

# INTENTIONALITY

*An essay in the philosophy of mind*

JOHN R. SEARLE

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND



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## INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this book is to develop a theory of Intentionality. I hesitate to call it a general theory because a large number of topics, e.g., the emotions, are left undiscussed, but I do believe the approach here presented will prove useful for explaining Intentional phenomena generally.

This book is the third in a series of related studies of mind and language. One of its objectives is to provide a foundation for my two earlier books, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge University Press, 1969) and *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), as well as for future investigations of these topics. A basic assumption behind my approach to problems of language is that the philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind. The capacity of speech acts to represent objects and states of affairs in the world is an extension of the more biologically fundamental capacities of the mind (or brain) to relate the organism to the world by way of such mental states as belief and desire, and especially through action and perception. Since speech acts are a type of human action, and since the capacity of speech to represent objects and states of affairs is part of a more general capacity of the mind to relate the organism to the world, any complete account of speech and language requires an account of how the mind/brain relates the organism to reality.

Since sentences – the sounds that come out of one's mouth or the marks that one makes on paper – are, considered in one way, just objects in the world like any other objects, their capacity to represent is not intrinsic but is derived from the Intentionality of the mind. The Intentionality of mental states, on the other hand, is not derived from some more prior forms of Intentionality but is intrinsic to the states themselves. An agent uses a sentence to make a statement or ask a question, but he does not in that way *use* his beliefs and desires, he simply has them. A sentence is a syntactical

object on which representational capacities are imposed: beliefs and desires and other Intentional states are not, as such, syntactical objects (though they may be and usually are expressed in sentences), and their representational capacities are not imposed but are intrinsic. All of this is consistent with the fact that language is essentially a social phenomenon and that the forms of Intentionality underlying language are social forms.

This study began as an investigation of that part of the problem of meaning which concerns how people impose Intentionality on entities that are not intrinsically Intentional, how they get mere objects to represent. I originally planned to include a chapter on this question in *Expression and Meaning*, but, in the way of such things, the chapter grew into a book of its own. In attempting to analyze the Intentionality of mental states (Chapter 1) I found I had to investigate the Intentionality of perception (Chapter 2) and action (Chapter 3). But there is no understanding of perception and action without an understanding of Intentional causation (Chapter 4), and various investigations led to the conclusion that Intentionality in all its forms functions only against a background of nonrepresentational mental capacities (Chapter 5). I reached my original goal of explaining the relations between the Intentionality of the mental and the Intentionality of the linguistic only in Chapter 6. But that still left me with a bushel of problems: Chapter 7 concerns the relationships between Intentionality-with-a t and intensionality-with-an-s; Chapters 8 and 9 use the theory developed in prior chapters to criticize several currently influential views on reference and meaning and to present an Intentionalistic account of indexical expressions, natural kind terms, the *de re-de dicto* distinction, and proper names. Finally, Chapter 10 presents a solution (more accurately, a dissolution) of the so-called "mind-body" or "mind-brain" problem.

In urging that people have mental states which are intrinsically Intentional I part company with many, perhaps most, of the currently influential views in the philosophy of mind. I believe people really do have mental states, some of them conscious and some unconscious, and that, at least as far as the conscious ones are concerned, they pretty much have the mental properties they seem to have. I reject any form of behaviorism or functionalism, including Turing machine functionalism, that ends up by denying

the specifically mental properties of mental phenomena. I do not criticize these other views in this book as I have discussed them at length elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> I believe that the various forms of behaviorism and functionalism were never motivated by an independent investigation of the facts, but by a fear that unless some way was found to eliminate mental phenomena naively construed, we would be left with dualism and an apparently insoluble mind-body problem. On my view mental phenomena are biologically based: they are both caused by the operations of the brain and realized in the structure of the brain. On this view, consciousness and Intentionality are as much a part of human biology as digestion or the circulation of the blood. It is an *objective* fact about the world that it contains certain systems, viz., brains, with *subjective* mental states, and it is a *physical* fact about such systems that they have *mental* features. The correct solution to the "mind-body problem" lies not in denying the reality of mental phenomena, but in properly appreciating their biological nature. More about this in Chapter 10.

Part of the fun of writing about speech acts is that there is no heavy philosophical tradition weighing down on the investigation. Except for a few favorites such as promises and statements, most types of speech acts have been ignored by the great philosophers of the past; and one can investigate, for example, thanking, apologizing and requesting without looking over one's shoulder to see what Aristotle, Kant or Mill had to say about them. But when it comes to Intentionality the situation is quite different. Entire philosophical movements have been built around theories of Intentionality. What is one to do in the face of all this distinguished past? My own approach has been simply to ignore it, partly out of ignorance of most of the traditional writings on Intentionality and partly out of the conviction that my only hope of resolving the worries which led me into this study in the first place lay in the relentless pursuit of my own investigations. It is worth pointing this out because several people who read the manuscript claimed to

<sup>1</sup> 'Minds, brains and programs', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 3 (1980), pp. 417-24; 'Intrinsic Intentionality', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, same issue, pp. 450-6; 'Analytic philosophy and mental phenomena', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 5 (1980), pp. 405-23. 'The myth of the computer', *New York Review of Books* (1982), vol. xxix, no. 7, pp. 3-6.

