

## Sąmonės filosofija

# CAUSAL THEORIES OF MENTAL CONTENT: WHERE IS THE 'CAUSAL ELEMENT' AND HOW DOES IT MAKE INTENTIONALITY RELATIONAL?\*

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**Abstract.** *This paper has two interrelated aims. The primary aim is to specify the character of philosophical theories of mental content that are usually classified as 'Causal Theories of Intentionality', 'Causal Theories of Representation', or 'Causal Theories of Mental Content' (CTs). More specifically, the aim is to characterize the role and place of causation in philosophical reflections on the nature of mental content, as suggested by theories of this kind. Elucidation of the role of the concept of causation in CTs requires examining the philosophical background against which versions of CTs are proposed; therefore the second aim of this paper is to clarify the link between CTs and the two philosophical theories that accompany it: the doctrine of philosophical naturalism (PN) and the representational theory of mind (RTM). Clarification of the relationship between the three theories is not only necessary for an adequate specification of the causal component that plays a central role in CTs, and so for a better understanding of CTs themselves; it also shows how the role that causation plays in CTs implies a genuinely relational conception of intentionality.*

**Keywords:** *Causal Theories of Mental Content, Intentionality, Naturalism, Representational Theory of Mind.*

The doctrine that intentionality of language and thought is a causal relation of a particular kind has become an essential – if rarely argued – part of the currently predominant philosophical theorizing on the nature of intentionality. Details and labelling differ,

but the general conception of linguistic or mental representation as well as the main theoretical objective is the same. As noted by Robert D. Rupert, theories as diverse as Jerry Fodor's 'Crude Causal Theory', Fred Dretske's 'Informational Semantics' or Ruth Millikan's 'Teleosemantics', among others, aim to "identify the particular form or pattern of causal relations that establishes, determines, or constitutes an intentional relation" (Rupert 2008: 356). Thus understood, Causal Theories of Mental Content (henceforth CTs) constitute a

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subclass of philosophical theories where the concepts of causal relation or causation play a central explanatory role.

According to Steven Davis,

[i]n the last 20 years or so, philosophers in the analytic tradition have taken an increasing interest in causal theories of a wide range of traditional philosophical topics. [...] It is quite clear that causal theories of action, knowledge, memory, and perception contain references to mental phenomena. In each case the causal relation that is hypothesized to account for the relevant phenomena is a relation between some sort of mental object and some non-mental object. (Davis 1983: 1)

The scope of years has tripled, and the increasing interest has become, for better or worse, orthodoxy in contemporary philosophical reflections on the nature of mind, but the description of the core idea of causal theories of mental phenomena is no less accurate today than it was then.

William Child proposes a characterization of it that indicates more clearly the specificity of causal theories of mind. He writes:

It is a commonplace of contemporary philosophy of mind that our ordinary, common-sense understanding of psychology is a form of causal understanding; and that many of our common-sense psychological concepts have an essentially causal element. So, for example, causality figures in the concepts of perception and memory: if *S* sees *x*, then *x* *causally explains* *S*'s perception; the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for memory. It figures in determining the contents of propositional attitudes; for, at least in certain central cases, the content of a belief is partially determined by the *normal cause* of beliefs of that type. (Child 1994: 90)

We should note two facts that are rarely made explicit in the contemporary philosophical literature on the nature of mind. The first is that causal theories of mind

(i.e. of perception, memory, propositional attitudes, etc.) concern 'our common-sense psychological concepts'. To this extent, they aim to elucidate or reform psychological concepts that we ordinarily employ in primarily (though not exclusively) non-scientific discourse; they do *not* aim at defining a new concept better suited for scientific enquiries. Of course, this does *not* rule out the possibility of modifying these concepts, if needed, or eliminating them if they turn out to be incoherent or useless. The important point that one should keep in mind, however, is that philosophical scrutiny (clarification or rectification) concerns (the subject matter of) ordinary psychological concepts<sup>2</sup>, however vague, structurally complex, or incoherent they might turn out to be.

