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SYMPOSIUM: INTENTIONALITY

NOTES ON INTENTIONALITY *

MY aim in this paper is to develop, in fairly short compass, some central themes pertaining to intentionality. Since I do not have the space for discussing usefully even a few of the major approaches to this complex topic, I shall limit myself to sketching the kind of position I am inclined to hold, and contrasting it with a carefully worked out alternative which belongs in the same philosophical neighborhood.

I shall assume that there are inner conceptual episodes proper ("thoughts") which are expressed by candid overt speech. These episodes can be referred to as "mental acts" provided that one is careful not to confuse 'act' with 'action' in the sense of "piece of conduct." Thoughts are acts in the sense of *actualities* (as contrasted with dispositions or propensities).¹

I shall not attempt to botanize the varieties of mental act. Their diversity corresponds to the diversity of the linguistic utterances in which, in candid or uncontrived speech, they find their natural culmination. I shall focus my attention on such thoughts as are expressed by subject-predicate empirical statements, and make use where possible of the tidy forms of PMese.

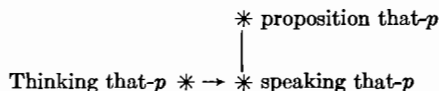
I said above that candid meaningful linguistic utterances express thoughts. Here it is essential to note that the term 'express', indeed the phrase 'express a thought', is radically ambiguous. In one sense, to say of an utterance that it expresses a thought is to say, roughly, that a thought episode *causes* the utterance.² But there is another and radically different sense in which an utterance can be said to express a thought. This is the sense in which the utterance ex-

* To be presented in a symposium on "Intentionality" at the sixty-first annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, December 29, 1964.

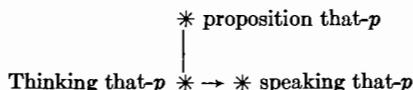
¹ This is not to say that there are no such things as mental actions in the conduct sense, but are more complex in structure.

² I say "roughly," because the word 'cause' is a dangerous one unless used with proper care. Here it means that the occurrence of the thought explains (on certain assumptions about the context) the occurrence of the utterance.

presses a proposition, i.e., a thought in Frege's sense (*Gedanke*)—an “abstract entity” rather than a mental episode. Let me distinguish between these two senses of ‘express’ as the ‘causal’ and the ‘logical’, and between the two senses of ‘thought’ by referring to *thinkings* and *propositions*. These distinctions are represented by the following diagram:



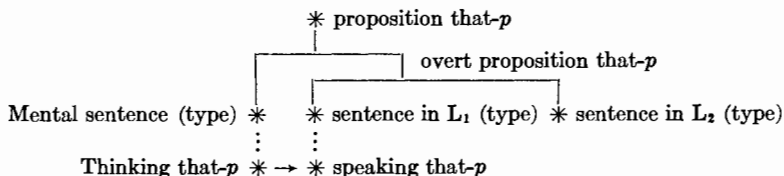
This diagram obviously raises the question: What is the relation between the thinking that-*p* and the proposition that-*p*? One possible move is to treat the relation between the speaking and the proposition as the logical product of the causal relation between the speaking and the thinking and a relation between the *thinking* and the proposition; thus:



(Roughly: for a speaking to mean that-*p* is for it to be caused by a thinking that-*p*.)

Another possible move is to treat the relation between the thinking and the proposition as the logical product of the causal relation between the speaking and the thinking and a relation between the *speaking* and the proposition, a situation which the first diagram can also be used to represent. (Roughly: to be a thinking that-*p* is to be an episode of a sort that causes speakings that express the proposition that-*p*.)

I propose, instead, to work with the following more complex framework in which the idea that thinkings belong to “inner speech” is taken seriously, and is combined with the idea that expressions in different languages can stand for (express in the logical sense) the same proposition. This can be represented, at least initially, by the following diagram:



According to this account, neither the relation of the speaking to the proposition nor the relation of the thinking to the proposition is to be analyzed as a logical product along the lines of the last two paragraphs. This claim is intended to be compatible with the idea that

there is an internal relation between the idea of a speaking's expressing a certain proposition and the idea of a speaking's being caused, *ceteris paribus*, by a thinking that expresses the same proposition.³

The structure of the above diagram can perhaps be clarified by pointing out that, according to the position I am defending, the framework of thinkings is an analogical one, the *fundamentum* of which is meaningful overt speech, i.e., speech understood in terms of the uniformities and propensities that connect utterances (a) with other utterances (at the same or a different level of language), (b) with the perceptible environment, and (c) with courses of action (including linguistic behavior). I say uniformities, but the uniformities are not *mere* uniformities, for they are grounded in rules in a way most difficult to analyze, but which involves the causal efficacy of rule expressions.⁴

Thus the concept of a proposition as something that can be expressed by sentences in both Mentalese and, say, English is an analogical extension of the concept of a proposition as something that can be expressed by sentences in both English and German. My next move, therefore, will be to explore what it is for a token of a sentence in, for example, German to express a proposition.