John Searle's *Speech Acts* (1969) and *Expression and Meaning* (1979) developed a highly original and influential approach to the study of language. But behind both works lay the assumption that the philosophy of language is in the end a branch of the philosophy of mind: speech acts are forms of human action and represent just one example of the mind's capacity to relate the human organism to the world. The present book is concerned with these biologically fundamental capacities, and though third in the sequence does in effect therefore provide the philosophical foundations for the other two. Intentionality is taken to be the crucial mental phenomenon, and its analysis involves wide-ranging discussions of perception, action, causation, meaning and reference. In all these areas John Searle has original and stimulating views and he ends with a resolution of the 'mind-body' problem.

The book is intended for philosophers and for the growing number of linguists, cognitive scientists and psychologists concerned with the relationship between language and the human mind.

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find interesting agreements and disagreements with their favorite authors. Perhaps they are right in their understanding of the relation between this book and the Intentionalist tradition, but with the exception of my explicit responses and my obvious debts to Frege and Wittgenstein, it has not been my aim in this book to respond to that tradition.

Where questions of style and exposition are concerned I try to follow a simple maxim: if you can't say it clearly you don't understand it yourself. But anyone who attempts to write clearly runs the risk of being 'understood' too quickly, and the quickest form of such understanding is to pigeonhole the author with a whole lot of other authors that the reader is already familiar with.

Some of the ideas in this book have appeared in preliminary versions in articles by me. Since several reviewers of *Speech Acts* complained that some of the ideas had already appeared in articles, a word of explanation is in order. I find it very useful to try out ideas in a preliminary form, both for the sake of formulating the ideas and to elicit comments and criticism. Such articles are like an artist's preliminary sketches for a larger canvas. They can stand on their own, but they also function as stages on the way to the larger picture. The hard work comes not only in trying to get each part right, but also in making all the parts cohere in the general conception.

One nagging problem remains that is not addressed directly in the book, but was one of my main reasons for wanting to write it. Ordinary human behavior has proven peculiarly recalcitrant to explanation by the methods of the natural sciences. Why? Why is it that the methods of the natural sciences have not given results comparable to physics and chemistry when applied to the study of individual and collective human behavior? There are many attempts to answer this question in contemporary philosophy, none of them in my view completely satisfactory. I believe that the direction of the correct answer lies in seeing the role of Intentionality in the structure of action; not just in the description of action, but in the very structure of human behavior. I hope to discuss the explanation of human behavior at greater length in a subsequent study. This book gives only some of the tools for such a discussion.

## THE NATURE OF INTENTIONAL STATES

### I. INTENTIONALITY AS DIRECTEDNESS

As a preliminary formulation we might say: Intentionality is that property of many mental states and events by which they are directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world. If, for example, I have a belief, it must be a belief that such and such is the case; if I have a fear, it must be a fear of something or that something will occur; if I have a desire, it must be a desire to do something or that something should happen or be the case; if I have an intention, it must be an intention to do something. And so on through a large number of other cases. I follow a long philosophical tradition in calling this feature of directedness or aboutness "Intentionality", but in many respects the term is misleading and the tradition something of a mess, so at the very beginning I want to make it clear how I intend to use the term and in so doing to dissociate myself from certain features of the tradition.

First, on my account only some, not all, mental states and events have Intentionality. Beliefs, fears, hopes, and desires are Intentional; but there are forms of nervousness, elation, and undirected anxiety that are not Intentional. A clue to this distinction is provided by the constraints on how these states are reported. If I tell you I have a belief or a desire, it always makes sense for you to ask, "What is it exactly that you believe?" or "What is it that you desire?"; and it won't do for me to say, "Oh I just have a belief and a desire without believing anything or desiring anything". My beliefs and desires must always be about something. But my nervousness and undirected anxiety need not in that way be *about* anything. Such states are characteristically accompanied by beliefs and desires, but undirected states are not identical with beliefs or desires. On my account if a state *S* is Intentional then there must be



an answer to such questions as: What is *S* about? What is *S* of? What is it an *S* that? Some types of mental states have instances which are Intentional and other instances which are not. For example, just as there are forms of elation, depression and anxiety where one is simply elated, depressed, or anxious without being elated, depressed, or anxious about anything, so, also, there are forms of these states where one is elated that such and such has occurred or depressed and anxious at the prospect of such and such. Undirected anxiety, depression, and elation are not Intentional, the directed cases are Intentional.

Second, Intentionality is not the same as consciousness. Many conscious states are not Intentional, e.g., a sudden sense of elation, and many Intentional states are not conscious, e.g., I have many beliefs that I am not thinking about at present and I may never have thought of. For example, I believe that my paternal grandfather spent his entire life inside the continental United States but until this moment I never consciously formulated or considered that belief. Such unconscious beliefs, by the way, need not be instances of any kind of repression, Freudian or otherwise; they are just beliefs one has that one normally doesn't think about. In defense of the view that there is an identity between consciousness and Intentionality it is sometimes said that all consciousness is consciousness *of*, that whenever one is conscious there is always something that one is conscious of. But this account of consciousness blurs a crucial distinction: when I have a conscious experience of anxiety, there is indeed something my experience is an experience of, namely anxiety, but this sense of "of" is quite different from the "of" of Intentionality, which occurs, for example, in the statement that I have a conscious fear of snakes; for in the case of anxiety, the experience of anxiety and the anxiety are identical; but the fear of snakes is not identical with snakes. It is characteristic of Intentional states, as I use the notion, that there is a distinction between the state and what the state is directed at or about or of (though this does not exclude the possibility of self-referential forms of Intentionality – as we will see in Chapters 2 and 3). On my account the "of" in the expression "the experience of anxiety" cannot be the "of" of Intentionality because the experience and the anxiety are identical. I will have more to say about conscious forms of Intentionality later; my aim now is just to

make clear that, as I use the term, the class of conscious states and the class of Intentional mental states overlap but they are not identical, nor is one included in the other.

