

CARITAS UNIVERSITY AMORJI-NIKE, EMENE, ENUGU STATE**Caritas Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities**

CJMSSH, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2022)

Anti-Reductionist Theories of Mind and the Philosophy of Mind and Body**Jude Godwins****Authors' Affiliation**

Department of Philosophy
Seat of Wisdom Seminary,
Imo State University, Owerri.
judegodwins8@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Cartesian model of mind slots behaviours expressive of our thoughts and feelings into the same category with their automatic counterparts. Yet, in contrast to the body's involuntary and automatic behaviours, "shared perspectives on the world" empower us to recognize the human body as expressing the subject's viewpoint on the world; a recognition that is not only about voluntariness and expressivity but also about the embodied nature of human behaviour: feeling, belief, action, and thought. Reasons as explaining behaviour have their roots in behaviour understood and explained in this embodied way. In consequence, it may be the case that it is because we have this "mode of embodiment" that we are subjects whose feelings and thoughts come from experience, represent a point of view on the world, and provide reasons for behaviour (Burwood, 157.)

Keywords:**Behaviour,****Feelings,****Expressivity,****Experience,****Voluntariness**

Introduction

Our reflections on Descartes and on the ensuing reductionist theories that focus on the physical side of his psycho-physical dualism expose the peculiarities of our intentional states. The peculiar features of our intentional states portend exacting tasks for the modern-day programme of reducing our experience of the intentional to “non-intentional” functionalist idioms. Similarly our study of the computational theories of mind and allied concepts uncover how “intentional kinds” have their roots in “normative, rationalizing” explanatory accounts. Incidentally, these normative and rationalizing explanatory patterns do not seem to have any resonance in physicalist accounts.

Besides, philosophical reflections (Burwood, 73-93) on the “semantic content of our intentional states” reveal that this content appears to grow out of our links with states of affairs in our surroundings and out of our “situatedness” in the behavioural pattern of our social milieu. Functionalism neither in its internalist nor in its externalist guises does appear equipped to adequately represent this content (See Jaegwon Kim, 1996, chapter 8). From these philosophical investigations it is apparent that our intentional states are equipped for explicating facts that are in many ways distinct from bodily motoric, even as they have implications for such corporeal motoricity. We, thus, engage them (our intentional states) in explicating our “intentional engagements” in our existential milieu and the way we expressively and meaningfully interact with this *Lebenswelt* (Burwood, 95.) It is not likely we have any viable alternatives to such intentional explanatory patterns in the non-intentional models.

In what follows we intend to examine some other answers to the question of what it is to be in or have a mental state. We intend to investigate the intentional accounts that strive to keep away from the kind of philosophical entanglements that reductive functionalist models run into. A line of thought that seems to stay away from the difficulties to which we

have been alluding is the interpretationalist account. Daniel Dennett and Donald Davidson are prominent proponents of interpretationalism. Interpretationalists propose that our “intentional patterns” of categorization afford us an “interpretative framework” that enables us get a handle on other people’s behaviour, relative to our observation of the way they relate with their existential milieu. Our understanding what it is to be in or have an intentional state calls for our understanding other people’s standpoint in such an intentional interpretationalist pattern. What is taking place in the behavioural agent’s mind is not needed to justify our ascribing intentional states to her.

Davidson’s radical interpretation obliges us to commit ourselves to making sense of the behavioural patterns of other people by recognising them as “intentional agents” and embarking on a “holistic” interpretative project. Such a holistic interpretative program is “constrained by overarching principles of rationality” that make us ascribe meaning to the words of others, favourably interpret their actions, and assign understandable motives to them (Burwood, 95).

1.a.i. The Constitutive Interpretationalist Theory of Mind

Davidson and Dennett represent a view we refer to as constitutive interpretationalism. Here one has an intentional state when an observer can interpret one as having an intentional state. This allows for those features, such as intentionality and rationality, which are challenging for reductionist functionalism. For interpretationalism, the principle of rationality is key to our grasping of the intentional. The idea of normativity is also central to our attribution of intentional contents.

Constitutive interpretationalism is externalist in approach. It seeks to interpret the human being in his existential milieu. And it lets the features of that existential matrix “dictate the content of the intentional attributes” credited to this instantiation of

creaturely experience. This intentional understanding spreads out from the intentional interpretation into the way we characterize the “actions that we interpret” this creature as carrying out. And we understand these actions as transforming its creaturely existential milieu to attain appropriate ends (Burwood, 99.)

