# Searle on Intentionality[i] - 30/05/2020

Firstly let’s define the terms of the title: intentionality and Searle general  
position according to what Ronald McIntyre[ii] said in the intro of his  
article.  
  
\*\*Intentionality is\*\* the apparently relational property wherein certain  
mental states (e.g. perceptions and beliefs) are characterized as \_being ‘of’  
or ‘about’ objects\_ of various sorts, especially extra-mental things and  
states of affairs.  
  
\*\*Searle is\*\* a physicalist but not a reductionist[iii]. For him,  
\_Intentionality\_ is an ‘intrinsic’ feature of certain mental states but cannot  
ultimately be explained away. However, ‘Intentional states are both caused by  
and realized in the structure of the brain’. Also Intentionality is crucial  
for developing a \_theory of mind\_ , including belief, perception, intentional  
action, causality, meaning, and reference.  
  
Especially here in this post our intention is to understand, from McIntyre,  
the relation between Husserl and Searle. Husserl called intentionality ‘the  
principal theme of phenomenology’ though Searle does not explicitly invoke the  
classical phenomenology. For Searle, the 'Intentional content' is a mental  
state, by virtue of its own internal character and its relationships to other  
mental states. Thus, he believes, the Intentionality of a mental state is  
\_independent of what is in fact true about extra-mental reality\_ and the  
mind's actual relationship to it. This aspect of Searle's work places it in  
close affinity with the \_phenomenological tradition\_.  
  
Some other points of Searle conception are:  
  
· He explicitly rejects the view that the problems of Intentionality  
are basically linguistic or semantic problems.  
  
· The problem of Intentionality is not a problem of explaining why  
sentences about Intentional mental phenomena violate certain logical  
principles (intensionality-with-an-s). Rather, it is the problem of explaining  
how those Intentional mental phenomena themselves relate to the states of  
affairs they are ‘of’ or ‘about’.  
  
  
  
\*\* The Nature of Intentional States: Searle's Key Concepts. \*\*The  
central notion of a mental state is its nature or its ‘Intentional content’.  
Two others contribute to it creating a kind of \_internal holism\_ : the  
\_Network\_ , a system of Intentional mental states in which the given mental  
state occurs and the \_Background\_ , a system of non-Intentional mental  
capacities corresponding to the subject's bodily skills and know-how.  
  
Searle appeals to his \_speech-act theory\_ to explain Intentional content, one  
dependent on two things, its ‘illocutionary force’ (varies with the kind of  
\_speech act performed\_ : asserting, promising, ordering, etc.) and its  
‘propositional content’ (varies with just \_what it is\_ that one asserts,  
promises, orders, etc.). For each speech act is the propositional content that  
makes the assertion true satisfying some state of affairs. The propositional  
content of a speech act determines its ‘conditions of satisfaction’; and each  
speech act is thereby said to ‘represent’ the state of affairs that would  
satisfy it. The illocutionary force affects the ‘direction of fit’ of  
propositional content that can be ‘word-to-world’ (assertion) or ‘world-to-  
word’ (order).  
  
We can carry over the speech-act theory to intentional states because they  
have ‘sincerity conditions’: a speech act with a certain propositional content  
purports to express an Intentional mental state with that same propositional  
content. This content occurs in mental states called ‘psychological modes’:  
belief, perception, etc., but not intrinsically linguistic. To summarize:  
‘Intentional states represent objects and states of affairs in the same sense  
of “represent” that speech acts represent objects and states of affairs’.  
These are the ‘direction of fits’ for intentional states of the psychological  
modes:  
  
· Beliefs and perceptions: ‘mind-to-world’.  
  
· Intention and desires: ‘world-to-mind’.  
  
Thus, Searle's explication of the Intentionality of a mental state consists in  
specifying these various relations for that mental state – specifying:  
  
· its psychological mode;  
  
· its conditions of satisfaction;  
  
· its direction of fit;  
  
And, elaborating on these as necessary.[iv] This first intro is enough so far  
and we can go ahead later with the other topics: the similarities and  
differences between Searle and Husserl and also the details of the Searle’s  
concepts.  
  
   
  
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[i] Available on:  
[http://www.csun.edu/~vcoao087/pubs/searle.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/~vcoao087/pubs/searle.pdf),  
Accessed on May 12, 2020. Ronald McIntyre, “Searle on Intentionality,”  
Inquiry, 27 (1984), 468-483.  
  
[ii] Ronald McIntyre: Professor Emeritus - Department of Philosophy,  
California State University, Northridge. Available on:  
<http://www.csun.edu/~vcoao087/> and accessed on May 12, 2020.  
  
[iii] John Searle has a concept of biological naturalism (it refutes both  
dualism and materialism) where mind, as a biological phenomenon, is part of  
the nature. One important point of this concept is that we don´t say that  
consciousness is not physical; instead we say it is physical with an  
ontological part. See on:  
<https://www.investigatingtheworld.com/2018/09/uniqueness-of-  
consciousnessi.html>.  
  
[iv] However, not all \_Intentional\_ states so neatly fit this speech-act  
model. Also, it is hard to understand Searle´s notions of speech-act theory at  
the first time. Even though the Searle´s non-reductionism it is difficult to  
refrain from wondering just what the propositional or Intentional content of a  
mental state is. Searle believes he can resist such questions, partly on the  
grounds that his basic notions are 'logical' rather than 'ontological' ones.  
But McIntyre will go on this later.