Third, intending and intentions are just one form of Intentionality among others, they have no special status. The obvious pun on "Intentionality" and "intention" suggests that intentions in the ordinary sense have some special role in the theory of Intentionality; but on my account intending to do something is just one form of Intentionality along with belief, hope, fear, desire, and lots of others; and I do not mean to suggest that because, for example, beliefs are Intentional they somehow contain the notion of intention or they intend something or someone who has a belief must thereby intend to do something about it. In order to keep this distinction completely clear I will capitalize the technical sense of "Intentional" and "Intentionality". Intentionality is directedness; intending to do something is just one kind of Intentionality among others.

Related to the pun on "intentional" and "Intentional" are some other common confusions. Some authors describe beliefs, fears, hopes, and desires as "mental acts", but this is at best false and at worst hopelessly confused. Drinking beer and writing books can be described as acts or actions or even activities, and doing arithmetic in your head or forming mental images of the Golden Gate Bridge are mental acts; but believing, hoping, fearing, and desiring are not acts nor mental acts at all. Acts are things one *does*, but there is no answer to the question, "What are you now doing?" which goes, "I am now believing it will rain", or "hoping that taxes will be lowered", or "fearing a fall in the interest rate", or "desiring to go to the movies". The Intentional states and events we will be considering are precisely that: states and events; they are not mental acts, though I will have something to say about what are properly called mental acts in Chapter 3.

It is equally confused to think of, for example, beliefs and desires as somehow intending something. Beliefs and desires are Intentional states, but they do not intend anything. On my account "Intentionality" and "Intentional" will occur in these noun and adjective forms, and I will speak of certain mental states and events as having Intentionality or as being Intentional, but there is no sense attaching to any corresponding verb.

Here are a few examples of states that can be Intentional states: belief, fear, hope, desire, love, hate, aversion, liking, disliking, doubting, wondering whether, joy, elation, depression, anxiety, pride, remorse, sorrow, grief, guilt, rejoicing, irritation, puzzlement, acceptance, forgiveness, hostility, affection, expectation, anger, admiration, contempt, respect, indignation, intention, wishing, wanting, imagining, fantasy, shame, lust, disgust, animosity, terror, pleasure, abhorrence, aspiration, amusement, and disappointment.

It is characteristic of the members of this set that they either are essentially directed as in the case of love, hate, belief, and desire or at least they can be directed as in the case of depression and elation. This set raises a rather large number of questions. For example, how can we classify its members, and what are the relations between the members? But the question I now want to concentrate on is this: What exactly is the relation between Intentional states and the objects and states of affairs that they are in some sense about or directed at? What kind of a relation is named by "Intentionality" anyhow and how can we explain Intentionality without using metaphors like "directed"?

Notice that Intentionality cannot be an ordinary relation like sitting on top of something or hitting it with one's fist because for a large number of Intentional states I can be in the Intentional state without the object or state of affairs that the Intentional state is "directed at" even existing. I can hope that it is raining even if it isn't raining and I can believe that the King of France is bald even if there is no such person as the King of France.

## II. INTENTIONALITY AS REPRESENTATION: THE SPEECH ACT MODEL

In this section I want to explore some of the connections between Intentional states and speech acts in order to answer the question, "What is the relationship between the Intentional state and the object or state of affairs that it is in some sense directed at?" To anticipate a bit, the answer that I am going to propose to that question is quite simple: Intentional states represent objects and states of affairs in the same sense of "represent" that speech acts represent objects and states of affairs (even though, as we will see in

Chapter 6, speech acts have a derived form of Intentionality and thus represent in a different manner from Intentional states, which have an intrinsic form of Intentionality). We already have fairly clear intuitions about how statements represent their truth conditions, about how promises represent their fulfillment conditions, about how orders represent the conditions of their obedience, and about how in the utterance of a referring expression the speaker refers to an object; indeed, we even have something of a theory about these various types of speech acts; and I am going to tap this prior knowledge to try to explain how and in what sense Intentional states are also representations.

There is one possible misunderstanding I need to block at the start of the investigation. By explaining Intentionality in terms of language I do not mean to imply that Intentionality is essentially and necessarily linguistic. On the contrary it seems to me obvious that infants and many animals that do not in any ordinary sense have a language or perform speech acts nonetheless have Intentional states. Only someone in the grip of a philosophical theory would deny that small babies can literally be said to want milk and that dogs want to be let out or believe that their master is at the door. There are, incidentally, two reasons why we find it irresistible to attribute Intentionality to animals even though they do not have a language. First, we can see that the causal basis of the animal's Intentionality is very much like our own, e.g., these are the dog's eyes, this is his skin, those are his ears, etc. Second, we can't make sense of his behavior otherwise. In my effort to explain Intentionality in terms of language I am using our prior knowledge of language as a heuristic device for explanatory purposes. Once I have tried to make clear the nature of Intentionality I will argue (in Chapter 6) that the relation of logical dependence is precisely the reverse. Language is derived from Intentionality and not conversely. The direction of pedagogy is to explain Intentionality in terms of language; the direction of logical analysis is to explain language in terms of Intentionality.