Secondly, and perhaps more controversially, it should be noted that if causal theories of mind in general, or CTs in particular, are taken to be *philosophical* theories about the nature of the relevant psychological phenomena, then in order to count as subscribing to them it should not be sufficient to hold either that the facts about the psychological phenomena can be given a causal explanation or that the psychological phenomena are, as a matter of empirical fact, underpinned by causal relations. For debating parties usually agree that facts concerning psychological phenomena *can*

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'ordinary use', however, is ambiguous, for as Gilbert Ryle has noted (Ryle 1971: 301-304), it may either refer to the everyday use of an expression (as opposed to a technical use of it), or the *standard* use of an expression (as opposed to a non-standard use of it). In this context, the notion of 'ordinary psychological concept' should be understood as referring more specifically to a set of mental terms (such as 'belief', 'desire', 'intention', 'thought', etc.) employed in a standard *everyday* use.

be given a causal explanation.<sup>3</sup> Hence, what seems to be at the core of causal theories of mind – the core that is supposed to divide the parties into opposing sides – is the question whether ‘an essentially causal element’ figures in the ordinary psychological *concepts* or whether it can ‘account for the relevant phenomena’: ideas that need to be clarified and spelled out in more detail. But irrespective of how they are spelled out, it should be clear that causal theories of mind should be seen as requiring more than just accepting the thesis of causal dependence as a factual truth about the phenomena in question.

There does not seem to be anything intrinsic in the theoretical character of CTs that would dictate one specific overall theory about the nature of mentality. Some form of causal theory of representation has been defended by philosophers as diverse as William of Ockham, John Locke, and Jerry Fodor. However, modern versions of CTs are usually represented as ‘naturalistic’ theories of mental content and are therefore considered to be linked to philosophical naturalism (PN). The connection is supposed to be so tight that subscribing to PN is considered to be a necessary condition for developing some form of CTs, as is clear from the following remark made by one of the most prominent advocates of a version of CTs: “if you’re *not* going to be a naturalist, why are you working on a causal theory of representation?” (Fodor 1984: 248).

It is certainly wrong to suggest that there can be no other reason to work on some form of CTs apart from being committed

to PN.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless Fodor’s quotation is interesting in its own right, because it points to an important and widespread assumption in contemporary philosophical reflections on the nature of intentionality – namely, that being a naturalist should, for some reason or other, motivate one to work on CTs. But the connection between PN and CTs is mediated via a particular philosophical picture of the nature of mind – the representational theory of mind (henceforth RTM) – as indicated by Fodor in the following passage:

If RTM is true, the problem of the intentionality of the mental is largely – perhaps exhaustively – the problem of the semanticity of mental representations. [...] It may be that what one describes, just there on the furthest horizon, is a glimpse of a causal/teleological theory of meaning [...]; and it may be that the development of such a theory would provide a way out of the current mess. (Fodor 1985: 99)

So it is not just because of a commitment to PN that one should be motivated to work on a causal theory of meaning; it is also because some version of it is ‘there on the furthest horizon’ if RTM is true.

It must be noted, though, that the two quotations do not show that either PN or RTM is a necessary condition for the truth of CTs. And rightly so, for there is no conceptual reason for thinking that CTs are necessarily tied to either of the other two theories. However, given that PN and RTM are *de facto* motives for most people who are developing some form of CTs, getting clear about the connection between them can provide valuable theoretical insights into the actual structure and content of the three philosophical doctrines.

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<sup>3</sup> Although according to the hermeneutic strand in the theory of action, there are explanations of mental phenomena and of actions which are *not* causal (Anscombe 1957; Taylor 1964).

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Paul Grice (1961) and Peter Strawson (1979) propounded causal theories of perception without subscribing to PN.

I shall start from the beginning, and discuss the first part of the route to CTs.

## 1. Philosophical Naturalism, Constitutive Explanation, and the ‘Conceptual Story’

Recent philosophical discussions about the nature of the intentionality of language and thought can be characterized by reference to the stance taken with regards to two strategic choices. Tim Thornton describes the latter as follows:

The first concerns the explanatory priority of linguistic meaning and mental content. Should linguistic meaning be explained as resulting from mental content, or vice versa, or should the same account be given of both with equal priority? The second choice concerns the kind of explanation or explication to which the philosophy of content should aspire. One approach is to attempt to give a reductionist analysis that avoids related intentional concepts in its explanation of content. The alternative is to accept that this is a false hope and instead to shed light on content using other related notions. (Thornton 1998: 1)

With respect to these two options, CTs belong to a class of theories that assign explanatory priority to mental content and aim to provide a reductive analysis of intentional categories. Additionally, they also belong to a group of theories whose general aim is to ‘naturalize’ those categories. As noted by Stephen Stich and Stephen Laurence:

In recent years, many philosophers have put a very high priority on providing a “naturalistic” account of intentional categories. Moreover, there is an unmistakable tone of urgency in much of this literature. Naturalizing the intentional isn’t just an interesting project, it is vitally important. *Something dreadful* will follow if it doesn’t succeed. And

for many writers, we suspect, that dreadful consequence is intentional irrealism. (Stich & Laurence 1994: 160)

The quotation also indicates that naturalization of intentional categories in particular is widely taken to be a necessary condition for realism about the intentional. Consequently, if one fails to naturalize intentionality, then it follows that intentionality is real, like phlogiston or witches. The relationship between PN and realism is interesting in its own right, but its examination is beyond the scope of this paper (and in any case, it is not directly relevant to our present concerns). Here, I shall confine myself to clarifying what naturalization of intentional categories amounts to.

Robert Stalnaker describes the project of naturalization of intentionality in the following way:

The challenge presented to the philosopher who wants to regard human beings and mental phenomena as part of the natural order is to explain intentional relations in naturalistic terms. (Stalnaker 1984: 6)

The passage rightly and accurately suggests that the primary challenge of philosophical naturalization is to provide an *explanation*. It is also true that the notion of ‘explanation’ is an epistemic notion. This does not, however, turn ‘the challenge’ into an epistemological one, for the aim is *not* to explain *how we know* what intentionality is, but to explain *what it is*. To use the traditional philosophical terminology, ‘the challenge’ is to specify the *essence*, or *nature* of intentionality in ‘naturalistic terms’. Some philosophers would call this a ‘metaphysical’ or ‘ontological’ challenge; others might wish to call it a ‘scientific’ challenge, or call it otherwise. But it does not matter how one

calls it, once it is clear that the *primary* goal of PN in general, and of the naturalization of intentionality in particular, is to deliver an *explanation* of a particular kind. Before undertaking that enterprise, however, one should first get clear as to *what kind* of explanation is at issue.

If the challenge of naturalism amounted to providing an empirical (causal) explanation of facts about mental intentionality in terms of naturalistic facts, then it would most certainly be a challenge – though not for philosophy but for the relevant empirical sciences, since only they can deliver the relevant causal explanations. But at the same time it should be noted that an empirical explanation of some property (or fact) can be given only if the property is (or the fact is about a phenomenon that is) part of the natural order. Otherwise, empirical sciences could not possibly explain it. If so, then the challenge that is presented to the philosopher who wants to explain intentional relations in naturalistic terms would seem to consist in proposing and defending an explanation of a kind that would make it *possible* to provide an empirical (causal) explanation of facts about them. The actual content of an explanation of such kind, surely, depends on what properties one takes to be signified by ‘naturalistic terms’; hence, on what conception of the property of *being natural*, or *being part of the natural order*, is to be adopted. But we need not decide here what properties can be considered to be part of the natural order in order to maintain that the explanation which is needed to meet the challenge is *not* an explanation of a causal kind. But if the required explanation is not of a causal kind, one can query what kind of explanation could possibly meet the challenge.

To answer this question one must note the *type* of question that is being asked (either implicitly or explicitly) when attempts are made to give a naturalistic explanation of intentionality. Assuming that the context is philosophical, one shall sooner or later discover (or perhaps re-discover) that the general form and type of question that is of primary concern is a question about the *essence* or *nature* of intentionality. Questions of this kind are usually called ‘constitutive questions’. Here is how Tyler Burge describes these questions and contrasts them with those that are of interest to scientists:

A constitutive question concerns conditions on something’s being what it is, in the most basic way. Something cannot fail to be what it is, in this way, and be that something. Constitutive conditions are necessary and sufficient conditions for something’s being what it is in this basic way. [...] Science is more interested in finding explanations of how and why things happen than in asking about natures [...] (Burge 2010: xv)

The distinction between the two kinds of explanations was also used and stressed by Fodor in his book *The Language of Thought*. He rightly noted that “*both* the causal *and* the conceptual story can be simultaneously true, distinct answers to the questions of the form: ‘What makes (an) *x* (an) *F*?’” (Fodor 1975: 8). Accordingly, the ‘stories’ should not be seen as competing, but as complementary explanations of the same phenomena. If so, then if PN in general, and philosophical naturalization of intentionality in particular, does *not* aim to tell a ‘causal story’ of the emergence of the phenomena in question, then it should be clear that the primary aim of PN regarding the mind in general, and intentionality in particular, is to tell what Fodor calls a ‘conceptual story’.



