

PHILOSOPHIA

PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY OF ISRAEL

VOLUME 21, NOS. 3-4

APRIL 1992

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

THE PROBLEM OF ERROR: A SURD SPOT IN RATIONAL INTENTIONALISM

V.L. McGEER

The notion of error is not univocal: there are many ways of going wrong and of getting it wrong – errors in action and errors in belief. Error, indeed, is one of the specialties of common-sense psychology. We are very good at describing in remarkable detail the origins, natures and consequences of the many lapses, mistakes, misconstruals, misjudgments, improprieties and so forth that we tend to make or fall prey to. Moreover, it is no accident that our vocabulary for error is so very rich. Being able to go wrong in so many ways indicates the richness of our cognitive abilities, of our physical world, of our social world and of our complex interactions - often intentionally described - with the other interactive agents and objects around us. That we err is obvious; but attention to how we err will allow us to probe the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical programs that attempt to trace the contours of our being – primarily, that is, of our being rational – in the world.

There are two tendencies in the philosophical literature on error. The first is to consider error not so much in its own right, but rather and more simply in its negativity to going right or to getting it right. This tendency, which is particularly evident amongst those who adopt a "charitable" approach to the attributions of propositional attitudes, has been fostered by a philosophical concern with skepticism. Indeed, the trademark of what I will call "rational intentionalism", among whose leading proponents are Dennett and Davidson, is to link agent rationality to an incapacity for persistent, systematic and widespread error. The second tendency is to think of error almost exclusively in terms of false belief. In the philosophy of mind, this had led to a peculiar one-sidedness in the on-going debate between rational intentionalists, on the one hand, and representationalists, on the other, about the ontological status of intentional states. For the phenomenon of error so narrowly construed is seen to present a particular problem

for realists, i.e. advocates of the Representational Theory of Mind, and is thus taken as indirect support for the instrumentalist Rational Intentionalism. The aim of this paper is to rectify that imbalance, not in order to defend Representationalism, but to show that a consideration of error freed from traditional prejudices reveals a common weakness in philosophical accounts of the folk psychological theory of behaviour.

Representationalists such as Fodor, Dretske, Millikan et al. claim that, since beliefs are representations whose content is more or less accurately determined by the things (objects/events/other beliefs) which cause them in the minds of their entertainers, and it is by means of them that we know about the world and direct our behaviour in it, the mechanism to account for error is ready at hand – it is misrepresentation. In fact, they claim, a creature's capacity for error lends credibility to their account. Fodor writes:

The point is that entertaining a mistaken belief is an intentional state *par excellence*, so there is a short and well-travelled route from the contemplation of facts about perceptual errors, illusions and the like to the postulation of mental representations and other cognitive apparatus.¹

Detractors of the Representational Theory of Mind argue that this route is best avoided. If human cognition is portrayed as essentially involving the acquisition, manipulation and interpretation of mental representations, the skeptic gains a foothold by exploiting the gap which emerges between us and the world. If skepticism about the external world is to be combated by a "wide" construal of the intentional contents of representations, the gap occurs between us and our representations, inviting skepticism about the contents of our own minds. If, on the other hand, representational contents are "narrowly" construed, we recover first person authority, but only by opening a gap between our representations and the world. The key, according to Davidson, is to avoid the "dogma that to have a thought is to have an object before the mind."² But not to deny the obvious, he writes, Of course people have beliefs, wishes, doubts, and so forth; but to allow this is not to suggest that beliefs, wishes and doubts are *entities* in or before the mind, or that being in such states requires there to be corresponding mental objects.³

A Rational Intentionalist theory of the mental does not invoke representational intermediaries. The attributions of common sense psychology, according to both Davidson and Dennett, are made to

rationalize a creature's behaviour and are therefore appropriate or inappropriate to this end. But while considerations of rationality do not precisely determine how we describe a creature's intentional states (there is considerable latitude in what rationalizing attributions we choose to make), they do severely constrain the role played in this process by the concept of error. Consider the following scenario:

Sue returns to her office late one evening because she believes her book is there and wants to finish reading it. Sue has a false belief. Unbeknownst to her, her colleague Harry has been wanting to read this book. He supposed (falsely) that Sue had finished with it and took it home himself to read. He concluded this because he observed Sue pick up the book just before she left, stare at it fixedly, then put it back on her desk after carefully moving a coffee cup to make room for it. But Sue, who had picked up the book intending to put in her case, was distracted by a long-distance phone call. The book never made the bag even though Sue formed the (false) belief that it had, so she left the office without it.

