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Davidson, "Truth and Meaning"
Argument to Show that Meaning Cannot be Reference

Explanation of symbols and terms in Davidson's argument

Read " \hat{x} " as "the class of objects x such that"

Read "." as "and"

Two sentences are *logically equivalent* just in case they always have the same truth-value; so in all circumstances, if one is true, so is the other one and vice versa.

The Argument in full dress:

- 1) The meaning of a singular term is wholly determined by its reference.
- 2) Sentences are complex singular terms.
- 3) Logically equivalent singular terms have the same reference.
- 4) A complex singular term does not change its reference if a singular term it contains is replaced with another co-referential singular term.
- 5) Consider any two sentences R and S with the same truth-value.
- 6) These two sentences are logically equivalent:
 - (a) R
 - (b) The class of all objects x such that x is self-identical and R is identical to the class of all self-identical objects.
- 7) Hence (by premises 2 and 3), 6a and 6b have the same reference.
- 8) These two sentences are also logically equivalent.
 - (a) S
 - (b) The class of all objects x such that x is self-identical and S is identical to the class of all self-identical objects.
- 9) Hence (by premises 2 and 3), 8a and 8b have the same reference.
- 10) If R and S have the same truth-value, then these two terms have the same reference:
 - (a) the class of all objects x such that x is self-identical and R
 - (b) the class of all objects x such that x is self-identical and S
- 11) Hence (by 5 and 10), 10a and 10b have the same reference.
- 12) Hence (by 4 and 11), 6b and 8b have the same reference.
- 13) Hence (by 7, 9 and 12), R and S have the same reference.
- 14) Hence (by 1 and 13), R and S have the same meaning.
- 15) But 14 is absurd.
- 16) So (1) or (2) must be false.