It is not necessary to classify the transformational actions of the creature as resulting from instinctive corporeal motorics. The categorizations and characterizations we make here must, for Davidson, be those an interpreter can recognize; and for Dennett, in addition, they should, perhaps, include behavioural patterns arising from evolutionary adaptation. Evolutionary concerns over time equip us with the level of rationality needed for navigating our way around our environs.

1.a.ii. Critique of Constitutive Interpretationalism

The interpretationalism of Dennett and Davidson is consistent with the “materialist metaphysics” of most contemporary philosophy of mind. Here the human mind is devoid of a “non-material substance” (Burwood, 97.) Davidson assents to the claim of supervenience for intentional properties. Here, the surroundings and physical features of a system or creature determine the “intentional descriptions” that it permits (Burwood, 98.) Besides, Davidson assumes a “token identity” between brain and intentional states, so as to show how realist he is about mental states. Worse still, he seems to hold that intentional descriptions are indeterminate. According to this indeterminacy proposition, what we consider to be true and rational cannot be assessed against any neutral or standardized yardstick (Burwood, 101.)

Dennett, working from an evolutionary standpoint, aims at naturalizing our notion of the mind/mental and at giving a scientific explanation of how a physical system can achieve that which the human mind achieves. In this way, he shares some affinity with functionalist materialism (Burwood, 98.) Again, Dennett appears to use the idea of intentionality in his intentional descriptions for instrumental purposes. He

makes people misread his project when he gives the impression that his interpretationalism is instrumentalist in orientation. Hence, he plays into the hands of critics who are already suspicious that interpretationalism merely pays lip service to realism, rather than being realist enough about mental states (Burwood, 100.)

1.b A Direct Interpretationalist Account of Mind

Neither the so-called indeterminacy of Davidson’s intentional model nor the prioritizing of the physicalist models is necessary for the interpretationalist modes of categorization. This is the import of the direct interpretationalist account of mind. In this alternative explanatory framework our intentional descriptive methods neither need to be grounded in “more basic observation concepts” nor do have need of some justification by such concepts.

“Intentional modes of description directly pick out interrelated phenomena,” in the direct interpretationalist account. It is not the case that we “first pick out” some corporeal motoric and upon some reflection decipher the intentional behaviour that matches to it, as is the case perhaps with the categories physical science picks out. Instead, we identify what is said and intentional behaviours immediately and directly (Burwood, 103.)

We learn the intentional modes of explanation and categorization alongside our day-to-day object-characterizations. Understanding being in an intentional state consists in understanding how these aspects of our “pattern of conceptualization” relate to one another. An intentional subject is one who is capable of this kind of conceptualization. Intentional account uncovers a “pattern of rationality” in the overall behaviour of the intentional subject. This pattern helps us understand his behaviour and predict his future actions and responses. The intentional understanding is outside the scope of the causal account and cannot be vindicated by a physical materialist scheme (Burwood, 103.)

1.c The Modified Psychological Causalist Theory of Mind

The modified psychological causalist theory of mind accepts the “causal explanatory role of intentional explanation,” but does not ground intentional kinds in “scientific natural” ones of a “physical kind.” It agrees with direct interpretationalism that psychological states modify those who have them, and we “learn to perceive” these states directly. It differs from direct interpretationalism in that it accepts the “causal implications of intentional explanations. Indeed it agrees with direct interpretationalism in many ways; what is new is that it adds “causal claims to the interpretative framework.”

1.d Third-Personalism and Perspectivity

This theory recognises that intentionality is grounded in a “pattern of conceptualization and explanation” that does not need any further grounding in a more basic descriptive level (Burwood, 106.) The problem with this view, though, is that understanding what being an intentional agent means requires that a third person makes sense of the behaviour of the agent. There is no contribution from how the world is from the perspective of the agent who is intentionally encountering the world (Burwood, 107.) Yet understanding a subject of behaviour and his “intentional states” requires understanding how the world manifests itself to him. It requires engaging with the world from the perspective of the subject in question.

Descartes recognises this perspectivity that constitutes the life of the mental. He recognises how this fact makes a physicalist account of mind indefensible. Regrettably, however, he regards the mind as an inner domain to which one has “a privileged and incorrigible access.” Such a Cartesian introspectionist account of mind renders the “intentional content of our psychological states utterly mysterious.” It alienates us from the world of our experience (Burwood, 108.) Perspectivalism, on the contrary, lets us access the lived-world, though, from a “perspective within it” (Burwood, 109.)

1.e The World from the Perspective of the Behavioural Agent

When we bring together aspects of modified psychological causalism, direct interpretationalism, and perspectivalism we get a richer understanding of our relationship with our world that has a couple of interrelated features.

