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Dennett

The intentional stance, the interface problem. Tuesday introduction

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# Intentionality

- Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity.

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- Intentionality contd

- Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it.
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- Intentionality contd some more
  - We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves. (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, 1874, §5)

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# The interface problem

How does commonsense psychological explanation interface with the explanations of cognition and mental operations given by scientific psychology, cognitive science, cognitive neuroscience and the other levels in the explanatory hierarchy? (Bermudez, *Philosophy of Psychology*, p. 35)

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# A few different answers to that question

- Autonomous mind

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- Autonomous mind
- Functional mind

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# A few different answers to that question

- Autonomous mind
- Functional mind
- Representational mind



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# A few different answers to that question

- Autonomous mind
- Functional mind
- Representational mind
- Neurocomputational mind

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# Autonomous mind

- The mind is autonomous: commonsense explanations of cognitive activities are a domain of their own. Nothing cognitive is going on at any deeper levels.
- The deeper levels are the domain of causal explanations in the form used by natural science.

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# Autonomous mind, continued

- Commonsense explanations of cognitive phenomena are of a different type. They have a normative component. To do something rational is to do what should be done (in a special sense)
- This normative aspect gives an account of why the mind is autonomous.
- This is not necessarily a dualist position

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# Functional mind

- Explanation on the commonsense level is a special kind of causal explanation

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# Representational mind

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# Neurocomputational mind

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# The Intentional Stance – Dennett

- "Intentional systems", *Jphil* 1971
- *The Intentional Stance*, book 1987
- "Real patterns", *Jphil* 1991

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# Relations with Newell's Knowledge level

"The knowledge level is a way of simply talking about what *can* be done computationally with certain symbols and processes even though in general I may not be able to know exactly how the system will behave."

Newell, "The Symbol Level and the Knowledge Level", last page



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# The design stance

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# The physical stance

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# The intentional stance

- "a particular thing is an Intentional system only in relation to the strategies of someone who is trying to explain and predict its behavior" (Dennett 1971:87)

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- "The definition of Intentional systems I have given does not say that Intentional systems *really* have beliefs and desires" (91)

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# Attitude?

- But does the intentional stance mean that whether something is intentional is up for grabs, a question of *our* attitudes?

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# Compare with eliminativism

- Is the knowledge level there, for Dennett?
- "Real patterns" returns to that question, giving a kind of "yes" answer.