In this story the individuals' actions only make sense if we suppose they believe, at some crucial juncture, what is not the case. There is no difficulty in attributing (false) beliefs and desires in circumstances that do not defy rational explanation. They have what Dennett describes as "normal etiologies that we might call peripheral."⁴

But there are more interesting kinds of errors than those of imply forming false beliefs. Sue believed she picked up the book and (while answering the phone) put it in her bag. We attribute that belief to her to rationalize her leaving the office without it, even though she wanted to finish reading it. She would say that of herself later. But if asked at the time why she moved her coffee cup, she would say to make room for the book she put back on her desk. Did she believe that she put her book on the desk? And if she believed this, could she also have believed she put her book in the bag? According to Dennett, these commonplace cognitive slips create "a surd spot, an uninterpretable gap, in the tale we tell of ...[her] from the intentional stance."⁵ He claims there is "no saying" what a person believes in these circumstances. And since there is no saying, we cannot explain her behaviour through attributions of beliefs and desires. Dennett says, "the gap is real and unclosable in the case of cognitive errors."⁶

For Dennett, this "no saying" is not a matter of simple indeterminacy. There is no rationalizing attribution to be made, though there are many "*ad hoc*" things we can say from the point of view of

common-sense psychology to overlap the gaps.⁷ She wasn't paying attention or she was distracted by the phone call and so on. But the gaps persist nonetheless, revealing the limitations of common-sense psychology as an explanatory and predictive theory. These limitations are unfortunate, but not catastrophic. Behaviour which cannot be explained or predicted from the intentional stance is not (in principle) inexplicable or unpredictable. We can always appeal to our biological and physical theories where, Dennett claims, "only complexity stands (practically) in the way of prediction..."⁸, and it is only complexity because it is only a way of talking, important though it may be, which we have lost in moving to a "lower" level of description.

Dennett claims that the dispensability of intentional explanations is an advantage his theory has over that of his representationalist colleagues. Their theory commits them to a realist construal of intentional contents. Since Rational Intentionalism does not, Dennett need not get bogged down in the hopeless task of trying to attribute intentional states which simply do not 'add up'. Thus, Dennett concludes, the problem of error is simply one of those "unlocked doors" which representationalists waste so much effort in trying to break down.⁹ He adds, "for Davidson and Dennett ... there simply is no issue right where a major lacuna looms for Realists such as Fodor (and Burge and Dretske and Kripke and others ...)"¹⁰

It is a tried and true strategy to dispatch one's opponents by showing that the intractable problems they encounter cannot be generated even by taking one's own approach. But the sanguinity with which Dennett dismisses these kinds of error - cognitive slips - is misplaced. Their conceptual significance lies in challenging the very notion of rationality that is the cornerstone of Dennett's instrumentalist account.

If we assume that the attribution of beliefs and desires is necessary to the explanation of an agent's behaviour *qua* the behaviour of an agent (in keeping with normative arguments against eliminativism), the gappiness introduced by cognitive errors doesn't just leave us in the dark about what to say of an agent in these circumstances. Since psychological concepts cannot be deployed, it leaves us in these moments without an agent to say anything of. Surely our intuitive conception of an agent is not so unstable. Sue is not Sue at one moment performing in a way that presupposes the rich intentional life of a cognitive agent, only to be supplanted at the next, by a neural net characterized by some physical state description 'X' and effecting the

causal sequences 'a¹, a², a³ ... aⁿ.' Yet if we suppose these gaps do not compromise the intuition that agents *qua* agents do have a certain cognitive integrity through time, then it seems we must acknowledge that what accounts for that integrity is not the agent's intentional states. What the agent does, its behaviour, does not need to be explained and predicted by appeal to beliefs and desires and so, *a fortiori*, does not need to be rationalized, but rather has only to be explained by appeal to our best physical and biological theories. Rationality and the attribution of propositional attitudes would be rendered otiose, not just here, but in all cases.¹¹