There are at least the following four points of similarity and connection between Intentional states and speech acts.

1. The distinction between propositional content and illocutionary force, a distinction familiar within the theory of speech acts, carries over to Intentional states. Just as I can order you to

leave the room, predict that you will leave the room, and suggest that you will leave the room, so I can believe that you will leave the room, fear that you will leave the room, want you to leave the room, and hope that you will leave the room. In the first class of cases, the speech act cases, there is an obvious distinction between the propositional content *that you will leave the room* and the illocutionary force with which that propositional content is presented in the speech act. But equally in the second class of cases, the Intentional states, there is a distinction between the representative content *that you will leave the room*, and the psychological mode, whether belief or fear or hope or whatever, in which one has that representative content. It is customary within the theory of speech acts to present this distinction in the form " $F(p)$ ", where the " $F$ " marks the illocutionary force and the " $p$ " the propositional content. Within the theory of Intentional states we will similarly need to distinguish between the representative content and the psychological mode or manner in which one has that representative content. We will symbolize this as " $S(r)$ ", where the " $S$ " marks the psychological mode and the " $r$ " the representative content.

It would perhaps be better to confine the term "propositional content" to those states that are realized linguistically, and use the terms "representative content" or "Intentional content" as more general terms to include both linguistically realized Intentional states and those that are not realized in language. But as we also need to distinguish between those states such as belief whose content must always be expressible as a whole proposition and those such as love and hate whose content need not be a whole proposition, I will continue to use also the notion of propositional content for Intentional states, to mark those states that take entire propositions as contents, whether or not the state is realized linguistically. I will use the notations of speech act theory in representing the content of an Intentional state inside parentheses and the form or mode in which the agent has that content outside. Thus, for example, if a man loves Sally and believes it is raining his two Intentional states are representable as

Love (Sally)  
Believe (It is raining).

Most of the analyses in this book will be about states which have whole propositional contents, the so-called propositional attitudes. But it is important to emphasize that not all Intentional states have an entire proposition as Intentional content, though by definition all Intentional states have at least some representative content, whether a whole proposition or not; and indeed this condition is stronger for Intentional states than for speech acts, since some (very few) expressive speech acts do not have any content, e.g., "Ouch!", "Hello", "Goodbye".

2. The distinction between different directions of fit, also familiar from the theory of speech acts,<sup>1</sup> will carry over to Intentional states. The members of the assertive class of speech acts – statements, descriptions, assertions, etc. – are supposed in some way to match an independently existing world; and to the extent that they do or fail to do that we say they are true or false. But the members of the directive class of speech acts – orders, commands, requests, etc. – and the members of the commissive class – promises, vows, pledges, etc. – are not supposed to match an independently existing reality but rather are supposed to bring about changes in the world so that the world matches the propositional content of the speech act; and to the extent that they do or fail to do that, we do not say they are true or false but rather such things as that they are obeyed or disobeyed, fulfilled, complied with, kept or broken. I mark this distinction by saying that the assertive class has the word-to-world direction of fit and the commissive and directive classes have the world-to-word direction of fit. If the statement is not true, it is the statement which is at fault, not the world; if the order is disobeyed or the promise broken it is not the order or promise which is at fault, but the world in the person of the disobeyer of the order or the breaker of the promise. Intuitively we might say the idea of direction of fit is that of responsibility for fitting. If the statement is false, it is the fault of the statement (word-to-world direction of fit). If the promise is broken, it is the fault of the promiser (world-to-word direction of fit). There are also null cases in which there is no

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the notion of "direction of fit" see J. R. Searle, 'A taxonomy of illocutionary acts', in *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 1–27.

direction of fit. If I apologize for insulting you or congratulate you on winning the prize, then though I do indeed presuppose the truth of the expressed proposition, that I insulted you, that you won the prize, the point of the speech act is not to assert these propositions nor to order that the acts they name be carried out; rather, the point is to express my sorrow or my pleasure about the state of affairs specified in the propositional content, the truth of which I presuppose.<sup>2</sup> Now something very much like these distinctions carries over to Intentional states. If my beliefs turn out to be wrong, it is my beliefs and not the world which is at fault, as is shown by the fact that I can correct the situation simply by changing my beliefs. It is the responsibility of the belief, so to speak, to match the world, and where the match fails I repair the situation by changing the belief. But if I fail to carry out my intentions or if my desires are unfulfilled I cannot in that way correct the situation by simply changing the intention or desire. In these cases it is, so to speak, the fault of the world if it fails to match the intention or the desire, and I cannot fix things up by saying it was a mistaken intention or desire in a way that I can fix things up by saying it was a mistaken belief. Beliefs like statements can be true or false, and we might say they have the "mind-to-world" direction of fit. Desires and intentions, on the other hand, cannot be true or false, but can be complied with, fulfilled, or carried out, and we might say that they have the "world-to-mind" direction of fit. Furthermore there are also Intentional states that have the null direction of fit. If I am sorry that I insulted you or pleased that you won the prize, then, though my sorrow contains a belief that I insulted you and a wish that I hadn't insulted you and my pleasure contains a belief that you won the prize and a wish that you won the prize, my sorrow and pleasure can't be true or false in the way that my beliefs can, nor fulfilled in the way my desires can. My sorrow and pleasure may be appropriate or inappropriate depending on whether or not the mind-to-world direction of fit of the