One should note here, however, that the step from a constitutive explanation to a ‘conceptual story’ requires further elaboration and defense. For even if everyone would agree that a conceptual explanation of what makes (an)  $x$  (an)  $F$  can tell one what being (an)  $F$  consists in, according to conceptual analysts like Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers, (i) conceptual explanations concern the meaning of terms and (ii) the meaning of terms are not dictated by reality. Surely not everyone would accept the claim that constitutive explanations are conceptual in *this sense*; in particular, essentialists like Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke would reject (i) or (ii), or both. But again, we need not decide here the precise character of constitutive explanations. What is important to note in this context is that the difference between the two kinds of explanations consists in the difference between the kinds of questions that are being asked about the same subject matter.

Restricting the scope to the problem of representation, Fodor specifies more precisely what a ‘conceptual story’ amounts to. He writes:

Well, what would it be like to have a serious theory of representation? [...] The worry about representation is above all that the semantic (and/or the intentional) will prove permanently recalcitrant to integration in the natural order; for example, that the semantic/intentional properties of things will fail to supervene upon their physical properties. What is required to relieve the worry is therefore, at a minimum, the framing of naturalistic conditions for representation. That is, what we want at a minimum is something of the form „R represents S“ is true iff C where the vocabulary in which condition C is couched contains neither intentional nor semantic expressions. (Fodor 1984: 232; italics added)

If the above characterization is to be taken as representative of what answering a constitutive question is, then constitutive explanations, or ‘conceptual stories’, amount to specifying the truth conditions of sentences that involve the relevant concepts. Moreover, unless one denies the possibility of there being non-reductive forms of naturalism, the italicized part in the quotation should be considered as expressing an *additional* requirement to the project of PN. For what it requires is for the explanation to be *reductive*; more specifically, it requires that the propounded explanations should not contain any intentional terms. The reductive requirement is specified more clearly by Barry Loewer who claims that that ‘naturalistic’ theories of representation of a reductive kind should only contain terms that are “definable in terms of predicates that occur in true theories of the natural sciences” (Loewer 1997: 108–109). And it is precisely at this point that the orthodox naturalistic versions of mental content appeal to RTM – an essentially philosophical theory about the nature of mind and cognition that is based on ideas from the philosophical theory of functionalism and scientific theorizing in cognitive psychology. I shall therefore turn to a discussion of RTM and its sources.

## 2. Philosophical Functionalism and Psychological Cognitivism

The vast majority of contemporary philosophical theories about the nature of mind assume some version of the mind/brain identity theory. Roughly speaking, the identity theory holds that all the mental phenomena are identical to, or consists in, activities in the brain. Contrary to the early versions of the identity theory as epitomized

mized by Herbert Feigl (1958) and Jack J. C. Smart (1959), more refined versions of the identity theory contain a conceptual premise that stems from analytic functionalism. The premise is usually explicated in various ways, but the main idea is this: psychological states are to be individuated by their causal-functional role. For example, David Armstrong holds that a mental concept signifies “a state that is apt to be the cause of certain effects or apt to be the effect of certain causes” (Armstrong 1981: 1). David Lewis, one of the founding fathers of analytic functionalism, maintains that “the concept of pain, or indeed any other experience or mental state, is the concept of a state that occupies a certain causal role, a state with certain typical causes and effects. It is the concept of a state apt to being caused by certain stimuli and apt for causing certain behaviour” (Lewis 1991: 230). Thus, according to analytic functionalism, all psychological predicates express a concept of a state that occupies a certain causal role. Combined with an identity thesis, analytic functionalism turns into ‘functionalism’ – a philosophical theory about the nature of mind that David Papineau describes in the following way:

The functionalist thinks of mental states as causal intermediaries between perceptual inputs and behavioural output. This is an advance on thinking of them simply as physical states. But, for all that, functionalism still presents mental states as part of a system of causal pushes and pulls inside the head. (Papineau 1987: 46)