Instead, however, of dealing with this topic directly, I shall ask the closely related question, What is it for a German noun, say 'Himmel', to express a concept: the concept sky?⁵

I have written on a number of occasions⁶ that "meaning is not a relation," although statements about what expressions mean "convey" information that would be directly expressed by statements among which would be relational ones. I want now to make addi-

³ It is important to distinguish between two senses of 'meaningless utterance': (a) An utterance is meaningless if it does not token a properly formed expression in a language. (b) An utterance is meaningless if it is uttered parrotingly by one who does not know the language. It is worth reflecting on the idea of a meaningless mental utterance. We might not call it a thinking, but it would stand to thinkings as meaningless utterances stand to "saying something."

⁴ See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 198 ff.; also my essay "Some Reflections on Language Games," *Philosophy of Science*, 21 (1954), reprinted in a revised version as chap. 11 of Sellars: *Science, Perception and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963).

⁵ In Fregean terminology, both concepts and propositions, as I am using these terms, are *senses*, and I am exploring what it is for a sentence to express a sense, by asking the parallel question about less complex expressions.

⁶ Of "Empiricism and Abstract Entities," in Paul Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1964), pp. 431-468, especially p. 464 ff.; also "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. I (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 253-329 (reprinted as chap. 5, *Science, Perception and Reality*), especially § 31.

tional payments on these promissory notes. Let me begin by acknowledging that there is a perfectly good sense in which

'Himmel' (in German) expresses the concept sky

is a relational statement. Hence, if

'Himmel' (in German) means sky

had the same sense, it too would be a relational statement. But the former is a relational statement only in the special way in which

Lions are members of the class of animals

is a relational statement. The special character of the latter consists in the fact that it is a second-level relational counterpart of the first-level nonrelational statement:

Lions are animals

The original statement (let me rewrite it, for reasons which will shortly emerge):

'Himmel's (in German) express the concept sky

has as its nonrelational counterpart

'Himmel's (in German) are 'sky's

where 'sky' is a common noun which applies to items in any language that play the role played in our language by the sign design that occurs between the dot quotes. The hypothesis I wish to propose, therefore, is that

'Himmel' (in German) means sky

is, at bottom, the PMese statement

'Himmel' (in German) \subset 'sky'

Here the specific word 'means' serves to indicate that the context is linguistic and to remind us that, in order for the statement to do its job directly, the unique common-noun-forming convention must be understood, and the sign design *sky* must be present in the active vocabulary of the person to whom the statement is made, playing there the role played by 'Himmel' in German.

To characterize a statement of the form

$A \subset B$

as "relational" is a mistake of the same nature as characterizing

p or q

as a relational form, or

$\sim p$

as predicating negation of a state of affairs. The first of these statements is equivalent by definition to

$\hat{x}(x \in A) \subset \hat{x}(x \in B)$

and, ultimately, to

$$(x) x \epsilon A \supset x \epsilon B$$

The expressions 'A' and 'B' that appear in ' $A \subset B$ ' are no more to be construed as proper names than these same expressions as they appear in its unpacked equivalents. As a first approximation we can say that ' $A \subset B$ ' preserves the predicative character of these expressions which is explicit in the latter statement.⁷ ' $A \subset B$ ' must not be confused with its higher-order counterpart:

The class of As (or A-kind) is included in the class of Bs (or B-kind)

which is, in its way, a relational statement. The distinction is closely parallel to that between the nonrelational statement form '*fa*' and its higher-order counterpart '*a* exemplifies *f*-ness' which is discussed in the next paragraph.

