



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



John
Templeton
Foundation

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Seminar 24

1. Recap: Psychologism about the psychological
2. An example: perception
3. Objects of thought

1. Recap: psychologism about the psychological

Frege's distinction between reference, sense and idea

Reference and sense are the components of Frege's semantic programme

Ideas: psychological (intentional) states or episodes

Psychologism: **the heart of a theory of intentionality should be the investigation of what Frege calls 'ideas'**

The moon analogy

The **reference** of a word is analogous to the moon itself

The **sense** is analogous to the image in the telescope – it is the ‘property of many people’ (Frege 1892).

The **idea** is analogous to the image on the retina of the person viewing the moon

Other things called ‘psychologism’ about the psychological

‘the doctrine that whether behavior is intelligent behavior depends on the character of the internal information processing that produces it’

Ned Block ‘Psychologism and Behaviourism’ (1981)

‘the doctrine that psychology provides at least part of the explanatory basis for the constitutive understanding of the mental’

Adrian Cussins ‘Varieties of Psychologism’ (1987)

Stanley Cavell

‘We know of the efforts of such philosophers as Frege and Husserl to undo the “psychologizing” of logic (like Kant’s undoing Hume’s psychologizing of knowledge): now, the shortest way I might describe such a book as the *Philosophical Investigations* is to say that it attempts to undo the psychologizing of psychology.’

Wittgenstein ‘wanted to show the necessity controlling our application of psychological and behavioural categories’

‘Aesthetic problems of modern philosophy’ (1965)

Reminder: the word 'psychologism'

- (1) Psychologism about logic
- (2) Psychologism about meaning/the semantic
- (3) Psychologism about the psychological

Psychologism about meaning (1)

‘When Frege engages in polemic against psychologism, what he is concerned to repudiate is the invasion of the theory of meaning by notions concerned with mental processes, mental images, and the like, and the confusion between the process by which we come to acquire a grasp of sense and what constitutes such a grasp.’

Michael Dummett *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (1981)

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Dummett on anti-psychologism about meaning

There is a sharp distinction between:

The processes by which we 'grasp' sense ('mental processes, mental images, and the like')

and

What **constitutes** this 'grasp'

McDowell on psychologism about meaning

According to psychologism, 'the significance of others' utterances is a subject for guesswork or speculation as to how things are in a private sphere concealed behind their behaviour'.

John McDowell, 'Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding' (1981)

McDowell on Frege on psychologism

‘Frege fails to question the the acceptability of a psychologistic conception of the psychological. (This means that his opposition to psychologism in the philosophy of language has to take the form of an obsessive, and surely doomed, rooting out of everything psychological from our account of how language works.)’

‘Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding’ (1981)

Anti-psychologism about the psychological

The idea that the philosophical study of the psychological starts with the semantic project: what determines truth or falsehood?

For example: the semantics of propositional attitude ascriptions

More generally: the idea that the study of the psychological is a **purely conceptual investigation**

Block and Cussins again

‘the doctrine that whether behavior is intelligent behavior depends on the character of the internal information processing that produces it’

Ned Block ‘Psychologism and Behaviourism’ (1981)

‘the doctrine that psychology provides at least part of the explanatory basis for the constitutive understanding of the mental’

Adrian Cussins ‘Varieties of Psychologism’ (1987)

Psychologism

These definitions are consistent with, and in the spirit of, what I mean by ‘psychologism about the psychological’

See Tim Crane, ‘In Defence of Psychologism’ in *Aspects of Psychologism* (2014)

(2) An example: perception

Philosophical theories of perception often begin with the ways we typically talk about perception

Seeing, perceiving, sensing, experiencing etc.

Psychologistic and non-psychologistic approaches

Ways of talking about perception (e.g. vision)

Vladimir sees the guests arriving

Vladimir sees that the guests have arrived

Vladimir has a visual experience of the guests arriving

Vladimir has a visual experience as of the guests arriving

Vladimir visually experiences that the guests have arrived

Dretske's distinction

Epistemic seeing:

S sees that p

Non-epistemic seeing ('simple seeing'):

S sees x

See Fred I Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (1969)

Is this is a psychological distinction?

What is the psychological correlate of the extensionality of 'sees x'?