First, we are aware of ourselves as “embodied agents” in the world. We experience ourselves as capable of influencing, controlling, handling, and responding to the world around us. We experience our bodies as intentional units involved in “active transformations” of our world. The perspective of an intentional agent allows us experience the body as “that through which we act” and feel. We do not experience the body as a “material object to which our intentional states are either causally related or reductively identified.”

Second, the world from the perspective of the human subject is Heidegger’s “familiar world, the world of everyday objects.” A perspectivalist account adds to this interpretationalist understanding the insight that we experience this familiar world as having salience for us. The salience or significance this world of our everydayness has for us renders some response patterns apt; and others, inappropriate (Burwood, 109.) Our intentional behaviours are “meaningful activities, purposive interventions into an already salient environment.”

Third, the perspectivalist insight affords rationalizing explanatory patterns the perspective of the agent on the world that he encounters. This makes rationalizing accounts no longer merely objective patterns that are lacking in the normativity condition. The salience of the agent’s world makes her responses proper. The rationality of his existential and experiential responses hinges on how the world that makes these (responses) appropriate manifests and appears to her.

Fourth, our intentional modes of conceptualizing our intentional states are ordinarily unmediated and direct.

They have a certain transparency that makes grounding them in some “more primitive observational” technique unnecessary. They are, however, open to revision, and cannot be said to be “incorrigible.” They are also not “necessarily self-reflective” the way introspection is (Burwood, 110).

Fifth, this transparent and immediate way the world appears to us also makes other human beings appear to us as having minds (See Pritchard, 2009, 134-135). It makes us experience others as having intentional viewpoints and as behaving in intentional ways. It also enables us afford direct and unmediated “intentional characterization” of the intentional viewpoints and intentional behaviours of others. Indisputably, we do not experience other people’s behaviours as all the time transparent; at times their intents require deciphering. At such moments we are obliged to take into account their viewpoint and how things appear from this perspective (Burwood, 110).

1.f Context and Culture

An apt articulation of intentionality needs to show how the rationalizing character and the feature of perspectivity of our intentional way of explaining connect each other. This, again, entails a pattern of conceptualizing the way we relate with our environment that occupies a class of its own and does not require grounding in the scientific, physicalist, system of classification.

Contemporary scientific, physicalist, naturalizing projects, however, will see this as a rather “anti-naturalizing” stance; because, as they argue, not integrating our intentionality in the scientific scheme makes our account mysterious. Be it as it may, we find the physicalist account of naturalism unacceptable. It reduces what is natural about human beings to what can be slotted into physicalist categories. That we experience ourselves as beings whose encounter with the world has meaning and significance is by no means less factual than any other type of fact. And again, that this encounter and experience provides us with reasons for judging and acting is yet another natural fact. Moreover, the “functional organization” of the human body

predisposes us to be the kind of higher animals we are (Burwood, 111.)

Intentional agency, possibly, leans on the “features of our intentional embodiment.” It, perhaps, characteristically belongs to our creaturely nature that our word is significant and salient to us. We, nonetheless, learn the “specific kind of significance or salience” our world takes on in a “social context” and it is rooted in “shared practices.” This makes it the case that certain judgments and certain “emotional responses” are “only possible in certain contexts or cultural settings.” Conceptualizing the real together with the salience it takes on turns out to be, perhaps, “highly specific.”

The big story, though, is not that the kind of salience our world has for us is rooted in “shared contexts and practices.” It is, instead, that we can not only learn the intentional modes of conceptualizing our intentional states but also that we can initiate others into them. Insiders learn them; outsiders are taught. So it is that when the way others behave is not clear to us, we can still avail ourselves of the meaning of their behaviours by becoming involved in their point of view. To involve ourselves in a certain viewpoint is not to enter into a secreted domain (Burwood, 112.) It is instead to initiate ourselves (by becoming involved) into the “context and practices” in which their modes of conceptualizing and responding to their world make sense. We, thus, find “our way around their cultural and personal worlds.”

As we recognise the insights of communicating meaning and sharing history (See Wittgenstein³⁵), we note that perspectives are far from being “closed and self-contained boxes.” Among the peoples of the world “shared and overlapping similarities and differences in judgments” possibly abound. Thus, even as understanding one another is “rarely complete,” it is also “rarely impossible” (Burwood, 113.)

1.g. Rounding off the Intentional Modes of Description of the Anti-Reductionist Accounts of Mind

Causal explanatory accounts of understanding others observe the behaviour of others, and taking into consideration our familiar “general law-like regularities,” formulates a hypothesis about the types of “inner states” that possibly generated the observed behaviour. Understanding their “intentional states” entails hypothesizing about their “inner intentions” and regarding them as “inner causes.” In their reductionist brands causal explanatory accounts map these “inner causes” onto the physicalist causes (Burwood, 113.)

