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CAUSES AS REASONS: MONISM, METAPHOR AND ASSOCIATION

1. Anomalous monism

Davidson's "anomalous monism" suggests that the same event can be both mental and physical, but that there are no laws relating the mental description with the physical one. He therefore claims that there is no way in which we could explain the mental via the physical structures of the brain. They involve different conceptualizations and therefore lead to different descriptions. They are, however, said to be related through *singular causal statements*. Three main points can be identified in this respect, which involve:

- Causal Interaction (at least some mental events cause and are caused by physical events).
- The law-like character of causality (causation involves laws).
- The anomalism of the mental (because of the intentionality of the mental there are no laws by which we can predict or explain mental events).

Therefore Davidson does not accept the existence of either psychological laws ($MS1 \rightarrow MS2$) or bridge laws ($MS1 \rightarrow PS1$). He focuses his attention on propositional attitudes, i.e. intentional states like beliefs, desires (attitudes) that p (propositional content).

As first-person authority raises the problem that MSs of the others are unknowable, we resort to third-person perspective, from which beliefs, in particular, can be reasonably approached (unlike sensations or even desires among propositional attitudes)¹. "Though our beliefs, intentions, fears, and other feelings are private and subjective.. they cannot be identified or explained except by tying them from the start to external objects and events" (Davidson 1990: 22-23). Further down he notices that "beliefs, which are also causal dispositions, are specified in terms of their relations to one another and to events and objects in the world" (ibid.: 22-23).

Because MSs are capable of justifying other MSs and actions we can assume that the person we are interpreting is rational. "When thought takes thought as subject matter, the observer can only identify what he is studying by finding it rational – that is, in accord with his own standards of rationality" (ibid.: 25). This implies that radical interpretation must (a) be guided by normative principles (one cannot believe that q

and not q) and (b) proceed holistically. Knowledge of *normative principles of rationality* amounts to knowledge of folk psychology: it has nothing to do with expert knowledge of the essence of MSs, i.e. to know a belief implies that you know that someone who has that belief does not simultaneously hold the opposite of that belief as true. Moreover we can only attribute mental states *en bloc*, because the evidence for the attribution of MSs does not relate to the attribution of *individual* MSs, i.e. we make sense of individual beliefs only as they cohere with the other beliefs, intentions, preferences, etc. *holistically*.

Conditions of coherence, rationality and consistency have no echo in physical theory and therefore there are *no psychophysical laws* in the strict sense of "law": the two kinds of evidence are inherently incompatible. In the absence of psychological laws, explanation and prediction of particular phenomena with precision is impossible. Normative principles which govern MSs operate holistically: there is no one to one correspondence between single MSs or MSs and PSs/actions. If some prediction fails, the original assumption cannot be disconfirmed, because *ceteris paribus* constraints are inapplicable: other beliefs and desires can play an equally significant (or a more significant) role, whereby they render the initial/original assumption superfluous or non-valid. These few points will be discussed in the following sections.

1.1 Causes of actions are reasons

Since for Davidson events are particulars (like objects), causation is defined as a relation holding between singular terms x and y. Causes are different from "the features we hit on for describing them". Causal explanations are sensitive to how events are described. Davidson emphasizes the distinction between events and their descriptions or between causes (causal statements) and causal explanations. Events, he claims, can be explained or predicted in the light of laws only in so far as they are described in one or another way (1970b: 215). The laws needed to predict event x with precision would be laws of physics. These would employ concepts only remotely connected with concepts used to describe event x.

Intentional events are actions. In other words, actions are events performed by people for reasons. Being intentional does not qualify events as such, but events as described in one way rather than another. Therefore, actions are events which are intentional under some description which rationalizes them by providing the content of the MSs which are reasons for them. Opening the window, for instance, is related to moving one's arm in a certain way and with a certain result. Consequently, there are two descriptions of the same act: one refers to

the actual (series of) motion(s) involved (i.e. moving one's arm towards the handle, etc.) and the other one refers to the consequence of the action. What I do intentionally is move parts of my body and «the rest is up to nature».