One response Dennett or Davidson might offer is that this is not a dilemma they have to take seriously. Their theory, as they have often said, does not require that agents be ideally rational. Mistakes are allowable in so far as an interpreter can still discern a pattern of behaviour that displays the overall contours of rationality - the minor glitches here and there being inconsequential. The purpose of attributing beliefs and desires is not the precise prediction of behaviour or, where predictions fail due to cognitive lapses, its explanation. If precise prediction and explanation were the goals, it would be better to shift to a level of description that allows for a precise specification of the relevant variables (the level of physics, say). A psychological theory subsumes the goals of a proper scientific theory (explanation and prediction) to the goal of making a person understandable, and that means, of making her behaviour interpretable as conforming to a certain standard of rationality. Thus, in attributing propositional attitudes we may have to brush over the details of individual instances of behaviour in order to get the broader picture of a rational agent in the world.

But what exactly does brushing over individual instances of behaviour require - that no rationalizing attributions be made (we don't attribute the belief to Sue that she put her book on the desk) or that the attributions which rationalize this instance of behaviour be ignored in our overall assessment of a person's rationality? Dennett seems to waffle on this question. On the one hand, he has stated that in circumstances of cognitive slips there is no saying what a person believes. As Stich points out, this seems to gibe with his claim that being rational is not something that admits of degrees. Dennett writes:

Any attempt to *legitimize* human fallibility in a theory of belief by fixing a permissible level of error would be like adding one more rule to chess: an Official Tolerance Rule to the effect that any game of

chess containing no more than k moves that are illegal relative to the other rules of the game is a legal game of chess.¹²

On the other hand, both he and Davidson have wanted to maintain all along that an agent can make mistakes. But, as I have suggested, it is hard to see how making a mistake can be characterized except by means of the attribution of propositional attitudes which are appropriate to the instance. Overall, contradictions will emerge which expose the agent's fallibility, but this does not impugn her rationality. "The claim," according to Dennett (in a later work), "is that it is rational to be inconsistent sometimes, not the pseudo-paradoxical claim that it is rational sometimes to be irrational."¹³

Dennett has put his finger on the nub of the problem which engender for his approach. They reveal that the "pseudo-paradoxical claim" is avoided only by exploiting an ambiguity in the very concept of rationality which drives the engines of the theory. Attributions of propositional attitudes are made so that an agent's behaviour is interpretable as rational in the main. But this cannot be too stringent a notion, since attributions will be made which rationalize particular instances of behaviour as well, these attributions then constituting the inconsistencies we must overlook. But if the concept of rationality (in the main) is weakened to the extent that it becomes little more than, as Dennett now calls it, a term of "cognitive approval"¹⁴, its force no longer seems constitutive in the sense of determining what attributions are to be made in a given instance, but only evaluative in the sense of being used to assess the cognitive merits of attributions already made. But then how are these attributions already made? If Dennett and Davidson stick to the basic tenets of their approach, it is in accord with a standard of rationality which is used to determine rather than merely evaluate, and which brooks no deviations. What entitles them to this double standard of rationality? It seems to be mere *ad hocery* stemming from the supposition that a psychological theory which imposes the template of rationality on the agents it hopes to characterize can also take account of empirical findings.

The virtue of a Representational Theory of Mind, of course, is that it needs no double standard. The promise of its program is to give some account of how intentional contents are specified prior to and explanatory of normative considerations of rationality. R. G. Millikan argues, for example, that while it is the "proper function" of beliefs to participate in inferences (which, in her account, is definitive of their being "representations"), their content – what they are about – is

determined by certain "mapping functions" in accord with which they correspond to objects and events in the world.¹⁵ This does not mean, in her view, that Sue and other rational creatures lack the means for determining when their beliefs are consistent, but that process (and the complex cognitive devices that are responsible for it) is distinct from the process of belief acquisition (or desire formation) (and the complex cognitive devices that are responsible for it).¹⁶ A creature's rationality may be assessed in terms of how well it deals with – checks, discards, reforms, retains, manipulates – the information it receives (hence, not passively, but actively¹⁷), but the errors it is liable to make do not rob its internal states of intentional contents. On the contrary, it is because, to use Millikan's phrase, "intentionality and rationality are *not* two sides of a coin"¹⁸ that the extent of a creature's mistakes can be assessed at all. Error, it might be said, makes sense only against a background of content ascriptions made on consideration other than those of rationality alone.