<sup>2</sup> Since fitting is a symmetrical relationship it might seem puzzling that there can be different directions of fit. If *a* fits *b*, *b* fits *a*. Perhaps it will alleviate this worry to consider an uncontroversial nonlinguistic case: If Cinderella goes into a shoe store to buy a new pair of shoes, she takes her foot size as given and seeks shoes to fit (shoe-to-foot direction of fit). But when the prince seeks the owner of the shoe, he takes the shoe as given and seeks a foot to fit the shoe (foot-to-shoe direction of fit).

belief is really satisfied, but my sorrow and pleasure don't in that way have any direction of fit. I will have more to say about these complex Intentional states later.

3. A third connection between Intentional states and speech acts is that, in the performance of each illocutionary act with a propositional content, we express a certain Intentional state with that propositional content, and that Intentional state is the sincerity condition of that type of speech act. Thus, for example, if I make the statement that *p*, I express a belief that *p*. If I make a promise to do *A*, I express an intention to do *A*. If I give an order to you to do *A*, I express a wish or a desire that you should do *A*. If I apologize for doing something, I express sorrow for doing that thing. If I congratulate you on something, I express pleasure or satisfaction about that something. All of these connections, between illocutionary acts and expressed Intentional sincerity conditions of the speech acts are internal; that is, the expressed Intentional state is not just an accompaniment of the performance of the speech act. The performance of the speech act is necessarily an expression of the corresponding Intentional state, as is shown by a generalization of Moore's paradox. You can't say, "It's snowing but I don't believe it's snowing", "I order you to stop smoking but I don't want you to stop smoking", "I apologize for insulting you, but I am not sorry that I insulted you", "Congratulations on winning the prize, but I am not glad that you won the prize", and so on. All of these sound odd for the same reason. The performance of the speech act is *eo ipso* an expression of the corresponding Intentional state; and, consequently, it is logically odd, though not self-contradictory, to perform the speech act and deny the presence of the corresponding Intentional state.<sup>3</sup>

Now to say that the Intentional state which constitutes the sincerity condition is expressed in the performance of the speech act is not to say that one always has to have the Intentional state that one expresses. It is always possible to lie or otherwise perform

<sup>3</sup> The exceptions that one can construct to this principle are cases where one dissociates oneself from one's speech act, as in, e.g., "It is my duty to inform you that *p*, but I don't really believe that *p*" or "I order you to attack those fortifications, but I don't really want you to do it". In such cases it is as if one were mouthing a speech act on someone else's behalf. The speaker utters the sentence but dissociates himself from the commitments of the utterance.

an insincere speech act. But a lie or other insincere speech act consists in performing a speech act, and thereby expressing an Intentional state, where one does not have the Intentional state that one expresses. Notice that the parallelism between illocutionary acts and their expressed Intentional sincerity conditions is remarkably close: In general, the direction of fit of the illocutionary act and that of the sincerity condition is the same, and in those cases where the illocutionary act has no direction of fit the truth of the propositional content is presupposed, and the corresponding Intentional state contains a belief. For example, if I apologize for stepping on your cat, I express remorse for stepping on your cat. Neither the apology nor the remorse has a direction of fit, but the apology presupposes the truth of the proposition that I stepped on your cat, and the remorse contains a belief that I stepped on your cat.

4. The notion of conditions of satisfaction applies quite generally to both speech acts and Intentional states in cases where there is a direction of fit. We say, for example, that a statement is true or false, that an order is obeyed or disobeyed, that a promise is kept or broken. In each of these we ascribe success or failure of the illocutionary act to match reality in the particular direction of fit provided by the illocutionary point. To have an expression, we might label all of these conditions "conditions of satisfaction" or "conditions of success". So we will say that a statement is satisfied if and only if it is true, an order is satisfied if and only if it is obeyed, a promise is satisfied if and only if it is kept, and so on. Now, this notion of satisfaction clearly applies to Intentional states as well. My belief will be satisfied if and only if things are as I believe them to be, my desires will be satisfied if and only if they are fulfilled, my intentions will be satisfied if and only if they are carried out. That is, the notion of satisfaction seems to be intuitively natural to both speech acts and Intentional states and to apply quite generally, wherever there is a direction of fit.<sup>4</sup>

What is crucially important to see is that for every speech act that has a direction of fit *the speech act will be satisfied if and only if the expressed psychological state is satisfied, and the conditions of satisfaction of*

<sup>4</sup> There are some interesting puzzling cases like doubting that *p* or wondering whether *p*. Shall we say that my doubt that *p* is satisfied if *p*? Or if not *p*? Or what?