In Davidson's view, «It is an error to think that no explanation has been given until a law has been produced» (1963: 17). Laws may not exist but generalizations do exist by virtue of which [...*reason explanations are causal explanations*]. For instance, if MS1 is usually followed by PS1, then you probabilistically expect similar cases to follow suit. So, MSs like desires are simply tendencies or dispositions to act in a certain way; if the action which usually follows does not occur in certain cases, this does not necessarily mean that the disposition was not present:

It is often thought that scientific explanations are causal, while explanations of actions and mental affairs are not. I think almost exactly the reverse is the case: ordinary explanations of action, perception, memory and reasoning, as well as the attribution of thoughts, intentions and desires, is riddled with causal concepts; whereas it is a sign of progress in a science that it rids itself of causal concepts.
Davidson (1990: 22-23).

He therefore contends that in an advanced science the explanations and laws will not employ causal concepts: «appeal to causal powers and descriptions reveals ignorance of detailed explanatory mechanisms and structures» (ibid.: 25).

In terms of practical, common sense interaction, it is important to know about causal chains relating MSs and actions. If, for instance, your stealing jewelry is known to me and understood as a disposition of yours, I have good reason to make sure you have no access to my jewelry. If all I know about the cause of your action is described in terms of chance electro-chemical reactions in your brain, I have no reason to act in any particular way in that respect. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that if I know that every time the representation of objects categorized as jewelry is formed on your retina, electro-chemical reactions in your brain result in your moving your arm in such a way that the objects in question end up in your pocket, I will probably react in exactly the same way, regardless of whether the description is provided in physical or mental terms².

Even if I know that pain is in fact neuron firing, I will still tend to employ, for purposes of ordinary understanding, communication and general use, the 'mentalist' descriptions, as this is closer to what I am consciously aware of as being the reason for my behaviour (i.e. feeling

pain and expressing it accordingly). This is similar to Chomsky's remark about 'perceiving' and 'understanding' the sun as going up or down, despite the fact that we know it does not actually move.

1.2 *Agent's reasons for action*

Following Aristotle's explanation of actions in terms of practical syllogisms (with the desire to achieve *x* being the first premise, the belief that action *y* will achieve *x* being the second premise and action *y* being performed being the conclusion), Davidson explains the agent's reason as including a desire and a belief, the former providing the goal of an action, the latter the means to reach that goal and the actual action coming out as the result of that combination. 'Pure intention' counterexamples are explained away: you may try to achieve something despite the fact that you do not believe your goal to be feasible. Clashing practical syllogisms are also explained in terms of weighing up different considerations as to how one should act. Davidson's reformulation of Aristotle's practical syllogism works as follows: acting intentionally means that we are through with weighing up alternatives: it is the expression of *unconditional desire*. To sum up: reasons which are mental events (MEs) cause actions which are physical events (PEs). Crucially, however, what are being related are tokens, not types; a token ME is also a PE (a certain state of the brain); other token MEs of the same type will not necessarily instantiate PEs of the same type (they are not necessarily identical to PEs of the same type). Hence the anomalism of the mental which implies that there are no psycho-physical or psychological laws. MEs which causally interact with PEs must have some physical description under which they instantiate physical laws. The mental supervenes on the physical, therefore if physical properties are exactly the same, there is no way in which differences may appear in relation to mental properties. Events by themselves are neither mental nor physical; this distinction rests on different ways of describing them. Events form a single, ontologically mental category of entities (hence Davidson's concept of 'monism').

In interpreting other people's actions we assume rationality; we consider that we have an explanation, that we know the cause(s) of their behaviour because we consider others to be rational (or we consider observed behaviour to be rational). We explain actions by providing reasons for them, i.e. desires and beliefs related in a logical pattern. These relations we know are established on the basis of first person authority. Therefore, the norms involved in belief, judgment and motives include those of *language*. Taking ourselves to have first-person authority about mental states presupposes that we use language, or the