A more balanced discussion of error has thus produced something of a stalemate in the on-going dispute between realists and instrumentalists over the grounds for ascription of intentional content. The problem realists encounter is in giving an independent characterization of the states of a system that have the function of determinately representing something in its environment and which, therefore, govern intentional ascriptions. They need this characterization to block Dennett's argument that all functional characterizations are merely interpretations – hence, subject to indeterminacy. If the function of a representational device is a always open to redescription – as genuine indeterminacy would imply – then, as Dretske says, "it becomes impossible to fool the organism, impossible to make it misrepresent anything."¹⁹ It simply "represents" whatever external conditions are causing its internal states. And for the realist-minded these are insufficient grounds for its making sense to say the organism is representing anything at all.²⁰

Now while Dretske, Fodor and other realists have tried to save intentional ascriptions for humans at the very least by arguing that the functions for our representational devices are not, to use Dennett's phrase, in the 'eye of the beholder', but determinately secured by our cognitive organization,²¹ Dennett has claimed that what grounds intentional ascriptions is not (directly) the constitution (physically or functionally described) of the organism or system at all. What actually grounds intentional ascriptions, in Dennett's view, is the successful

deployment of a theory of interpretation whose constitutive norm is the principle of rationality. An interpreter who has succeeded in attributing beliefs and desires that rationalize an organism's behaviour has no further question to ask about whether she has got the explanation right.

Well, what happens when the intentional strategy doesn't work or doesn't work very well? This is as vexing a question for Dennett as the question of determinacy of function is for the Representationalists. That because his discussion of cognitive slips reveals a fundamental tension between two demands placed on his account. The first demand is that common-sense psychology – or that part of it that is "worth keeping" – be unified, systematized and hence legitimized in the context of a proto-scientific theory of behaviour. This allows us to see that beliefs and desires are not just the mythical constructs of a way of talking, but further they are the well-behaved scientific *abstracta* of a powerful generative and efficient normative theory.²² Since this theory makes "ineliminable appeal to the rationality of the agent,"²³ it has an organizing structure that places a global demand on the explanation of behaviour which is to maintain the overall pattern of rationality. The second demand is that, while the attributions of beliefs and desires to an organism must make sense globally, it is local instances of behaviour that must be made sense of.

Now here's the dilemma I have tried to bring to light: If the global demands of the theory force us often enough to abandon rationalizing explanations of local behaviour – leading, for example, to the uninterpretable gaps of cognitive slips – the theory won't satisfy the instrumentalist criterion for the grounds of intentional attributions – predictive and explanatory success. On the other hand, if empirical pressures force us to retain local rationalizations at the expense of "revising downward from the ideal of perfect rationality"²⁴ with which the theory began, it looks as if we have simultaneously undermined the standard in accord with which those globally problematic attributions were made in the first place.

Dennett seeks to avoid this dilemma by convincing us that occasions of our fallibility which bring these two demands – for theoretical integrity and for empirical adequacy – into conflict are rare. They must be rare, Dennett thinks, because as products of natural selection we are, he assures us, "pretty rational."²⁵ Thus the patterns of rationality given explicit form by intentional systems theory are objectively real, discernible in our behaviour despite the minor

imperfections that normally emerge now and then. Furthermore, the most common of these seeming sub-optimal perturbations can be incorporated into the design of the patterns themselves. That is, by "fiddling" with the concept of rationality, our mistakes can be reconstrued as strategies of a rational – i.e. efficient – organism. This "fiddling" is not, according to Dennett, just opportunistic since it is guided by the pre-theoretic concept of rationality which he is convinced lies at the root of and explains successful folk psychological practice.²⁶

Dennett's appeal to our various intuitions is difficult to resist, but we should, I think, be wary. Given that we are not ideally rational, in whatever sense of "rational" Dennett prefers, no amount of concept gerrymandering will produce an unambiguous standard that can play an evaluative role, on the one hand, and on the other, underlie the intentional attributions which must then be evaluated. This has forced Dennett to concede the need for supplementing, and even "correcting", theory-driven explanations of behaviour with seat-of-the-pants empirical generalizations.²⁷ But instead of recognizing the inherent instability of his position, Dennett takes this to show that we ordinary folk "are in this matter, as in most, satisficers, not optimizers, when it comes to information gathering and theory constructions."²⁸