It will probably be objected that the above account simply disguises the relational character of meaning. For surely, it will be said, the role played by the design *sky* in our language is that of expressing the concept sky, and, consequently, I have no more shown that meaning is nonrelational than I would have shown that largeness is nonrelational by pointing out that

New York is large

has the nonrelational form

$$f(x)$$

To come to grips with this challenge I must say an additional word or so about the relational character of

'Himmel's (in German) express the concept sky

and, in general, about the connection between those special relational statements which have nonrelational counterparts and these counterparts. I gave above as an example the pair:

Lions are members of the class of animals

Lions are animals

What is the relation between these two statements? It is, at bottom, that of

Socrates exemplifies wisdom

to

Socrates is wise

⁷ Strictly speaking, of course, the predicates in the latter are ' ϵA ' and ' ϵB ' in which the 'A' and 'B' are the differentiating components and the ' ϵ ' serves (like 'is a' in English) as a syncategorematic component which expresses the classificatory rather than adjectival character of the predicates. See "Classes as Abstract Entities and the Russell Paradox," *Review of Metaphysics* 17 (1963): 67-90, specifically, pp. 67-69; also "Counterfactuals, Dispositions and the Causal Modalities" in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. II, pp. 225-308, especially pp. 252-266.

where, to tip my hand, the former can be replaced by

Wisdom is true of Socrates

In other words, as I see it, to claim that 'Himmel' (in German) means sky *because* 'Himmel' (in German) expresses the concept sky is analogous to claiming that Socrates is wise *because* wisdom is true of Socrates. To see that the latter claim would be a mistake one needs only reflect that it would be akin to claiming that Socrates is wise *because* that Socrates is wise is true.⁸

I have argued elsewhere⁹ that the truth of statements in a language is to be defined in terms of the truth of propositions. In the framework sketched above, the definition can be represented by the following schema:

S (in L) is true $=_d (\exists p) S$ (in L) means p , and that- p is true

If we extend these considerations to the case of sentential expressions, we see that

'Es regnet' (in German) means *it is raining*

is, at bottom, the nonrelational PMese statement:

'Es regnet' (in German) \subset 'it is raining'

and that, although it has a relational counterpart, namely,

'Es regnet' (in German) expresses the proposition that it is raining

the existence of the latter does not point to a relational analysis of meaning-statements.

If this seems to involve a conflation of two radically different variables, viz. 'that- p ' and ' p ', the appearance is an illusion, for the propositional expression 'that- p ' is related to ' p ', as it occurs in the context ' S (in L) means p ', as 'the bishop' in

The bishop is a diagonal mover

to 'bishop' in

Bishop \subset diagonal movers

They are at the same level of language,¹⁰ and hence no fallacy of

⁸ Of course, I may know that Socrates is wise because Plato tells me so, and I know that what Plato says is true. But not everything that explains how one knows something to be so explains why it is so. For an elaboration of this interpretation of the relational counterparts of nonrelational statements see "Grammar and Existence: A Preface to Ontology," *Mind*, 69 (1960): 499-533, reprinted as chap. 8, *Science, Perception and Reality*; also "Abstract Entities," *Review of Metaphysics*, 16 (1963): 627-671.

⁹ "Truth and 'Correspondence'," this JOURNAL, 59, 6 (Jan. 18, 1962): 29-56, reprinted as chap. 6, *Science, Perception and Reality*.

¹⁰ This point is elaborated and defended in "Abstract Entities," *Review of Metaphysics*, 16 (1963): 627-671.

treating expressions at different levels as values of the same variable is involved in the above definition. Explicated, it now becomes

S (in L) is true $=_{df}$ $(\exists p) S$ (in L) $\subset p$ and $p \subset$ true

Once one make the move of accounting for the truth of statements in language in terms of the propositions they express, the philosophical problem of truth becomes that of explaining how statements like

That it is raining is true

are related to their lower-level counterparts, here

It is raining

Gustav Bergmann, in an important essay on intentionality,¹¹ makes an interesting use of the structure of Carnap's definition of 'true sentence in L ' in which he applies it to the truth of the propositions; thus,

That- p is true $=_{df}$ $(\exists q)$ that- p means q and q

Bergmann argues that statements of the form

— means...

are either "analytic" or "self-contradictory" according to extended applications of these terms which he finds to be justified by the fact that these applications bring together things that belong together. (Just what the *intension* is which is supposed to be common to the original and extended applications is left somewhat obscure—a matter of being decidable on purely quasi-linguistic grounds.)