concepts expressed in language, correctly. Although there is nothing in our first-person perspective which we can use to show ourselves that we follow the rules of our own language correctly (and therefore that our first-person perspective is in accord with reality), this is precisely what the others establish as being the case by interpreting our behaviour (including our linguistic behaviour). In other words, what certifies our use of language and hence our first person authority and judgments is the possibility that somebody else could arrive at these judgments (as to our behaviour) by *interpretation*. Therefore the perspectives are interdependent. The states and events in ourselves that we regard as mental are those which others ascribe to us by interpreting our actions/behaviour following the rules of normative and causal accord specified above. This is what Hopkins (1995) calls the interpretive approach to the mind and it is consistent with our commonsense understanding of the mind. He then compares this picture to the understanding of the mind as a sealed container, where everybody can see into their own container but nobody else's. Consider Wittgenstein's (1958: § 293) metaphor where everyone is supposed to have a box with something in it, which we could call a 'beetle'. "No one can look into anyone else's box and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle... Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing".

If this metaphor is taken seriously (at its face value) since no one has access to anyone else's private, inner space, we cannot know what other people think or feel. Wittgenstein's argument continues by pointing out that if the word 'beetle' had a use in the language of the sealed box possessors, then "the thing in the box drops out of consideration as irrelevant" (*ibid.*). The metaphor is therefore misleading, at least to some extent, Hopkins claims.

2. Metaphor in cognitive linguistics

Nevertheless, this is one of the basic metaphors which organize our thinking about the mind (Lakoff 1993). The metaphor represents subjective or conscious events as objects of some imaginary sight in a kind of imaginary container and not as events in the brain; but these are in fact public, physical events (in Hopkins's understanding) which occur in the physical space internal to our bodies, and this is what the metaphor obscures. Notice, of course, that their being physical does not stop them from being either private or available only to introspection. Wittgenstein's remark relates to language and aims at clarifying the

issue of whether language is private or public. In that connection, his 'beetle' example serves the purpose of showing that meanings are not private entities sealed inside people's minds, but public and available to all the members of the same linguistic community through their use. In other words, this is used in Wittgenstein parallel to his 'meaning is use' statement and explains the possibility of interpretation and verbal communication.

Unlike Hopkins, I cannot see the 'mind as a container' metaphor as a 'primitive representation of neural events' although this is exactly how Lakoff probably intends it (Lakoff 1997 in Antonopoulou 1997: chapter 7). Commonsense, pre-theoretical understanding of mental events does not seem to involve anything like neuron firing, or mental states as available to inspection from the outside. Hence Hopkins's further interpretation of Wittgenstein strikes me as rather peculiar. In § 296 Wittgenstein (1958) states "there is *something* there all the same accompanying my cry of pain. And it is on account of that that I utter it. And this something is what is important—and frightful—only whom are we informing of this? And on what occasion?" (ibid.: 297). If water boils in a pot, Wittgenstein says, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. "But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the picture of the pot?" (ibid.).

Once we think of events, or states like being in pain, as taking place in an enclosed space which is not the body, they become indescribable and incommunicable. Things happen in our bodies which cause verbal and other behaviour we associate with pain, as things happen in a boiling pot which cause the appearance of steam. But in this case we insist that the internal events we picture are occurring not in our bodies, but rather in this pictured space. We insist that the internal events are occurring not in the pot, but in the picture of the pot, Wittgenstein suggests. In other words, we do not think about brain states and brain processes when we are thinking of a pain in our back. These real events happening in our bodies and when we use language to describe them, they are the *causes* of our corresponding utterances.

The explanation/interpretation of human behaviour in terms of articulate thought and feeling requires a coordination of other people's acts and utterances (a correlation between what they say and what they do). This process requires that we also grasp the illocutionary force of the interpreter's utterances and therefore interpret these utterances as assertions that some state of affairs is the case, in the interpreter's view, or as expressions of her desire that p, etc. Since interpreters have

first-person authority they can also correlate their utterances with their actions, thus enabling the interpreter to confirm (or disconfirm) her hypothesis. This picture attempts to explicate the cogency of commonsense interpretation. Coherence between actions and utterances, between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour is at issue and this coherence is of a *causal-logical* type. It can possibly serve as the beginning of the explanation of the role of language in interpretive understanding.