*speech act and expressed psychological state are identical.* Thus, for example, my statement will be true if and only if the expressed belief is correct, my order will be obeyed if and only if the expressed wish or desire is fulfilled, and my promise will be kept if and only if my expressed intention is carried out. Furthermore, notice that just as the conditions of satisfaction are internal to the speech act, so the conditions of satisfaction of the Intentional state are internal to the Intentional state. Part of what makes my statement that snow is white the statement that it is, is that it has those truth conditions and not others. Similarly part of what makes my wish that it were raining the wish it is, is that certain things will satisfy it and certain other things will not.

All of these four connections between Intentional states and speech acts naturally suggest a certain picture of Intentionality: every Intentional state consists of a representative content in a certain psychological mode. Intentional states represent objects and states of affairs in the same sense that speech acts represent objects and states of affairs (though, to repeat, they do it by different means and in a different way). Just as my statement that it is raining is a representation of a certain state of affairs, so my belief that it is raining is a representation of the same state of affairs. Just as my order to Sam to leave the room is about Sam and represents a certain action on his part, so my desire that Sam should leave the room is about Sam and represents a certain action on his part. The notion of representation is conveniently vague. As applied to language we can use it to cover not only reference, but predication and truth conditions or conditions of satisfaction generally. Exploiting this vagueness we can say that Intentional states with a propositional content and a direction of fit represent their various conditions of satisfaction in the same sense that speech acts with a propositional content and a direction of fit represent their conditions of satisfaction.

If we are going to allow ourselves to use notions like "representation" and "conditions of satisfaction" they will require some further clarification. There is probably no more abused a term in the history of philosophy than "representation", and my use of this term differs both from its use in traditional philosophy and from its use in contemporary cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence. When I say, for example, that a

belief is a representation I am most emphatically not saying that a belief is a kind of picture, nor am I endorsing the *Tractatus* account of meaning, nor am I saying that a belief re-presents something that has been presented before, nor am I saying that a belief has a meaning, nor am I saying that it is a kind of thing from which one reads off its conditions of satisfaction by scrutinizing it. The sense of "representation" in question is meant to be entirely exhausted by the analogy with speech acts: the sense of "represent" in which a belief represents its conditions of satisfaction is the same sense in which a statement represents its conditions of satisfaction. To say that a belief is a representation is simply to say that it has a propositional content and a psychological mode, that its propositional content determines a set of conditions of satisfaction under certain aspects, that its psychological mode determines a direction of fit of its propositional content, in a way that all of these notions – propositional content, direction of fit, etc. – are explained by the theory of speech acts. Indeed, as far as anything I have so far said is concerned, we could in principle dispense with the terms "representation" and "represent" altogether in favor of these other notions, since there is nothing ontological about my use of "representation". It is just a shorthand for this constellation of logical notions borrowed from the theory of speech acts. (Later on I will discuss some differences between Intentional states and speech acts.)

Furthermore, my use of the notion of representation differs from its use in contemporary artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology. For me a representation is defined by its content and its mode, not by its formal structure. Indeed, I have never seen any clear sense to the view that every mental representation must have a formal structure in the sense, for example, in which sentences have a formal syntactic structure. Leaving out some complications (concerning Network and Background) which will emerge later, at this preliminary stage of the investigation the formal relations between these various notions can be stated as follows: every Intentional state consists of an *Intentional content* in a *psychological mode*. Where that content is a whole proposition and where there is a direction of fit, the Intentional content determines the *conditions of satisfaction*. Conditions of satisfaction are those conditions which, as determined by the Intentional content, must obtain if the

state is to be satisfied. For this reason the *specification* of the content is already a *specification* of the conditions of satisfaction. Thus, if I have a belief that it is raining, the content of my belief is: that it is raining. And the conditions of satisfaction are: that it is raining – and not, for example, that the ground is wet or that water is falling out of the sky. Since all representation – whether done by the mind, language, pictures or anything else – is *always* under certain aspects and not others, the conditions of satisfaction are represented under certain aspects.

The expression "conditions of satisfaction" has the usual process-product ambiguity as between the *requirement* and the *thing required*. So, for example, if I believe that it is raining then the conditions of satisfaction of my belief are that it should be the case *that it is raining* (requirement). That is what my belief requires in order that it be a true belief. And if my belief actually is a true belief then there will be a certain condition in the world, namely the condition *that it is raining* (thing required), which is the condition of satisfaction of my belief, i.e., the condition in the world which actually satisfies my belief. I think this ambiguity is quite harmless, indeed useful, provided that one is aware of it from the start. However, in some of the commentaries on my earlier works on Intentionality, it has led to misunderstandings;<sup>5</sup> so in contexts where the two senses might seem to lead to misunderstandings, I will mark the two senses explicitly.

Leaving out the various qualifications we might summarize this brief preliminary account of Intentionality by saying that the key to understanding representation is conditions of satisfaction. Every Intentional state with a direction of fit is a representation of its conditions of satisfaction.

### III. SOME APPLICATIONS AND EXTENSIONS OF THE THEORY

As soon as one states these views a whole host of questions come crowding in: What shall we say about those Intentional states that do not have a direction of fit? Are they representations too? And, if

<sup>5</sup> In, e.g., J. M. Mohanty, 'Intentionality and noema', *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 78, no. 11 (November 1981), p. 714.

so, what are their conditions of satisfaction? And what about fantasy and imagination? What do they represent? And what about the ontological status of all this stuff – are these Intentional states mysterious mental entities and have we not also populated the world with ‘states of affairs’ in order to satisfy these mental entities? And what about intensionality-with-an-s, how does it fit in? And what about the traditional notion of an “Intentional object” with its alleged “intentional inexistence” (Brentano)? Furthermore there are some more skeptical objections. Surely, one might object, every representation requires some intentional act on the part of an agent who does the representing. Representing requires a representer and an intentional act of representation and therefore representation requires Intentionality and cannot be used to explain it. And more ominously, haven’t the various arguments about the causal theory of reference shown that these mental entities ‘in the head’ are insufficient to show how language and mind refer to things in the world?