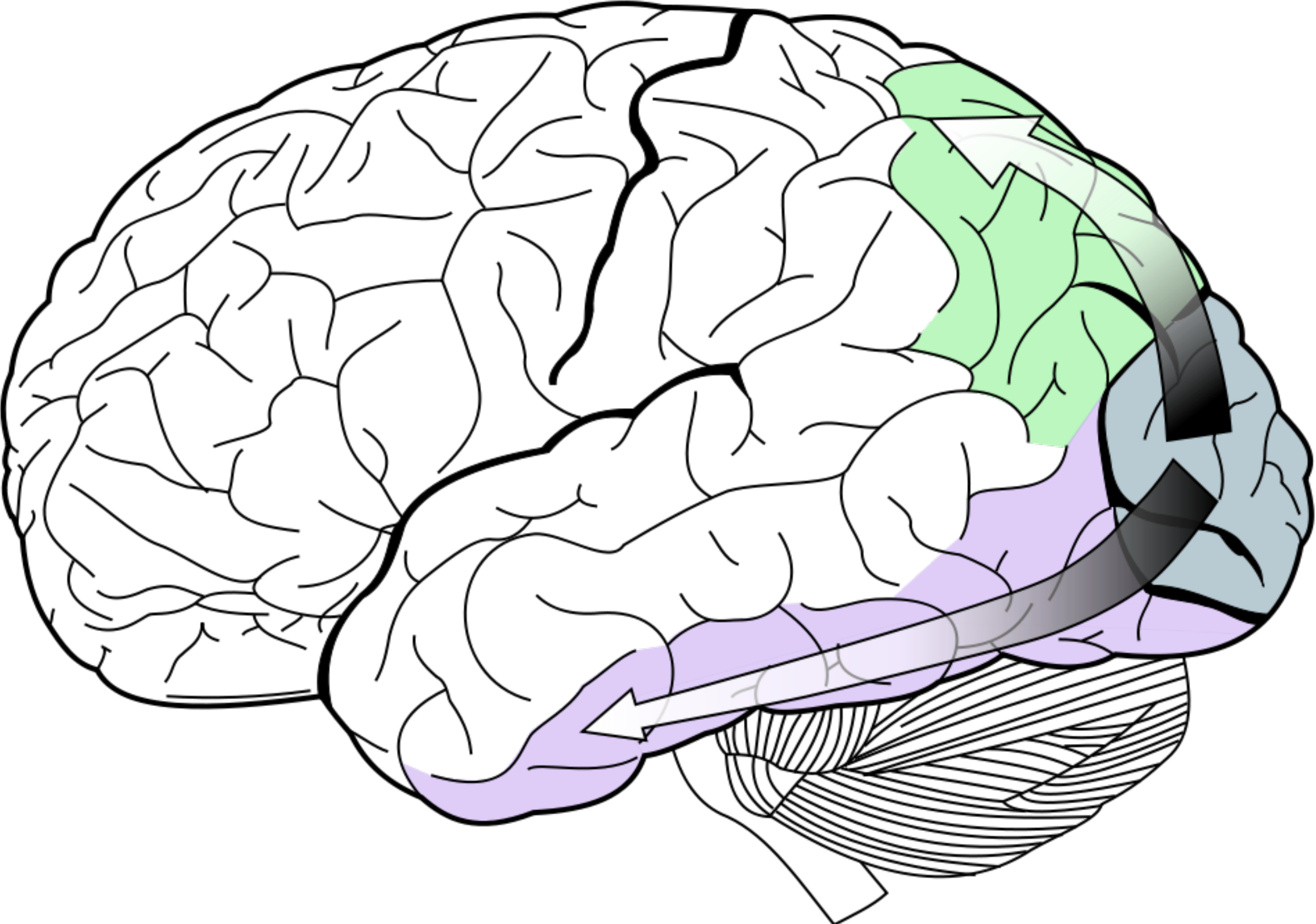
What is the psychological correlate of the propositional attitude ascription of 'sees that...'?

Visual processing

Two visual systems (Milner and Goodale 1992)

ventral stream: object identification (the ‘what’)

dorsal stream: location of object (the ‘where’ or maybe the ‘how’ — cf. ‘vision for action’)



Epsitemic seeing: an alternative

'S sees that p' implies:

S is in a position to know that p through seeing

(What further conditions need to be added is a matter for debate)

This does not require the existence a distinct visual state from that ascribed by ascriptions of 'simple seeing'

3. Objects of thought

Intentionality is the directedness of the mind upon its objects

What does this mean?

What is directedness, and what is an object?

Frege on objects of thought

‘what is a content of my consciousness, my idea, should be sharply distinguished from what is an object of my thought’
Gottlob Frege ‘The Thought’ (1918-19)

What does Frege mean by an object of my thought?

Not what I mean!

He means: the referents of my words

Remember what Frege means by ‘thought’

Proposition — bearer of truth-value

So: the ‘objects of my thought’ means: **the referents of the words in the sentences that express this proposition**

I will use the word ‘thought’ to mean **episode or act of thinking**

Objects of thought and referents

There is this similarity:

the referents of your words are the things in the world that your words concern;

the objects of your thought are the things in the world that your thoughts are about

Variety of objects of thought

Anything you can think about:

particular things

events

processes

states

properties

relations

etc.



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