The last proposition is important. For it specifies more precisely the kind of property that the psychological concepts are supposed to signify: according to functionalism (and mind/brain identity theories in general)

psychological states are characterized as being a part of a ‘system of causal pushes and pulls’. Fodor notes that functionalism thus characterized implies

[a] new account of the type/token relation for psychological states: psychological-state tokens were to be assigned to psychological-state types *solely* by reference to their causal relations to proximal stimuli (“inputs”), to proximal responses (“outputs”), and to one another. (Fodor 1985: 28)

The rise of functionalism in philosophy during the 1960s has been reflected in the revolution in psychology, where the doctrine of psychological behaviourism was replaced by cognitivism. M. J. Cain describes the shift as follows:

From the early years of the twentieth century into the 1960s, behaviourism constituted the dominant approach in scientific psychology in the English-speaking world. With the birth and development of cognitive psychology and cognitive science in the 1960s, this behaviourist dominance was challenged and behaviourism gradually fell into disrepute. As a result of this ‘cognitive revolution’ psychologists came to operate with a quite different conception of the research agenda of their discipline. They came to see their central concern as being that of explaining intentionally characterized cognitive capacities and held that in order to explain such capacities, it is necessary to appeal to internal representational states and processes. (Cain 2002: 20–21)

Rowland Stout gives a similar description:

While accepting a broadly behaviourist denial of introspection, cognitive psychology rejected the behaviourist claim that the subject matter of psychology is just patterns of behaviour. Cognitive psychology looked for mechanisms behind these patterns and found them by positing internal representa-

tions as causally explanatory entities. (Stout 2006: 37)

The intricate details of this shift need not concern us here. But two points relevant for the present purposes should be noted. The first point concerns the changes that took place as a result of the ‘cognitive revolution’, which are twofold. The first is (iii) the change of the conception of the subject matter of empirical psychology: so *what* empirical psychology is supposed to explain are ‘intentionally characterized cognitive capacities’, *not* behaviour that is described in terms of proximal stimulus-response patterns, as psychological behaviourists would have it. The second feature concerns (iv) the change in explanatory resources that are invoked as empirically necessary for causal explanations of cognitive capacities in question. It is proclaimed to be necessary to appeal to ‘internal representational states and processes’ – or simply ‘representations’ – in order to causally explain the relevant cognitive capacities<sup>5</sup>. Thus, to use Fodor’s terms, (iii) is part of the ‘conceptual story’ about the subject matter of empirical psychology, whereas (iv) is part of its ‘causal story’. Accordingly, it is a question for empirical psychology whether the postulated mental representations are indeed necessary for empirical explanations of the psychological phenomena, or whether they can be dispensed with (as it is argued by proponents of connectionism). And it is a question for philosophical psychology whether the characterization of the subject

matter of empirical psychology that is being suggested by proponents of the cognitive revolution is coherent as well as whether it is coherent to describe the postulated entities as ‘internal (mental) representations’.

The second point concerns the relation between constitutive and causal explanations, and it is this. Even if theoretical considerations in empirical psychology establish the need to appeal to mental representations (assuming that the postulated entities bear a coherent description) when proposing causal explanations of psychological phenomena, it must be born in mind that in such a case they are part of the ‘causal story’ of what makes the psychological phenomena what they are. But from the presumed fact that they are part of the ‘causal story’, it does not follow that they are *also* part of the constitutive explanation (or the ‘conceptual story’) of either the subject matter of empirical psychology or of so-called ‘folk psychology’. Neither of the latter theses is supported by scientific theorizing in cognitive psychology, and so *other reasons* must be given to support them, if they are to be defended.

According to RTM, however, the ordinary psychological concepts are concepts that apply to mental representations, and so the latter constitute a part of the ‘conceptual story’ of psychological states. David Pitt expresses this fact in the following way:

RTM *defines* [...] intentional mental states as relations to mental representations, and explains the intentionality of the former in terms of the semantic properties of the latter. (Pitt 2012: §1; emphasis mine)

Ted A. Warfield and Stephen Stich propose a different, although equivalent, story about what RTM amounts to:

According to the most widely held theory in this area, *what it is* for a person to have

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Arthur B. Markman and Eric Dietrich state that in their article “In Defence of Representation” they aim to “provide a view of representation designed to move the debate over representation out of its current morass into deeper issues about the properties of representation *necessary to explain various cognitive capacities*” (Markman & Dietrich 2000: 139; emphasis mine).



a propositional attitude is for the person to stand in an appropriate sort of relation to a special kind of internal state – a *mental representation*. Thus, for example, for a person to believe that the flower is in the vase is for the person to stand in the relation constitutive of believing to a state of the person, a mental representation, which *means* that the flower is in the vase. (Warfield & Stich 1994: 3; first emphasis mine)

The rationale behind this doctrine arises out of a mixture of the philosophical ideas of functionalism and scientific ideas of cognitive psychology already discussed. In the next section, I characterize the core of RTM and locate the transitional point leading to CTs.