So the view of folk psychology Dennett wants us to accept is this: a degenerate theory infected by practices that are *ad hoc*, variegated, complex and bordering on incoherent.²⁹ Witness the kinds of things we are likely to say to overleap the gaps in the appropriate intentional characterization of Sue's cognitive state when she suffers her lamentable lapse: "She wasn't paying attention" or "she was distracted." or "she had too many things on her mind", and so on in similar messy profusion.³⁰ How can this be an explanation of her behaviour? Ordinary folk might mistakenly construe it as such – they might even use such claims predictively – but, Dennett claims, genuine intentional explanations are reason explanations and, of course, "people don't make mistakes for reason."³¹ Thus, the folk jargon of error is genuinely a *façon de parler* – an unsystematizable, jury-rigged, haphazard means for getting around when there's nothing sensible to say.³² As such, it is not worth saving in intentional systems theory even if somehow, *per impossibile*, it could be.

It is ironic that in trying to account for the success of common-sense psychological explanations, Dennett discounts the very kinds of discourses that ensure its success. And what justifies the exclusions he is determined to make? Nothing, I claim, in our ordinary sense-

making practices. It is rather that Dennett has been gripped by a picture – one he shares with Representationalists – that folk psychology is a theory. So explaining the success of our ordinary practices must be done in terms of a relation between limited evidence and the adequacy of the theory – degenerate and implicit though it may be – we construct on that basis. This view underlies the dispute between realists and instrumentalists we have been considering: Is folk psychology a successful theory because its theoretical entities – beliefs and desires – are posited real states in the heads of their entertainers or the logical constructs of “an idealizing, abstract, instrumentalistic interpretation method” that “produces its predictions and explanations by calculating in a normative system.”³³ Both accounts seem to founder (in their separate ways) in making plausible, or even possible, the all-too-common occurrences of ordinary human mistakes within the confines of their separate accounts. My final suggestion, then, is that the problem of error presents us with a different kind of challenge than either of these two accounts have faced: It is to articulate what is unique about our social and communicative relations with other intelligent (enough) creatures that allows us the possibility of understanding them in a way which is fundamentally unlike our theorizing about the non-intentional phenomena of the natural world.

There have been suggestions along these lines. Such, for example, in arguing against Dennett that folk psychology is not a normative theory, has claimed that it is method by which we use ourselves as the model for understanding others, projecting onto them the beliefs and desires we think we would have in the circumstances we observe surrounding them.³⁴ But merely replacing the idealized standard of a rational agent with a standard that is the conception of our own selves, complete with cognitive short-comings, does not address the methodological question of how that significantly alters the relation between the one who projects her would-be intentional states onto the one she understands from the relation of scientist to observed object. As Dennett says, though it is an “interesting idea ... that when we interpret others we do so not so much by theorizing about them as by using ourselves as analogue computers that produce a result,” he asks,

How can it work without being a kind of theorizing in the end? For the state I put myself in is not belief but make-believe belief. If I make believe I am a suspension bridge and wonder what I will do when the wind blows, what “comes to me” in my make-believe state depends on how sophisticated my knowledge is of the physics and engineering

of suspension bridges. Why should my making-believe I have your beliefs be any different? In both cases, knowledge of the imitated object is needed to drive the make-believe “simulation”, and the knowledge must be organized into something rather like a theory.³⁵

The answer to Dennett's question must be a complex one, but it is worth exploring – beginning with the important observation that he has already prejudiced the answer. It is prejudiced because in making-believe I am a suspension bridge I cannot abandon the “objective, materialistic third-person world of the physical sciences”.³⁶ In an astonishing leap of the imagination, I may pretend I am the object that I, as theorist, want to understand. But my pretence, my imitation, is exactly as limited as the knowledge my theory encompasses. It provides me with no additional information, which is why I think we should look askance at engineering scientists who confessed that their method of understanding suspension bridges was to pretend they were suspension bridges. But engaging in the time-honoured folk practice of putting I, myself in your shoes is fundamentally different. And it's not that by so doing I can abandon the 'objective, materialistic third-person world of the physical sciences', since that's a position I never adopted with respect to you in the first place. Normally, I don't need to go to any extraordinary lengths – any theorizing – to understand you. But when you baffle me, and I begin to think, “now if I were you, if I were in your circumstances, why would I do what you're doing?”, I am also not theorizing in Dennett's sense. For in considering the particulars of the case, I am not exploiting any theoretical knowledge of the “rational agent” or of people like you or even of people like me so that I can imitate you in your circumstances. You are to me as one suspension bridge is to another, close enough in kind that it is possible to try to understand you by putting myself in your place. Thus, it is a kind of make-believe which makes sense to us even though we must acknowledge that it may not work in the end if in fact we are not “enough” alike.