In Lakoff's understanding (1986, 1987, 1993, also Lakoff and Johnson 1980), *metaphors* are not linguistic devices, but rather they represent basic forms of thinking. We systematically use objects and relations experienced in a concrete domain, especially in interaction with our bodies, to conceptualize and talk about entities and relations in an abstract domain, e.g. career-as-a-journey, life-as-a-journey, visual field as-a-container, an activity-as-a container (1980: 69ff). Goals and purposes are destinations towards which we move, since travelling represents all kinds of purposeful human activity. Difficulties in achieving goals are understood as barriers/ obstacles in the road, so we try to "get over" or "get around", but we may be "blocked", "stopped", "trapped", "held back" and therefore we may be unable to "get through" and "go ahead". The source domain is concrete and primitive, the target domain is abstract and sophisticated. These two ends of the metaphorical mapping are also conceived of as related in time: there is an earlier and a later one. Sweetser (1990) is a good example of the significance of this aspect of metaphorical mapping in relation to diachronic development/change. Goals are further related to grasping and states to possessions and this seems to reflect the representation of the world in the perspective of an infant, for whom fundamental tasks are those of moving, grasping and holding.

The use of the body as source domain extends also to our understanding of the mind and mental states. Intellectual achievements are conceived of in terms of basic manipulation. Therefore understanding is related to sight (e.g. 'I see what you mean', an explanation 'casts light' on an issue, I am expressing my 'view', etc.). Now if you understand ('see') something well, you 'grasp' its meaning, or you can 'get a hold' on what someone is talking about. In short, understanding is related to perceptual accuracy and bodily control, just as states of mind are related to states of body. A common metaphor within this large area involves understanding the mind as a 'house' (the house of reason, for instance) which is itself housed in the body. The senses are related to doors/portals to the mind, the eyes are windows of the soul. The container metaphor in relation to mind and body is also

clear in cases where we understand someone as being 'full' of emotions which may 'bubble up' or 'overflow' unless they are 'contained' or 'bottled up' (Kovecses 1990).

Anger and love/lust are conceived of in terms of heat or flame, while fear is related to cold. Good things enter the mind/body container and are 'sweet', bad things are 'bitter' and expelled. Lakoff explains therefore that the system of metaphor is a system of thought rooted in/or grounded on bodily experience. What is called 'motivation' in cognitive linguistics at large is the grounding of meaning of lexical and syntactic constructions alike (and hence of all language), on more concrete, experientially available and finally human body related actions. In other words, 'surface' linguistic expressions are explained in terms of the concrete, bodily grounded experience which has given rise to their existence and provides, *ipso facto* their interpretation. Lakoff's opening statement at the 5th ICLC (1997) is characteristic: "Cognitive linguistics for me" he said "always began with embodiment". Our conceptual systems are, in this view, grounded in our bodies. This is closely followed by grounding in metaphor. Embodiment in CL has to do with mental imagery or image schemas and it is ultimately central to all of cognitive linguistics. Grounding is supposed to be explanatory.

Metaphorical mappings are therefore understood as a major mechanism which relates concrete body action to abstract domains of human experience. Properties of the source domains are carried over and reflected in the target domain which is conceptualized, understood or interpreted in terms of and *because* of the existence of these elements and their relations in the source domain. The latent content of meaning as expressed in language is therefore understood in cognitive linguistics as causing and therefore explaining overt linguistic behaviour.

3. Associations in psychoanalytic methodology

Analytical methodology aims at explaining/providing reasons for not only intentional actions but also for dreams and symptoms. These motives/ reasons are not understood within the analytical framework as states of mind present in consciousness, but rather as states that the subject is unaware of and even finds hard to admit to. One way of reasoning about this idea is perhaps the following. Since desire outruns the possibilities of successful action, it makes sense that it should be pacified by other means. Certain forms of desire which cannot be fulfilled through action for whatever reason, might well be pacified by representation alone, as, for instance, by forms of imagining. Let us consider Freud's (1976: IV) own account of dream interpretation and the role of association in it.