### **3. The Representational Theory of Mind and Causal Theories of Intentionality**

A common way to introduce RTM as a philosophical theory of the mind is by proposing innocuous claims concerning some of the central features of some of our psychological states. For example, Kim Sterelny writes as follows:

What is the function of our mental states? According to the representational theory of mind, while mental states differ, one from another, mental states are representational states, and mental activity is the acquisition, transformation and use of information and misinformation. (Sterelny 1990: 19)

Even if one restricts the scope of ‘mental states’ to include only cognitive, and not conative ones, is it then true that they are representational states? The answer depends on how one understands the notion of ‘representation’.

One might understand this notion in what is sometimes called a ‘minimalist’ way (as in Glock 2013: 218) and interpret it in a way that it correctly applies to anything

(though not necessarily any *thing*) that is *about* something, is *directed* towards something, has (a propositional or non-propositional) *content*, and therefore has *truth* or *satisfaction conditions*.

Now, if the notion of ‘representation’ (and its cognates) is understood in this minimalist sense, then one should agree without hesitation that psychological states *are* representational as long as one accepts that the latter possess the definitional properties indicated in the ‘minimalist’ definition. But at the same time it should be clear that if one uses the notion of ‘representation’ in the minimalist sense, then it is *not* doing any explanatory work and so RTM turns out to be a vacuous philosophical theory. Therefore, assuming that RTM is *not* explanatorily inert, the notion of ‘representation’ should not be understood in the minimalist way. How, then, should this notion be understood so as to allow for it to be non-vacuously true that relative to the framework of RTM some or most psychological states are representational states?

RTM is linked to the developments in scientific psychology, and so its conceptual framework is tied to the conceptual framework of cognitive psychology. Accordingly, the notion of ‘representation’ that is being used in the context of RTM combines the minimalist connotations of this notion with the connotations that derive from the use of it in cognitive psychology. The result is a *transformed* concept, one that has undergone significant semantic change. For the notion is enriched to encompass features that are specified in the context of cognitive psychology (e.g. the notion of ‘performing computations’ over ‘symbolic representations’, if both Computationalism and the Language of Thought Hypothesis are true).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to clarify all the semantic subtleties and implications that result from the transformed notion of ‘representation’. For the present purposes it is enough to note that the new notion is linked to the one that is used in cognitive psychology. This shall be enough to draw several informative consequences from the quotidian slogan ‘mental states are representational states’, as it is used in the context of RTM.

The first consequence that one can draw is that if RTM is true, and so at least some psychological states are representational states in the relevant sense, then it would follow that ordinary psychological concepts (such as ‘belief’, ‘desire’, ‘thought’, etc.) apply to what causally explains cognitive capacities, because they apply to the postulated entities (mental representations) that are part of the ‘causal story’ of empirical psychology. Consequently, given that the transformed notion of ‘representation’ retains its minimalist connotations (i.e. being *about* something or other, having *content*, setting *conditions of satisfaction*), those same entities are the proper objects of predication of properties signified by the minimalist part of the transformed notion. Finally, that would entail that ordinary psychological states are sub-personal states, because mental representations (i.e. the postulated entities in cognitive psychology) are neural states of the brain, and neural states are sub-personal states.

The implicit commitment that RTM bears to a functionalist version of the mind/brain identity thesis should be evident from the latter consequence. For it might be objected that ordinary psychological concepts do *not* signify sub-personal states, and if so, then it is either false that psychological

states are representational states in the sense used by RTM, or the proposed definition of the notion of ‘representation’ is incorrect. However, RTM counters this objection by assuming the truth of functionalism and maintaining that psychological concepts apply to functionally characterized neural states of the brain, and hence to sub-personal states.