The initial effect of this approach is to make it appear that Bergmann is assimilating the way in which 'it is raining' occurs on the right-hand side of

That it is raining means it is raining

to the way in which it occurs in analytic extensional contexts, thus on the right-hand side of

Not (it is raining) or it is raining

To switch the metaphor, his logically atomistic left hand works on the principle that ' p ' can occur in sentential contexts only if the latter are truth-functional, so that, in order for 'it is raining' to occur in 'that it is raining means it is raining', the latter statement must be analyzable in terms of truth-functional connectives in such a way that the apparently *predicative* character of 'means' disappears.¹² His equally agile right hand, however, works on the

¹¹ "Intentionality," in *Semantica* (Rome: 1955), reprinted in *Meaning and Existence* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1960), pp. 3–38.

¹² In his *Introduction to Semantics*, Carnap so introduces 'designates (in L)' that 'it is raining' does occur on the right-hand side of

S designates (in L) it is raining

principle that 'means' functions as a predicate. Is it a predicate? It cannot, he assures us, be analyzed into the familiar connectives. Yet its character as predicate is somehow bogus. At this juncture, Bergmann simply tells us that 'means' is a *unique* connective. His purpose is clear. If 'means' is a *connective*, then 'it is raining' genuinely occurs on the right-hand side of '... means it is raining', while if it is *not reducible* to the familiar connectives, it must be added to PMese to capture the unique character of mentalistic discourse. Bergmann is on to something important, but his formulations strike me, to use a Russellian metaphor, as light-fingered.

What is the alternative? As I see it the correct move is not to introduce a new "connective," but to explore in greater detail the unique way in which 'it is raining' occurs in 'it is true that it is raining'. But before doing so, let me note that, on the view sketched earlier in this paper, as well as on Bergmann's view,

That it is raining means it is raining

is analytic. On my view, however, it is analytic in a straightforward sense, for it amounts to nothing more than

'It is raining' \subset 'it is raining'

The crucial difference between our two accounts concerns the concept of a proposition. On my view, it is essential to distinguish between a proposition and the mental sentence directly tokened by mental acts or thinkings. Bergmann runs these two together, with, as I see it, disastrous consequences to his whole philosophy of mind. For this running together, when combined with the insight that it is just as appropriate to speak of what mental sentences mean, leads him to the mistaken conclusion that statements about the meanings of propositions are basic to the theory of mind, meaning, and truth.

Thus, if we use '<<Es regnet>>' to stand for the kind of mental act that occurs in the minds of German-speaking people and finds its overt expression in candid utterances of 'Es regnet', then it makes as good sense to say

<<Es regnet>> (in the minds of German speakers) means it is raining¹³

by defining it in terms of disjunction, conjunction, and identity construed as a PMese connective. This generates at best the "telephone directory" account of meaning and truth correctly satirized by Max Black in his well-known paper on the "Semantical Definition of Truth," *Analysis*, 7 (1947).

¹³ I pointed out above (656-657) that the concept of a proposition as expressed by mental and overt sentences is an analogical extension of the concept of a proposition as something expressed by overt sentences. Roughly, to be a *that-p* item in the more inclusive sense is to be an item of a kind that plays a role in *either* thinkings or overt speakings similar in relevant respects to that played in our overt speech by the design represented by '*p*'.

as it does to say

'Es regnet' (in German) means it is raining

That there is a close connection between these statements is clear, but it is not such as to make (using a corresponding convention)

⟨It is raining⟩ (in the minds of English speakers) means it is raining as trifling as

That it is raining means it is raining

Inner sentence episodes can differ in their descriptive character and yet express the same proposition, just as can overt sentence episodes.¹⁴ And just as the generically specified character of the shapes and motions and relative locations demanded of chess pieces *must* have determinate embodiment in actual games, so the generically specified character of pieces, positions, and moves which is common to determinate ways of playing the same conceptual game must be determinately embodied in the natural order. In other words, although a mental act that expresses the proposition that it is raining is *ipso facto* an 'it is raining', it must also belong to a specific variety of 'it is raining', just as a token of the corresponding English sentence not only is an 'it is raining' but has the specific empirical character by virtue of which it sounds (or reads) like *that*.