Well, one can’t answer all questions at once, and in this section I will confine myself to answering a few of these questions in such a way as to extend and apply the preliminary statement of the theory. My aim is double. I want to show how this approach to Intentionality answers certain traditional philosophical difficulties and in so doing I want to extend and develop the theory.

1. One advantage to this approach, by no means a minor one, is that it enables us to distinguish clearly between the logical properties of Intentional states and their ontological status; indeed, on this account, the question concerning the logical nature of Intentionality is not an ontological problem at all. What, for example, is a belief really? The traditional answers to this assume that the question asks about the ontological category into which beliefs fit, but what is important as far as the Intentionality of belief is concerned is not its ontological category but its logical properties. Some of the favorite traditional answers are that a belief is a modification of a Cartesian ego, Humean ideas floating around in the mind, causal dispositions to behave in certain ways, or a functional state of a system. I happen to think that all of these answers are false, but for present purposes the important thing to note is that they are answers to a different question. If the question “What is a belief really?” is taken to mean: what is a belief *qua* belief?

then the answer has to be given, at least in part, in terms of the logical properties of belief: a belief is a propositional content in a certain psychological mode, its mode determines a mind-to-world direction of fit, and its propositional content determines a set of conditions of satisfaction. Intentional states have to be characterized in Intentional terms if we are not to lose sight of their intrinsic Intentionality. But if the question is “What is the mode of existence of beliefs and other Intentional states?” then from everything we currently know about how the world works the answer is: Intentional states are both caused by and realized in the structure of the brain. And the important thing in answering this second question is to see *both* the fact that Intentional states stand in *causal* relations to the neurophysiological (as well as, of course, standing in causal relations to other Intentional states), and the fact that Intentional states are *realized* in the neurophysiology of the brain. Dualists, who correctly perceive the causal role of the mental, think for that very reason they must postulate a separate ontological category. Many physicalists who correctly perceive that all we have in our upper skulls is a brain think that for that reason they must deny the causal efficacy of the mental aspects of the brain or even the existence of such irreducible mental aspects. I believe that both of these views are mistaken. They both attempt to *solve* the mind-body problem when the correct approach is to see that there is no such problem. The “mind-body problem” is no more a real problem than the “stomach-digestion problem”. (More about this in Chapter 10.)

At this stage the question of how Intentional states are realized in the ontology of the world is no more a relevant question for us to answer than it is relevant for us to answer the analogous questions about how a certain linguistic act is realized. A linguistic act can be realized in speaking or in writing, in French or in German, on a teletype or a loudspeaker or a movie screen or a newspaper. But such forms of realization do not matter to their logical properties. We would, with justification, regard someone who was obsessed by the question whether speech acts were identical with physical phenomena such as sound waves as having missed the point. The forms of realization of an Intentional state are just as irrelevant to its logical properties as the forms in which a speech act is realized are irrelevant to its logical properties. The

logical properties of Intentional states arise from their being representations, and the point is that they can, like linguistic entities, have logical properties in a way that stones and trees cannot have logical properties (though statements about stones and trees can have logical properties) because Intentional states, like linguistic entities and unlike stones and trees, are representations.

Wittgenstein's famous problem about intention – When I raise my arm what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up?<sup>6</sup> – resists solution only as long as we insist on an ontological answer. Given the non-ontological approach to Intentionality suggested here, the answer is quite simple. What is left is an Intentional content – that my arm goes up as a result of this intention in action (see Chapter 3) – in a certain psychological mode – the intentional mode. To the extent that we find ourselves dissatisfied with this answer I believe that our dissatisfaction reveals that we have a mistaken model of Intentionality; we are still searching for a thing to correspond to the word “intention”. But the only thing that could correspond is an intention, and to know what an intention is, or what any other Intentional state with a direction of fit is, we do not need to know its ultimate ontological category but rather we need to know: first, what are its conditions of satisfaction; second, under what aspect(s) are those conditions represented by the Intentional content; and third, what is the psychological mode – belief, desire, intention, etc. – of the state in question? To know the second of these is already to know the first, since conditions of satisfaction are always represented under certain aspects; and a knowledge of the third is sufficient to give us a knowledge of the direction of fit between the representative content and the conditions of satisfaction.

2. A second advantage of this approach is that it gives us a very simple answer to the traditional ontological problems about the status of Intentional objects: an Intentional object is just an object like any other; it has no peculiar ontological status at all. To call something an Intentional object is just to say that it is what some Intentional state is about. Thus, for example, if Bill admires President Carter, then the Intentional object of his admiration is

<sup>6</sup> *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), Part I, para. 621.