Interpretationalist accounts of understanding others, for their part, observe the behaviours of others, and look for an interpretation that reasonably ascribes intentional states that, over time, depict and portray such behavioural patterns as being in accord with common sense (Burwood, 113.) This interpretative mode constrains us to assign to the behavioural agents beliefs that people in this existential milieu can reasonably hold and objectives that we find plausibly desirable. The superseding principles here are “principles of rationality” rather than the “empirical causal laws” that override causal accounts. This mode of interpretation understands “having intentional states” by appreciating how the behaviour of others can be systematized into the “objective patterns” of the rationality principles.

Our preferred account is this one that recognises the *centrality of the perspectivity of intentional behaviours in understanding others*. Here we become involved in the viewpoint of others and recognise how the “world appears” from this perspective. This enables us understand the significance and meaning their behaviours carry for them and appreciate these behaviours as being appropriate in many ways. All this calls for a scheme of classification different from the scientific and physicalist ones. This alternative scheme affords us intentional patterns of describing ourselves and our world. It has its roots in our practical involvement in the world and is “mediated by the culture and context in which it is learnt.” To

understand what is to be an agent of behaviour with “intentional psychological states” requires recognition of the uniqueness of these intentional classificatory patterns. It also demands an appreciation of the “projects of understanding others” wherein they are found. This again calls for a recognition of the “perspectively anchored, rationalizing nature of these projects” (Burwood *et al.*, 1999, 114.)

1.h. Intentionality and Rationality: The Challenge for the Naturalizing Project.

Materialist functionalism is the consequence of accepting the Cartesian theory of the mind-action causal links, while rejecting the Cartesian idea of mental substances. This places the causal link in a “mechanical body,” which is the second half of the dualist theory of Descartes. Descartes, we recall, posits an immaterial substance in recognition of the “distinctive” feature of our mental life for which his “mechanistic physical world” cannot allow. The test for present-day materialist functionalism is to allow for the “distinctively psychological phenomena” (such as rationality and intentionality) in a manner that matches with reductionist functionalism. Reductionist functionalism, proposes to explain how psychological features intelligibly come from a material domain that only the physical sciences can articulate (Burwood, 51.) In what follows we discuss some of the features of the intentional and the rational that are problematic for physicalist and materialist accounts of mind.

1.h. a. The Intentional Contents of Mental States.

Mental states or psychological states have intentional contents that have the “feature of intentionality,” that is to say, that are about something or someone. The intentional contents of mental states confer intelligibility on behaviour. To understand human behaviour we need to associate it with some mental states that have some feature of intentionality. Understanding what type of states mental states are and the part they play in making behaviour understandable calls for our understanding their

intentional contents. *Dan fears it will rain and takes an umbrella.* To understand Dan's behaviour we need to associate him with some mental states that have some character of intentionality.

Intentional contents of mental states have a couple of features. First, we can only accurately represent them through "descriptions whose meaning is anchored in characterizations of objects or states of affairs in the world." *Dan takes an umbrella because he fears it will rain.* Thus our "intentional states are relational states." They relate us to states of affairs. However, it is also possible to direct our mental states to contents that have no correspondence to actual states of affairs in our world (Burwood, 52.)

Second, "how we characterize the intentional content of our psychological states" is of the essence. For, whenever we think about any object or state of affairs, we do this in a certain way that excludes other possible dimensions. This feature of the intentional state is what we refer to as its opacity (Burwood, 52.)

The issue of the sort of link needed between an agent of behaviour and the state of affairs in his existential milieu, to make ones intentional state have the content it does, is of the essence for the naturalizing mission. That it is possible to think about inexistent things and the fact that there is something opaque about the way we attribute intentional contents to our mental states, place a considerable measure of limitation on the envisaged account. What is probably clear, however, is that the intentional contents of our psychological states cannot be "fixed by the objects/states of affairs to which we stand in, for example, causal relations" (Burwood, 53.)

1.h. b. Qualia

Qualia are those properties of mental states or events (especially perceptual states and sensations) that decide "what it is like" to be in or have such states. Qualia refer to the distinctive and determining qualitative characters of mental states. They are the 'phenomenal properties' and 'qualitative features' of mental states that determine what being in such states is like. Qualia are what it is like to be in phenomenal

states; and to be in phenomenal states is to be conscious of something. One is in a phenomenal state when one is in a state in which one is conscious of something. The consciousness typified here is called phenomenal consciousness and what it is like to be in such states we call qualia or the qualitative character of the states in question (Burwood, 117.)