The fact that conceptual "pieces" or "role-players" *must* have determinate *factual* character, even though we don't know what that character is, save in the most general way, is the hidden strength of the view that identifies mental acts with neurophysiological episodes.¹⁵

If the foregoing remarks are correct, then, whereas the truth of mental statements must, like that of overt statements, be defined in terms of the truth of propositions, according to the schema

S (in L) is true $=_{df}$ $(\exists p') S$ (in L) means ' p ' and ' $p' \subset$ true

the truth of propositions is *not* to be so defined, but requires a radically different treatment.

I shall limit my positive account to the truth of empirical propositions and to the bare bones of that. The central theme is that the "inference" represented by the sequence

It is true that Tom is tall
Tom is tall

¹⁴ There is indeed, every reason to suppose that Japanese inner speech differs systematically from English inner speech in a way which reflects the differences between these two languages.

¹⁵ This point is elaborated in Sellars: "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" in Robert Colodny, ed., *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), reprinted as chap. 1 in *Science, Perception, and Reality*; see especially Section VI.

Differs radically from the inference represented by the sequence

Tom is tall and wise
Tom is tall

or

There is lightning
It will thunder

In the latter two examples, the sequences are authorized by principles that do not themselves belong in the sequences. In the first example, however, the inscribing of 'Tom is tall' is a performance which has as its authority a statement inscribed above it.

It might be thought that I am offering something like the "warranted assertability" theory of truth, according to which the first sequence has the form

The tokening of 'Tom is tall' is warranted
Tom is tall

But to make this move is to confuse truth with probability, for, presumably, to be warranted is to be warranted by evidence. There is, indeed, a close connection between truth and probability, but it is not so simple as that.

What is the basic job of empirical statements? The answer is, in essence, that of the *Tractatus*, i.e., to compete for places in a picture of how things are, in accordance with a complex manner of projection. Just how such a manner of projection is to be described is a difficult topic in its own right.¹⁶ The important thing for our purposes is that the relation between conceptual picture and objects pictured is a factual relation. Thus, whereas an item in the picture is, say, an '*fa*', and the concept of an '*fa*' ultimately involves (as does the concept of a pawn) the concept of what it is to satisfy a norm or a standard, the point of the norms or standards pertaining to conceptual "pieces" is to bring it about that *as items in the natural order* they picture the way things are.

To say of a basic empirical proposition, e.g., that-*fa*, that it is true is to say that an '*fa*' belongs in a telling of the world story that it is the business of empirical inquiry to construct. And the statement:

An '*fa*' belongs to the story

makes sense even where one neither knows nor has good reason to think that an '*fa*' belongs in the story. If, however, one constructs two columns, a right-hand column purporting to be a fragment of the story, and to the left a fragmentary list of statements about what belongs in the story, then it is clear that to inscribe 'An '*fa*'

¹⁶ I have explored this topic in the paper on "Truth and 'Correspondence'" referred to in footnote 9 above.

belongs in the story: in the latter left-hand column is to be committed to the inscribing of an '*fa*' in the right-hand column, and vice versa. If we represent this commitment by

That-*fa* is true: *fa*

then we can say that the implication statements:

That-*fa* is true implies that-*fa*

That-*fa* implies that that-*fa* is true

are derivative from the former in that the latter are vindicated by pointing out that the pair of inscriptions referred to above can be regarded as a special case of both of the kinds of sequence represented by:

That-*fa* is true
fa

fa
That-*fa* is true

which it would be the point of the implication statements to authorize.

Notice, in conclusion, that the *practical* connection between inscribing 'That-*fa* is true' and inscribing '*fa*' is a special case of a family of practical connections. Another example is that which relates 'that-*fa* implies that-*ga*' to world-story telling. Commitment to 'that-*fa* is true' picks for further consideration out of all constructible world stories those which include an '*fa*'. Commitment to 'that-*fa* implies that-*ga*' picks out those which do not include an '*fa*' unless they include a '*ga*', nor a competitor of '*ga*' unless it includes a competitor of '*fa*'.

WILFRID SELLARS

YALE UNIVERSITY

SPEAK YOUR THOUGHTS *

When I think, there seems to be something I am thinking about. When I think that it is raining, it seems that the object of my thinking is the proposition that it is raining. What are these propositions? Are they some rare kind of abstract entity? These are the questions Professor Sellars has set out to answer, questions which, as he approaches them, can be answered by examining the relationship between mental acts of thinking that-*p* and the proposition that-*p*. His conclusion is that this relationship is like the relationship between speech acts of saying that-*p* and the

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