Being “enough alike” may seem a vague kind of constraint to place on the effectiveness of a particular strategy, but we ordinary folk don't really need anything more. This is because we don't let our understanding of others (or lack thereof) ride on the applicability of common-sense generalizations or useful strategies which make up what philosophers call “folk psychology”. We may often be surprised by how people (including ourselves) behave. But having our expectations continually disappointed does not provoke the search for

expectations continually disappointed does not provoke the search for systematic modifications that recalcitrant data does for scientific theorizing. Although we may modify some of the generalizations about people we tended to accept in the past, we are just as likely to rest content with the thought that this person is an "exception to the rule" or this act was "out of character" - perhaps with reason, or perhaps not. Maybe we suppose they are having a bad day - hence, a particular liability to various mistakes. I conclude, therefore, that a philosophical inquiry into the nature of folk psychology should not be the quest for a theory supporting the generalizations which we are just as likely to set aside without compunction in our attempts to get on with others; rather, it should be an inquiry into the circumstances, skills and abilities which enable us to understand each other in the absence of anything like a systematic theory.^{37 38}

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5S 1A1
CANADA

NOTES

1. J. Fodor, "Why Paramnesia Don't Have Mental Representations," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1987) 7. Dretske also emphasizes the importance of going wrong: "What we are after is the power of a system to say, mean, or represent (or, indeed, *take*) things as *P* whether or not *P* is the case. That is the power of words, of beliefs, of thought - the power that *minds* have - and that therefore is the power we are seeking in representational systems. Whatever *word* we use to describe the relation of interest (representation? meaning?), it is the power to misrepresent, the capacity to get things wrong, to say things that are not true, that helps *define* the relation of interest. That is why it is important to stress a system's capacity for misrepresentation. For only if a system has this capacity does it have, in its power to get things right, something approximating *meaning*. That is why the capacity to misrepresent is an important aspect of intentionality and why it figures so large in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language." - *Explaining Behaviour: Reasons in a World of Causes* (Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book 1988), 65.
2. Davidson, "Knowing One's Own Mind", Presidential Address to the Sixtieth Annual Pacific Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association in Los Angeles, California, March 28,

THE PROBLEM OF ERROR

- 1986 in *Proceedings of the APA*, 441-458. See also, "The Myth of the subjective", 1986, esp. p. 21 (manuscript); "The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon 1985); "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" reprinted in E. LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
- 3 Davidson, "Knowing One's Own Mind", 454.
- 4 "Reflections: When Frogs (and Others) Make Mistakes", *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book 1987), 103.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 103. This type of cognitive error has been discussed with similar critical intentions by Stephen Stich in "Dennett on Intentional Systems", *Philosophical Topics* 12 (1981) 38-62. Dennett's reply constitutes Chapter 4 of *The Intentional Stance*.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 104.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 103-106.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 The image is Dennett's from "Evolution, Error and Intentionality" in *The Intentional Stance*, 294.
- 10 "Midterm Exam: Compare and Contrast" in *The Intentional Stance*, 345.
- 11 I would like to thank Bruce Hunter and Arthur Ripstein for warning me away from a stronger (and less tenable) version of this point.
- 12 Dennett, *Brainstorms; Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology* (Montgomery, Vt: Bradford Books 1978) 21. See also Stephen Stich's discussion of the "hard" and "soft" lines he attributes to Dennett in "Dennett On Intentional Systems", op cit.
- 13 "Making Sense of Ourselves" in *The Intentional Stance*, 98.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 97.
- 15 R. G. Millikan, *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories: New Foundations for Realism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press/A Bradford Book 1984), 139-140. Millikan's account of how these mapping functions ("mathematical sense") are determined, hence what the contents of representations are, appeals to the Proper (qua evolutionarily adaptive) functions they serve in accord with a Normal (again in an adaptive sense, not necessarily "average") explanation. Her view is articulated in a complex manner, defying even minimal characterization in a footnote.
- 16 Collapsing these two processes into one is a manifestation of the syndrome Millikan calls "meaning rationalism." This syndrome is the chronic problem of traditional epistemologists, new-fangled functionalists, and meaning holists. Millikan's book is sweeping in its condemnation of theories in the philosophies of mind and

language and highly suggestive about what might be erected in the void.