Once the specific use of the notion of ‘representation’ employed in the framework of RTM is clarified, the core ideas of RTM as well as the link holding between it and CTs becomes more perspicuous. We can state it by making use of Fodor’s proposed characterization of intentional psychological states (or propositional attitudes). He proposes the following:

*Claim 1* (the nature of propositional attitudes):

For any organism O, and any attitude A toward the proposition P, there is a (‘computational’/‘functional’) relation R and a mental representation MP such that MP means that P, and

O has A iff O bears R to MP ... (Fodor 1987: 16–17)

Bearing in mind that RTM is supposed to provide a constitutive explanation of the nature of at least some of the psychological states, the content of Claim 1 can be paraphrased in the following way:

(Clm1\*) “O As that P” is true if and only if (1) *and* (2) are true.

- (1) O stands in a ‘computational’/ ‘functional’ relation R to a MP.
- (2) MP means that P.

(Clm1\*), however, is not the complete explanation of the nature of psychological states according to Fodor. For (2) – a clause concerning the nature of the intentionality of psychological states – contains *intention-*

al concepts ('means that P'). It is precisely *at this stage* that some version of CTs is supposed to play a role in a philosophical account of the nature of mental content.

In order to illustrate the analysis of (2) and thus specify the role of the causal element, I shall confine myself to the most well-known versions of CTs: Fodor's 'Crude Causal Theory' (1987), Dretske's 'Informational Semantics' (1981) and Millikan's 'Teleosemantics' (1984). The final analysis of representational states is this:

(C1m1\*\*) "MP means that P" (and is about X) is true if and only if (3) *or* (4) *or* (5) are true.

- (3) X causes MP (Crude Causal Theory).
- (4) X causes MP during the initial learning process. (Informational Semantics)
- (5) X causes MP under normal conditions. (Teleosemantics)

Many philosophers today believe that none of the naturalization proposals that are currently on offer are successful, and the general pattern of their failure is, to quote Barry Loewer, their inability "to account for essential features of semantic properties, especially the possibility of error and the fine-grainedness of content" (Loewer 1997: 121). But even if *none* of the current naturalistic accounts of intentionality are successful, the above analyses, if correct, help to attain a more perspicuous represen-

tation of the predominant kind of naturalistic theories of mental content. For (C1m1\*) and (C1m1\*\*) not only show that concepts of intentional psychological states do in fact contain what Child has called an 'essentially causal element'; they also provide a clearer representation of the role this element is supposed to play in the constitutive account of cognitive psychological states. On top of all this, the suggested analyses and their implicit reliance on a modern version of RTM also allow us to maintain that in the framework of CTs, the intentionality of cognitive psychological states is a genuine relation. For either of the proposed constitutive accounts of intentional relations show that the latter consist in some type of a causal relation holding between the two independently individuated items: X and MP. Thus, CTs are committed to a genuinely *relational* conception of intentionality.

This paper has achieved its main objective if it has managed to identify and explain at least some of the theoretical motives and presuppositions that surround the orthodox versions of CTs, as well as managed to specify more precisely both the location of the 'causal element' and the conception of intentionality that is implicit in CTs. The conceptual scrutiny and critical evaluation of the explicated presuppositions and implications with respect to their truth must be left for another occasion.

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## KAUZALINĖS SĄMONĖS TURINIO TEORIJS: KUR YRA „KAUZALINIS ELEMENTAS“ IR KAIP INTENCIONALUMAS VIRSTA SANTYKINIŲ?

**Mindaugas Gilaitis**

**Santrauka.** Šio straipsnio tikslas – specifikuoti priežastingumo kategorijos vaidmenį priežastinių mintinio turinio teorijų pateikiamose intencionalumo koncepcijose. Šio tikslo siekiama analizuojant priežastinių mintinio turinio teorijų ir dviejų šio tipo teorijas lydinčių filosofinių teorijų – filosofinio natūralizmo doktrinos ir reprezentacinės sąmonės teorijos – tarpusavio ryšį. Atliekama analizė leidžia tiksliau apibrėžti priežastinių intencionalumo teorijų pagrindą sudarančio priežastinio komponento teorinį vaidmenį ir vietą bei parodyti, kokiū būdu šis komponentas tampa reliacinės intencionalumo koncepcijos pagrindu.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** priežastinės mintinio turinio teorijos, intencionalumas, natūralizmas, reprezentacinė sąmonės teorija

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