

A concise phenomenology of folk psychology

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1 Phenomenology

1. Many but not all of the mental states that we attribute to one another appear to have a form content that agrees with the facts or not. Beliefs are true or false; if I intend to do the dishes, then I may or may not realise my intention by doing the dishes; and so on.

Mental states that don't have content in this sense (or not necessarily) are nervousness, anger,...

- (a) In some cases, (the content of) a mental state has a "direction of fit". Belief and intention are among the clearer cases.

2. Mental states guide our actions, and there are more or less regular connections between mental states, on the one hand, and patterns of behaviour, on the other.
3. Mental-state attribution (or the mental states themselves?) obeys certain rules/regularities: seeing is believing, inertia of belief,...

Part of this systematicity involves content.

4. Mental-state attribution is normative. (Always?)
5. Mental states are private.
6. Aspectuality
7. Higher-order mental states
8. Mental states are somewhere. In our culture they are generally between the ears. Exceptions are pains, itches,...

2 Discussion/applications

1. Unsurprisingly, mental-state verbs are polysemous (cf. Borg et al. 2018 on the “polyeidicity of the folk concept of pain”).
2. Mental states of infants, pets, insects, trees, artefacts.
3. Standard false-belief task. (Importance of inertia.)
4. “Implicit” false-belief tasks.