Qualia are the "non-intentional," that is, "non-representational features of the states that have them" (Dictionary of Philosophy, 762.) The quale of a very tasty yam potage, for instance, is the distinctive way it tastes, the particular character of its appetizing taste (Burwood, 117.)

Physicalist and functionalist accounts of mind, with their physical and functional descriptions, cannot tell "what it is like" to be in pain, and so they are incapable of capturing, grasping, and accommodating qualia (Dictionary of Philosophy, 762.)

1.i. The subjective and "Qualitative Character" of the Human Experience

The "qualitative character" of any experience is "what it is like" for the subject of this experience to have it (the experience.) To understand this character of a subject's experience is to, in some form, adopt or share the subject's point of view. This is so because subjective phenomena tie up with single perspectives (Burwood, 139.) Thus often sharing experience entails sharing perspectives. But then, human experience is neither an instance of an "irreducible phenomenal property" as some hold, nor is it a case of a "reducible one," as in functionalism. Each of these, it does seem, is objectivist. Experience, instead, is the world appearing to us from a particular viewpoint. It seems impossible having multiple points of view toward a particular experience, since having an experience is adopting a "certain point of view toward the world" (Burwood, 140.)

Neither the Cartesian nor the functionalist characterization of experience seems adequate. We find the "qualitative character of experience" in the way only a specific kind of agent of experience has

“intentional content.” We do not find it in a certain “special non-representative content.” Besides, “what it is like” being this sort of agent and having her unique experience, rather than being private, is indeed “shareable by subjects of her sort.” The agents in question, though, do not need to simulate one another’s “experiential states.” Instead, we understand what having the experiences is like by recognizing how these experiences provide “reasons” informing our believing and acting. The reasons do not merely make believing and acting “reasonable” because they are informed by our experiences, but they as well render them “understandable,” for we recognize the beliefs and actions as “normal reactions” to the reasons the experiences provide. Through the belonging together of our beliefs and actions and the reasons that render them comprehensible our experiences not only become public but also themes for reflection and discussion.

The unity of the human experience makes this brand of “reason-giving account” of behaviour seem tenable (Burwood, 155.) Unity of experience refers to the fact that the constituent features of a certain human experience come “unified into a state with a single subjective character.” These features do not come as a couple of “distinct states,” as with human thought. By the features of an experience we mean, for instance, the colours we perceive, the pains we feel, and the sufferings we endure. The unity of experience is tied up with its “complexity and richness” (Burwood, 156.)

The reason-giving approach does seem capable of responding to challenges that issues such as an absent qualia present. Absent qualia represents a situation where for a subject there is nothing it is like being in a state that for others is one of experience; that is, not having the subjective character of experience in state that for others has the qualitative character of human experience. We take this subject as doing that which we do and believing what we believe. But then, we take him as having neither reason for his actions nor for his beliefs, in much the same way we at times do as we “absentmindedly but skilfully negotiate” our way around our surrounds while our minds are

somewhere else. In such cases, “causal mechanisms” that operate without our availing ourselves of reasons for believing and acting explain our behaviour.

The absent qualia case is an instance of the automaticity of a certain species of behaviour. Here behaviour is automatic, as thought does not mediate it. This, however, differs substantially from the standard human behaviour that is expressive of a subject’s “thoughts and feelings.” In either instance, we observer the subject’s body find its way around its surroundings. The Cartesian model of mind does not go beyond this observation. It does not realise the difference between the two illustrations; and so it slots behaviours expressive of our thoughts and feelings into the same category with their automatic counterparts.

Yet, in contrast to the body’s involuntary and automatic behaviours, “shared perspectives on the world” empower us to recognize the human body as expressing the subject’s viewpoint on the world; a recognition that is not only about voluntariness and expressivity but also about the embodied nature of human behaviour: feeling, belief, action, and thought. Reasons as explaining behaviour have their roots in behaviour understood and explained in this embodied way. In consequence, it may be the case that it is because we have this “mode of embodiment” that we are subjects whose feelings and thoughts come from experience, represent a point of view on the world, and provide reasons for behaviour (Burwood, 157.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burwood, S. *et al.*, 1999, *Philosophy of Mind*, UK, UCL Press.

Jaegwon Kim, 1996, *Philosophy of Mind*, Colorado: Westview Press.

Mele, A.R., 1999, Theoretical Reason, in Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, United Kingdom, Cambridge Press.

Pritchard, Duncan, 2009, *What is this Thing Called Knowledge*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations.
New York: Macmillan, 1953