President Carter, the actual man and not some shadowy intermediate entity between Bill and the man. In both the case of speech acts and the case of Intentional states, if there is no object that satisfies the propositional or the representative content, then the speech act and the Intentional state cannot be satisfied. In such cases, just as there is no “referred-to object” of the speech act, so there is no “Intentional object” of the Intentional state: if nothing satisfies the referential portion of the representative content then the Intentional state does not have an Intentional object. Thus, for example, the statement that the King of France is bald cannot be true, because there is no King of France, and similarly the belief that the King of France is bald cannot be true, because there is no King of France. The order to the King of France to be bald and the wish that the King of France were bald both necessarily fail of satisfaction and both for the same reason: there is no King of France. In such cases there is no “Intentional object” of the Intentional state and no “referred-to object” of the statement. The fact that our statements may fail to be true because of reference failure no longer inclines us to suppose that we must erect a Meinongian entity for such statements to be about. We realize that they have a propositional content which nothing satisfies, and in that sense they are not “about” anything. But in exactly the same way I am suggesting that the fact that our Intentional states may fail to be satisfied because there is no object referred to by their content should no longer puzzle us to the point where we feel inclined to erect an intermediate Meinongian entity or Intentional object for them to be about. An Intentional state has a representative content, but it is not about or directed at its representative content. Part of the difficulty here derives from “about”, which has both an extensional and an intensional-with-an-s-reading. In one sense (the intensional-with-an-s), the statement or belief that the King of France is bald is about the King of France, but in that sense it does not follow that there is some object which they are about. In another sense (the extensional) there is no object which they are about because there is no King of France. On my account it is crucial to distinguish between the *content* of a belief (i.e., a proposition) and the *objects* of a belief (i.e., ordinary objects).

Of course, some of our Intentional states are exercises in fantasy and imagination, but analogously some of our speech acts are



fictional. And just as the possibility of fictional discourse, itself a product of fantasy and imagination, does not force us to erect a class of "referred to" or "described" objects different from ordinary objects but supposedly the objects of all discourse, so I am suggesting that the possibility of fantasy and imaginative forms of Intentionality does not force us to believe in the existence of a class of "Intentional objects", different from ordinary objects, but supposedly the objects of all our Intentional states. I am not saying there are no problems about fantasy and imagination, what I am arguing rather is that the problems are of a piece with the problems of analyzing fictional discourse.

In fictional discourse we have a series of pretended (as if, make-believe) speech acts, usually pretended assertives, and the fact that the speech act is only pretended breaks the word-to-world commitments of the normal assertive. The speaker is not committed to the truth of his fictional assertions in the way that he is committed to the truth of his normal assertions. Now similarly in imagination the agent has a series of representations, but the mind-to-world direction of fit is broken by the fact that the representative contents are not contents of beliefs but are simply entertained. Fantasies and imaginings have contents and thus they are as if they had conditions of satisfaction, in the same way that a pretended (i.e., fictional) assertion has a content and therefore is as if it had truth conditions, but in both cases the commitments to the conditions of satisfaction are deliberately suspended. It is not a failure of a fictional assertion that it is not true and it is not a failure of a state of imagination that nothing in the world corresponds to it.<sup>7</sup>

3. If I am right in thinking that Intentional states consist of representative contents in the various psychological modes, then it is at least misleading, if not simply a mistake, to say that a belief, for example, is a two-term *relation* between a believer and a proposition. An analogous mistake would be to say that a statement is a two-term relation between a speaker and a proposition. One should say rather that a proposition is not the *object* of a statement or belief but rather its *content*. The content of the statement or belief

7 For further discussion of the problems of fiction, see 'The logical status of fictional discourse', in Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, pp. 58-75.

that de Gaulle was French is the proposition that de Gaulle was French. But that proposition is not what the statement or belief is about or is directed at. No, the statement or belief is about de Gaulle and it represents him as being French, and it is about de Gaulle and represents him as being French because it has the propositional content and the mode of representation – illocutionary or psychological – that it has. In the way that "John hit Bill" describes a relation between John and Bill such that John's hitting is directed at Bill, "John believes that *p*" does not describe a relation between John and *p* such that John's believing is directed at *p*. It would be more accurate to say in the case of statements that the statement is *identical* with the proposition, construed as stated; and in the case of belief the belief is *identical* with the proposition construed as believed. There is indeed a relation ascribed when one ascribes an Intentional state to a person, but it is not a relation between a person and a proposition, rather it is a relation of representation between the Intentional state and the things represented by it; only remember, as with representations in general, it is possible for there to be the Intentional state without there actually being anything that satisfies it. The muddled view that statements of propositional attitudes describe a relation between an agent and a proposition is not a harmless manner of speaking; it is rather the first step in the series of confusions that leads to the view that there is a basic distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* Intentional states. I will discuss this view in Chapter 8.<sup>8</sup>

4. An Intentional state only determines its conditions of satisfaction – and thus only is the state that it is – given its position in a *Network* of other Intentional states and against a *Background* of practices and preintentional assumptions that are neither themselves Intentional states nor are they parts of the conditions of satisfaction of Intentional states. To see this, consider the following example. Suppose there was a particular moment at which Jimmy Carter first formed the desire to run for the Presidency of the United States, and suppose further that this Intentional state was realized according to everybody's favorite theories of the ontology of the mental: he said to himself "I want to

8 Indeed, the Russellian terminology of 'propositional attitude' is a source of confusion since it implies that a belief, for example, is an attitude toward or about a proposition.