- 17 *Ibid.*, Chapter 15: "The Act of Identifying".
- 18 *Ibid.*, 140.
- 19 Dretske, "Misrepresentation", in R. Bogdan, ed., *Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986) 32.
- 20 For a discussion of this issue, see Dretske, *Explaining Behaviour: Reasons in a World of Causes*, Ch. 3.
- 21 For important differences among these various accounts, see, for example: Dretske, *op cit.*; Fodor, *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press/A Bradford Book, 1987); and Millikan, *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories*.
- 22 Dennett, "Three Kinds of Intentional Psychology", in *The Intentional Stance*, 48.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 See Dennett, "True Believers" in *The Intentional Stance*, 21.
- 25 *Ibid.*, "Three Kinds of Intentional Psychology" in *The Intentional Stance*, 50. See also, "Evolution, Error and Intentionality" in *The Intentional Stance*.
- 26 "Making Sense of Ourselves" in *The Intentional Stance*, 97-98.
- 27 "Three Kinds of Intentional Psychology" in *The Intentional Stance*, 53-54.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*, 47.
- 30 Notice how none of these things is equivalent to the philosophical strategy of accounting for apparent irrationality by dividing the mind. That is to say, we account for a person's having inconsistent beliefs by supposing the beliefs themselves occupy different spaces (however that is made out), or more radically, that different persons occupy the same body. Neither one of these strategies seems to me particularly attractive. If these divisions are to be justified, it can only be by appeal to the principle of rationality underlying the very theory that is brought into question by the possibility of a person's having inconsistent beliefs, or even by making the kinds of errors discussed above. It is one of the attractive features of folk psychology that it does not make irrationality or error disappear *qua* irrationality or *qua* error in order to account for its manifestations.
- 31 "Making Sense of Ourselves" in *The Intentional Stance*, 86.
- 32 See *ibid.*, 87.
- 33 The alternatives are described by Dennett, "Three Kinds of Intentional Psychology" in *The Intentional Stance*, 53 and 48, 52.
- 34 Stich, "Dennett on Intentional Systems", *op. cit.*, 57-61.

35. "Making Sense of Ourselves", in *The Intentional Stance*, 100-101.
36. See Dennett, "Setting Off on the Right Foot," in *The Intentional Stance*, 5.
37. This inquiry has already been launched by some. See, for example, Arthur Ripstein's "Explanation and Empathy" in the *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (1987) 465-482.
38. I would like to thank Deborah Brown, Sue Campbell, Bruce Hunter, Arthur Ripstein and especially Randall Keen for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

REFERENCES

- Davidson, D. *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
- Davidson, D. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", reprinted in E. LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Davidson, D. "Knowing One's Own Mind", Presidential Address to the Sixtieth Annual Pacific Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association in Los Angeles, California, March 28, 1986, in *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA*.
- Davidson, D. "The Myth of the Subjective" (manuscript), 1986.
- Dennett, D. *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*. Montgomery, Vt.: Bradford Books, 1978.
- Dennett, D. *The Intentional stance*. Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book, 1987.
- Dretske, F. "Misrepresentation", in R. Bogdan, ed., *Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Dretske, F. *Explaining Behaviour: Reasons in a World of Causes*. Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book, 1988.
- Fodor, J. "Why Paramnesia Don't Have Mental Representations", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1986) 3-23.
- Fodor, J. *Psychosemantics*. Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book, 1987.
- Millikan, R. G. *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories: New Foundations for Realism*. Cambridge: MIT Press/A Bradford Book, 1984.
- Ripstein, A. "Explanation and Empathy", *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (1987) 465-482.
- Stich, S. "Dennett on Intentional Systems", *Philosophical Topics* 12 (1981) 38-62.