

Origins of Mind

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Question How do humans come to know about—and to knowingly manipulate—objects, causes, words, numbers, colours, actions and minds?

‘... ’tis past doubt, that Men have in their Minds several Ideas, such as are those expressed by the words, Whiteness, Hardness, ... and others: It is in the first place to be enquired, How he comes by them?’ (Locke 1689, p. 104)

‘How does it come about that the development of organic behavior into controlled inquiry brings about the differentiation and co-operation of observational and conceptual operations?’ (Dewey 1938, p. 12)

‘the fundamental explicandum, is the organism and its propositional attitudes ... Cognitive psychologists accept ... the ... necessity of explaining how organisms come to have the attitudes to propositions that they do.’ (Fodor 1975, p. 198)

1. From Myths to Mechanisms

‘Men, barely by the Use of their natural Faculties, may attain to all the Knowledge they

have, without the help of any innate Impressions; [...] ‘For I imagine any one will easily grant, That it would be impertinent to suppose, the Ideas of Colours innate in a Creature, to whom God hath given Sight, and a Power to receive them by the Eyes from external Objects’ (Locke 1689, p. 48)

2. Inbetween mindless behaviour and thought

‘We have many vocabularies for describing nature when we regard it as mindless, and we have a mentalistic vocabulary for describing thought and intentional action; what we lack is a way of describing what is in between’ (Davidson 1999, p. 11)

‘there are many separable systems of mental representations ... and thus many different kinds of knowledge. ... the task ... is to contribute to the enterprise of finding the distinct systems of mental representation and to understand their development and integration’ (Hood et al. 2000, p. 1522).

3. *todo*

4. Two Breakthroughs

5. Social Interaction

‘children learn words through the exercise of reason’ (Bloom 2001, p. 1103; see Bloom

2000)

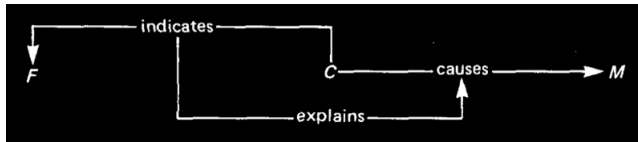
‘Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak.’ (Wittgenstein 1953, 15–16, §32)

‘[t]he child learns this language from the grown-ups by being trained to its use. I am using the word ‘trained’ in a way strictly analogous to that in which we talk of an animal being trained to do certain things. It is done by means of example, reward, punishment, and suchlike’ (Wittgenstein 1972, p. 77)

‘the child’s early learning of a verbal response depends on society’s reinforcement of the response in association with the stimulations that merit the response’ (1960, p. 82; compare 1974, pp. 28–9)

‘A child learning to speak is learning habits and associations which are just as much determined by the environment as the habit of expecting dogs to bark and cocks to crow’ (Russell 1921, p. 71)

6. Representation



source: (Dretske 1988, p. 84, figure 4.1)

‘Once C is recruited as a cause of M—and recruited as a cause of M because of what it indicates about F—C acquires, thereby, the function of indicating F. Hence, C comes to represent F. C acquires its semantics, a genuine meaning, at the very moment when a component of its natural meaning (the fact that it indicates F) acquires an explanatory relevance.’ (Dretske 1988, p. 84)

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