* and trace are not things. *Différance* is what we could loosely call a "condition" that makes meanings possible.

8. There is an interesting ambiguity in Grice's 1957 paper, "Meaning." Grice begins by trying to explain how an utterance comes to have a specific meaning. The answer given is in terms of the now familiar tripartite intentional structure. However, when faced with the challenge of making sense of how this intentional structure functions to endow the speech act with meaning, Grice shifts his focus to how listeners interpret a speaker's linguistic behavior. "Again, in cases where there is doubt, about which of two or more things an utterer intends to convey, we refer to the context ... and which intention in a particular situation would fit in with some purpose he obviously has" (1957). The former attempts to explain *how* an utterance is meaningful; the latter is a hermeneutical question about audience interpretation. There is a vast difference between claiming that intentions have a foundational, metaphysical role in determining meaning and claiming intentions are a theoretical tool used in interpretation. Grice cannot mean that intentions are primary only in the interpretive sense since there are obvious counterexamples. I cannot complete the marriage ceremony with my new bride and then say I was not intending to be serious, and therefore we are not really married. Nor can I sign a contract or testify in court and later claim I really meant something else. I cannot even use derogatory epithets for my colleagues and not be held responsible because I "intended" some other meaning. Elements of the context lead to interpretations that in many cases override any implicit or explicit intentions.

9. This argument is presented in "Belief and the Basis of Meaning," in Davidson 1984, 144.

10. Davidson argues that idiolects are what matter in interpreting speech acts. We assume that the speaker is rational to some degree, a believer of truths, is part of a shared context, etc. and then we try to figure out what is being said. Given that speakers have differing beliefs as well as differing vocabularies to various degrees, there is not a single uniform "language" that all English speakers, for example, speak. This does not, of course, prohibit widespread agreement about what certain words and utterances might mean.

11. This would be the Gricean line of thought.

12. Of course, this is the classic Western view of speech and also writing. Speech is the better vehicle for expression because it is closer to the source—the speaker's thoughts. Thoughts are in some sense self-interpreting, and so do not require a

system of signifiers. This is yet another version of the view held by Husserl that Derrida criticized.

13. Derrida also equates truth with the suppression of *différance* within the auto-affection of the phenomenological voice. Truth is the reality, the logos, the pure meaning, untainted by the signifier, by appearance. Presence is a necessary condition for truth. In the beginning of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, we are confronted with Derrida's analysis of the traditional view of truth: "Thus, within this epoch, reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as the fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined within secondariness. They are preceded by truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of logos" (1967, 14). This early work of Derrida indicates the notion of truth he is intent on criticizing.

14. See *Speech and Phenomena* (103): "This does not mean that we know nothing but that we are beyond absolute knowledge (and its ethical, aesthetic, or religious system)."

15. The traditional view suppresses the necessity of the Other within the phenomenological voice. The Other can include public language, other meanings within the speaker, or even past and future uses of a single expression. This suppression results in viewing the phenomenological voice as a primitive unity rather than a derived synthesis.

16. See "Signature, Event, Context."

17. A similar point was made in Wheeler's *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy*.

18. See Davidson's "The Structure and Content of Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. LXXXVII, No. 6, June 1990. 279–328.

19. See "True to the Facts," (1969) and also "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1974).

20. Davidson diverges from Derrida somewhat in the sense that Davidson privileges speech because it is closer to the intending speaker; we have greater access to the interpretive tool of speaker intentions than we do to a written text in some cases. However, this privileging is consistent with the denial of intentions being the only or primary source of meaning.

21. See "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1974).

22. The view of experience, as a product of *différance*, is a point made by Derrida in "Signature, Event, Context."