Freud begins *The Interpretation of Dreams* with his own dream of

Irma's injection. In this dream Freud met Irma, a family friend and patient, whom he had diagnosed as hysterical and treated by an early version of psychoanalysis. He told Irma that if she still felt pains, this was her own fault, for not accepting his 'solution' to her difficulties. As she continued to complain, however, he became alarmed that she was suffering from an organic illness which he had failed to diagnose, and this turned out to be so. Freud examined Irma, and then she was examined by some of Freud's colleagues, including his senior colleague M. It became manifest not only that she was organically ill, but also that her illness was caused by a toxic injection of the chemical trimethylamin, given by another of Freud's colleagues, his family doctor Otto. Thus Freud sets out the parts of the dream as follows:

numerous guests, among them Irma. I at once took her on one side, as though to answer her letter and to reproach her for not having accepted my 'solution' yet. I said to her 'If you still get pains, it's really only your fault'. She replied: 'if you only knew what pains I've got now in my throat and stomach and abdomen—it's choking me'— I was alarmed and looked at her. She looked pale and puffy. I thought to myself that after all I must be missing some organic trouble. I took her to the window and looked down her throat... I saw extensive whitish gray scabs upon some remarkable curly structures... I at once called in Dr. M... and he repeated the examination and confirmed it... M. said: 'There's no doubt it's an infection, but no matter, dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated'... We were directly aware, too, of the origin of the infection. Not long before, when she was feeling unwell, my friend Otto had given her an injection of a preparation of propyl, propyls, propionic acid ...trimethylamin (and I saw before me the formula printed in a heavy type)... Injections of that sort ought not to be made so thoughtlessly... And probably the syringe had not been clean" (IV 107).

The dream deals with topics unpleasant for the dreamer crucially involving his responsibility towards a family friend. The day before Otto had returned from visiting Irma and discussed her health with Freud, who had felt something like a reproof in Otto's remarks. That night Freud started writing up Irma's case to show M. who appears in the dream as diagnosing Irma's illness and attributing responsibility to Otto. According to the dream and contrary to what Otto had implied (in Freud's understanding) Freud bore no responsibility for Irma's condition. The contrasting role of desire in action and wishfulfillment is fairly

obvious here. Freud's intentional action in response to his desire to be cleared of responsibility was to write up a case history to present M., whose authoritative judgment could clear him of responsibility. In the dream, the desire to be cleared did not produce a related action, but gave rise to a dreamt belief-like representation of a situation in which Freud was cleared of responsibility in many different ways involving M. In other words, the dreamer's free associations give information about incidents and related emotions (e.g. Otto's giving someone an injection, his remark about Irma not being well yet, Freud's annoyance, etc.) which appear to have influenced the content of the dream. What requires an explanation is precisely these connections between associations and the elements of the dream. It needs to be explained how the material from the associations is causally related to the content of the dream.

Freud's hypothesis is that the data from the associations are connected to data from the dream through wishful imaginative representation. The correspondences are fairly easy to establish. Consider some of these where 'A' stands for 'associations', 'H' stands for 'hypothesis' and 'D' stands for 'dream'.

1. A: Freud wants not to be responsible for Irma's illness.
 →H. He wishfully represents her suffering as not his fault but her own.
 →D. Freud tells Irma that if she still has pains it is really only her fault.
2. A: Freud wants not to be responsible for Irma's illness.
 →H. he wishfully represents Irma as suffering from something for which he is not responsible.
 →D. Irma is suffering from an organic complaint, for the treatment of which Freud is not responsible.
3. A: Freud is annoyed with Otto for his remark about Irma's condition, as he takes it to be directed against him.
 →H. Freud wishfully represents the situation as the reverse of that implied by Otto, so that it is the latter who is to be held responsible for Irma's suffering.
 →D. Otto is at fault in his practice with Irma.
4. A: Otto had given someone an injection while at Irma's and Freud had been thinking that his own injections had never given anybody an infection.
 →H. He uses elements from reality to wishfully represent the situation in such a way that Otto (rather than himself) should be accused of fault connected with Irma's suffering. →D. Otto gave Irma an injection which caused an infection.
5. A: Freud desires to clear himself of responsibility for Irma's condition.

→D. Otto is held entirely responsible for Irma's condition.

6. A. Freud hopes that M.'s intervention will acquit him of responsibility.

→H. Freud wishfully represents M. as finding that Irma's suffering was Otto's fault.

→D. M. observes Otto's bad practice and recognizes that Otto is completely responsible for Irma's suffering.

