Representation

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# Philosophy 101

Representation

February 19, 2015

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# What is a Representation?

Representation: something that represents something (either itself or something else)

- goes proxy; stands for; symbolizes something
- refers to something; is accurate/inaccurate; is true/false

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# Examples of Representational Kinds

- Pictorial Representation
- Linguistic Representation
- Mental Representation

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### Two Questions

- 1 How does a representation represent?
- 2 Are some kinds of representation more fundamental than others?

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- 1 How does a representation represent?
  - resemblance
- 2 Are some kinds of representation more fundamental than others?
  - · pictorial representation

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## Test Cases – Resemblance

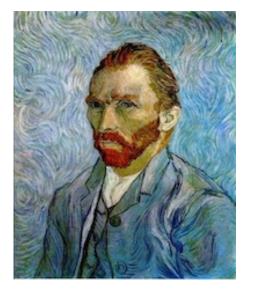


Figure: Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

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### Test Cases – Resemblance

- How does Van Gogh's portrait represent him?
  - represents him in virtue of resembling him
- Is the fact of resemblance both necessary and sufficient for the portrait to resemble Van Gogh?

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## Test Cases – Resemblance



Figure: Who do I resemble?

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### Test Cases – Resemblance

- Resemblance is neither necessary nor sufficient for representation
  - not necessary: pictures can represent non-existent objects but they cannot resemble non-existent objects
  - not sufficient: everything resembles something but not everything represents something

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## Test Cases – Pictures

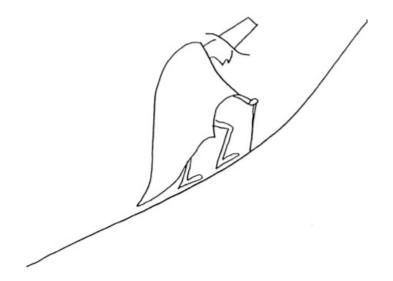


Figure: Walking Uphill or Sliding Down?

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## Test Cases – Pictures

- Interpretation
- 2 Logical relations
  - if...then...
  - ...and...
  - either...or...
  - not...

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### Test Cases – Pictures

- Pictorial representations:
  - require interpretation
  - cannot represent logical relations

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# Test Cases – Language

The cat is on the mat

 How does the string of symbols 'the cat is on the mat' come to represent a particular situation—viz. the cat's being on the mat?

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# Test Cases – Language

- Language is not intrinsically representational
  - Convention
  - Expression of 'ideas' or mental states

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## Test Cases – Language

#### Convention

- cannot explain the representation relation, only why some things represent other things
  - 'dog' represents dogs by convention
    - convention cannot explain how 'dog' represents without appealing to the mental states of subjects doing the representing

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### **Test Cases**

words, like pictures, do not represent in themselves ('intrinsically'). They need interpreting – they need an interpretation assigned to them in some way. But how can we explain this? The natural answer, I think, is that interpretation is something which the mind bestows upon words. (Crane, p. 22)

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# Fundamentality

- Any representational system that depends on interpretation or convention is not fundamental
- 2 Linguistic and pictoral representation depend on interpretation and convention
- : Linguistic and pictoral representation are not fundamental

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# Is Mental Representation Fundamental?

## Mental representation is not conventional

- Conventions rely on the intentions of a subject or subjects
- 2 Intentions are a kind of mental representation
- 3 ∴ Convention cannot be used to explain mental representation

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# Is Mental Representation Fundamental?

## Mental representation does not depend on interpretation

- If mental representation required interpretation then we would need to be able to think about the interpretations in some way, in order to use them as interpretations
- 2 But thoughts are a form of mental representation, so we would need a further interpretation to make sense of those thoughts
- 3 But a further thought would be needed to think *that* interpretation, etc.
- ... we would have an infinite regress of thoughts and interpretations of them
- **⑤** ∴ Mental representations do not require interpretation

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# Mental Representation

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#### Mental Representation

# Thoughts & Propositional Attitudes

Thought: A state of mind that represents a state of the world (a 'fact' or 'situation')

- Some thoughts—'Propositional Attitudes'—have a particular structure
  - the situation represented
  - the 'attitude' taken towards the represented situation

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# Thoughts & Propositional Attitudes

- John believes that it is raining outside
- Jane hopes that class will be canceled
- S As that ... F ...

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## Intentionality

Intentionality: The 'directedness' of a mental state at some (existing or non-existing) thing

 All mental representations are 'intentional' or directed at some thing, fact, or situation

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# Intentionality & Mentality

- Is it true that if something exhibits intentionality, then that thing is (or has) a mind?
  - If something exhibits intrinsic intentionality (i.e. not derived in like pictorial or linguistic intentionality) is it a mind?

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## Mental Representation

- According to Crane, only mental representation could plausibly be fundamental because only mental representation is intrinsically intentional
- What kinds of things might have intentional states?
  - Could machines have intentional states?