7. A. Freud considered Otto's remark to him thoughtless.

→H. He wishfully represents Otto as thoughtless.

→D. Otto's injection to Irma was thoughtless.

The MSs and processes of the wishful imagining which are latent, are supposed to give rise to the content of the dream which is manifest. In other words, Freud forms a hypothesis, which is the dream-wish in this case, to account for an episode of wishful imagining. The relation between the wish and the process of wishful imagining is similar to that between a desire and the action it is hypothesized to cause and explain. The manifest part of the chain is the intentional action and the hypothesized, latent part is the desire which supposedly has given rise to that action. Similarly, just as the action serves to satisfy/pacify the desire, the imagining serves to pacify the wish. Methodologically, therefore, there does not seem to be much difference between our commonsense interpretation of action the way Davidson presents it and Freud's proposal. In fact, in the latter case, first-person accuracy is tested against interpretation more explicitly than in every day interpretation of action. The interpretive foundations of both commonsense psychology and psychoanalysis are evidently intuitive but they are potentially very strong. The natural concordance that interpretation brings to the surface seems to be the basis of normative accord, in Davidson's sense, and is at least equally plausible with commonsense explanation of action which makes human cooperation and communication possible.

This parallel can be pushed even further. It is clear from Freud's own associations that the dream related also to deeper matters of responsibility and in particular to his role in the death of one of his patients and one of his friends. In Freud's mind, Irma (in the dream) is connected with those people whose health was severely damaged by the medication Freud administered. These are reflected in the dream in M.'s statement that "the toxin will be eliminated". Further associations are therefore established, such as:

8. A. Freud accidentally caused the death of a patient by prescribing a toxic substance.

→H. He wishfully represents Otto rather than himself as responsible for the misuse of toxic substances.

9. A. Freud advised a friend to take cocaine and the friend's death was precipitated by cocaine injections.

→H. He wishfully represents Otto rather than himself as responsible for the thoughtlessness, in particular for thoughtless injections as in the case of his friend who died.

→D. Freud reproaches Otto that injections of that kind should not be made so easily.

Apparently, while on the surface responsibility verges on Irma's condition, at some deeper level, responsibility for having caused death is at issue. Hence the deeper emotion involved is guilt. This is coherent with the wish not to be responsible for Irma's suffering as depicted in the dream, for that too could be a source of guilt. In Freud's terminology, Irma's presence in the dream involves 'condensation'. Irma is combined with the friend and the patient about whom Freud felt guilty. The dream brings about a wishful 'displacement' of the guilt from Freud to Otto. The dream and the associations are therefore also related to deep emotions. Transference from 'latent' to 'manifest' content is presented as transformation effected through condensation and displacement. His interpretation of a dream consists in establishing a relation between manifest and latent content in the same way as in interpreting action itself. Hypothesized elements in the interpretee's (agent's) mind provide the reasons for that action as they are seen as the source/causes for it.

Notice, further, that in Freud's understanding, the processes of condensation and displacement are hypothesized to work in connection with language and other modes of symbolism. Dream symbolism in Freud can be regarded as a metaphor. This kind of metaphor is similar to Lakoff's concept, although lacking the systematic character and the body-grounding of the latter. Freud's interpretations are in fact the result of comparisons between elements from the 'source' domain, in Lakoff's terminology, and elements from the 'target' domain. The former can be understood as causing the latter and providing *ipso facto* the reasons for their occurrence.

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SUMMARY

Eleni Antonopoulou, *Οι Αιτίες ως Λόγοι: Μονισμός, Μεταφορά και Συνειρμός*

Στο άρθρο αυτό επιχειρείται συσχετισμός της θεωρίας "ανώμαλου μονισμού" του D. Davidson, της θεωρίας της μεταφοράς όπως εκφράζεται στη Γνωστική Γλωσσολογία και της αντίληψης του συνειρμού όπως λειτουργεί στην ψυχαναλυτική προσέγγιση ερμηνείας του ονείρου.

Ο Davidson αρνείται την ύπαρξη ψυχολογικών και ψυχο-φυσικών νόμων και θεωρεί ότι το ίδιο γεγονός είναι συγχρόνως νοητικό και φυσικό, χωρίς όμως να υπάρχει δυνατότητα να ερμηνευθεί η νοητική του σύλληψη βάσει φυσικών στοιχείων του εγκεφάλου. Πρόκειται για δύο διαφορετικές περιγραφές που συνδέονται με *ιδιαίτερη* κατά περίπτωση αιτιακή σχέση, εφόσον τα γεγονότα είναι, κατά τον Davidson, μονάδες επιδεκτικές πολλαπλών διαφορετικών περιγραφών. Επομένως οι πράξεις είναι γεγονότα περιγραφόμενα κατά τέτοιο τρόπο ώστε να εξηγούνται μέσω του περιεχομένου των νοητικών καταστάσεων που λειτουργούν ως *λόγοι* για την ύπαρξή τους. Είναι δηλαδή φυσικές καταστάσεις που συνδέονται με τις νοητικές καταστάσεις που τις προκαλούν και αποτελούν για αυτόν ακριβώς το λόγο και την εξήγηση/ερμηνεία τους.

Κατά τη Γνωστική Γλωσσολογία, η μεταφορά δεν είναι καθαρά γλωσσικός μηχανισμός, αλλά αναπαράσταση γενικής γνωστικής λειτουργίας. Η γλώσσα χρησιμοποιεί συστηματικά τη μεταφορά για να εκφράσει το (γνωστικό) συσχετισμό ανάμεσα στο συγκεκριμένο, φυσικό χώρο με τον οποίο ερχόμαστε σε επαφή με το σώμα μας και στον αφηρημένο χώρο της πολύπλοκης και εκλεπτυσμένης ανθρώπινης δραστηριότητας, τον οποίο αντιλαμβανόμαστε βάσει αυτού ακριβώς του φυσικού χώρου ο οποίος *προκαλεί* την ύπαρξη του αφηρημένου και συγχρόνως *εξηγεί* το περιεχόμενό του. Στοιχεία από το φυσικό (σωματικό) χώρο που αποτελεί την αφετηρία μεταφέρονται στον αφηρημένο που αποτελεί το στόχο και τον οποίο συλλαμβάνουμε και ερμηνεύουμε με τους όρους του πρώτου και εξαιτίας της ύπαρξής του.

Στη ψυχαναλυτική μεθοδολογία ανιχνεύονται οι λόγοι - αιτίες όχι μόνο των (ηθελημένων) πράξεων, αλλά και των νευρωτικών συμπτωμάτων και των ονείρων. Μέσα στα πλαίσια αυτής της θεωρίας, οι αιτίες δεν είναι συνειδητές νοητικές καταστάσεις. Το υποκείμενο όχι μόνο δεν τις γνωρίζει αλλά δυσκολεύεται και να δεχθεί την ύπαρξή τους. Η υπόθεση που διατυπώνεται είναι ότι εφόσον η επιθυμία π.χ.

υπερβαίνει τη πιθανότητα επιτυχούς πραγματοποίησής της, δηλαδή πράξης που να την ικανοποιεί, βρίσκει διέξοδο μέσω άλλων διόδων, κυρίως μέσω αναπαράστασης. Στην *Ερμηνεία των Ονείρων* ο Freud παρουσιάζει μια υπόθεση, αυτή της φαντασιωσικής αναπαράστασης της επιθυμίας, η οποία συνδέει στοιχεία από το όνειρο (που υπάρχουν μόνο στην αναπαράσταση) με στοιχεία από τους συνειρμούς του υποκειμένου (που προέρχονται από τον πραγματικό φυσικό χώρο). Η ερμηνεία του ονείρου προέρχεται από το συσχετισμό εμφανούς και λανθάνοντος περιεχομένου μέσω “συμπύκνωσης” και “μετάθεσης”. Ο συμβολισμός του ονείρου παραλληλίζεται με τη μεταφορά που εκφράζεται στη γλώσσα. Στοιχεία από τον πραγματικό χώρο της αφετηρίας προκαλούν (αποτελούν δηλαδή την αιτία) και συγχρόνως εξηγούν (παρέχουν δηλαδή ερμηνεία για) στοιχεία από το φανταστικό χώρο του ονείρου.