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II. Searle on Intentionality*

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John Searle's *Intentionality* is an important addition to contemporary studies in philosophy of mind (and also philosophy of language). As its title reveals, Searle's book gives central attention to Intentionality:¹ that 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. Best known as a philosopher of language, especially for his work in speech-act theory, Searle thus joins an increasing number of philosophers from the analytic tradition who have recently taken interest in what Husserl called 'the principal theme of phenomenology'.² This book, however, is not quite what one might expect from an 'analytic' philosopher writing on Intentionality – especially one who explicitly disavows, as Searle does, any direct indebtedness to the classical phenomenologists.

Consider: (1) Although Searle sees a close connection between philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, he explicitly rejects the view that the problems of Intentionality are basically linguistic or semantic problems. One of Searle's main themes is that Intentional mental states and speech acts share certain central features by virtue of which both are Intentional, and his chief strategy is to develop a theory of Intentionality by drawing on the explication of these features in speech-act theory. But Intentionality is not essentially linguistic, he insists; indeed, he characterizes the Intentionality of speech acts as 'derived Intentionality', derived from the fundamental and 'intrinsic' Intentionality of mental states. Searle accordingly sees this book as providing the philosophical foundations for his previous work in the philosophy of language, not vice versa. (2) On a related issue, Searle warns against confusing 'Intentionality-with-a-t' and 'intensionality-with-an-s'. The problem of Intentionality is not, for Searle, the problem of explaining why sentences about Intentional mental phenomena violate certain logical principles (although he does offer an explanation). Rather, it is the problem of explaining how those Intentional mental phenomena themselves relate to the states of affairs they are 'of' or 'about'. (3) Searle is a physicalist; but, unlike most analytic philosophers, he is not a reductionist on mental states and their Intentionality. Intentionality is an 'intrinsic' feature of certain mental states, he says, and 'intrinsic mental phenomena . . . cannot be reduced to something else or eliminated by some kind of re-definition' (p. 262). Yet, while Searle is committed to the view that Intentionality cannot ultimately be explained away, he also thinks that 'Intentional states are both caused by and realized in the structure of the brain' (p. 15). Searle believes

* John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, x + 278 pp., £20.00, \$39.50, paperback £7.50, \$12.95. Page numbers in parentheses are to this work.

he can make this position coherent, and that belief – physicalism rendering non-reductionism respectable – frees him to acknowledge whatever mental phenomena he finds and to describe them from within a circle of mentalistic and intentional notions. (4) Intentionality is often treated as a peripheral issue in philosophy of mind. But Searle's book seems to be predicated on the assumption – so explicitly articulated by Husserl – that a proper account of Intentionality constitutes the very framework required for developing a theory of mind. Searle, accordingly, begins with a basic account of Intentionality, and he then uses and extends that account in discussing a wide range of topics, including belief, perception, intentional action, causality, meaning, and reference. (5) Searle describes his approach to Intentionality as 'internalist', and the key notion he attempts to explicate is what he calls the 'Intentional content' of a mental state. In Searle's view, the Intentionality of a mental state is a property it has inherently, by virtue of its own internal character – its 'Intentional content' – 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. As we shall see, this aspect of Searle's work, especially, places it in close affinity with the phenomenological tradition.

1. The Nature of Intentional States: Searle's Key Concepts

According to Searle, the Intentionality of a mental state is determined by three things: the nature of that mental state itself, especially its 'Intentional content'; the subject's 'Network', a system of Intentional mental states in which the given mental state occurs; and the subject's 'Background', a system of non-Intentional mental capacities corresponding to the subject's bodily skills and know-how. Of these three, the notion of Intentional content is the central one and the most complex, and for ease of exposition I shall at first ignore the contributions made to Intentionality by the Network and the Background; we shall see later that they turn Searle's position into a kind of internal holism, where the Intentionality of any given mental state is dependent not only on its own Intentional content but also on its relationship to the subject's entire mental repertoire.

Searle hopes to illuminate the notion of Intentional content by appeal to speech-act theory. To specify which speech act a person has performed one must, in paradigmatic cases at any rate, specify two things: what Searle calls its 'illocutionary force' and its 'propositional content'. Illocutionary force varies with the kind of speech act performed: asserting, promising, ordering, etc. And propositional content varies with just what it is that one asserts, promises, orders, etc. Now, it is the propositional content of speech acts that establishes their special sort of relationship to the world: for each such speech act, some state of affairs would count as 'satisfying' it or making it successful – making the assertion true, the promise kept, the order obeyed, and so on – and just which state of affairs that depends on the propositional content of the speech act. Thus, says Searle, 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. Finally, the illocutionary force of a speech act affects the 'direction of fit' that must obtain between its propositional content and the world if the speech act is to be successful. The point of an assertion is that its propositional content

should match the way the world is: it has the 'word-to-world direction of fit'. But the point of a promise or an order is to bring about changes in the world so that the world will match its propositional content: promises and orders have the 'world-to-word direction of fit'.

Now, says Searle, speech acts meeting the above model have 'sincerity conditions': a speech act with a certain propositional content purports to express an Intentional mental state *with that same propositional content* and, therefore, *the same conditions of satisfaction*. For example, a sincere assertion that *p* expresses the belief that *p*, a sincere promise to do *A* expresses the intention to do *A*, and so on. Thus, the notions of propositional content and conditions of satisfaction carry over to Intentional mental states. And, just as propositional contents occur in different kinds of speech acts with different illocutionary forces, so propositional contents occur in different kinds of mental states in what Searle calls different 'psychological modes' – the modes of belief, perception, desire, and so on. Searle is not claiming that the contents of mental states are somehow intrinsically linguistic, however, and at any rate there are Intentional states (e.g. love and hate) whose contents are not always expressible as complete propositions; hence, Searle more generally characterizes an Intentional state as an 'Intentional content' occurring in a psychological mode. From this characterization follows Searle's 'speech-act model' of Intentionality: the relation of an Intentional mental state to the object or state of affairs it is 'of' or 'about' is the relation of 'representation'. The Intentional content of a mental state determines which object or state of affairs would 'satisfy' that mental state, and so 'Intentional states represent objects and states of affairs in the same sense of "represent" that speech acts represent objects and states of affairs' (p. 4). Specifically, for paradigmatic cases such as belief and perception where Intentional content is propositional in form, a mental state has 'conditions of satisfaction', as determined by its Intentional content; and so each such mental state 'represents' – and in that sense is 'of' or 'about' – the state of affairs that would satisfy it. And finally, these Intentional states also vary in 'direction of fit' according to their psychological mode: beliefs and perceptions, for example, have the 'mind-to-world direction of fit', while intentions and desires have the 'world-to-mind direction of fit'.

Searle recognizes that not all Intentional states so neatly fit this speech-act model, and he discusses further some of the problem cases. But the body of his work consists in applying these concepts to a core of cases, adding to them further concepts as needed. 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, and its direction of fit – and elaborating on these as necessary. More falls out of this, especially the elaborations, than one might at first think possible, but it is hard to avoid feeling some dissatisfaction with Searle's procedure. The reason, I think, is that he believes such notions as 'propositional content' and 'conditions of satisfaction', because they are familiar from speech-act theory, are clearer than they really are. Even for one who finds Searle's non-reductionism laudable, it is difficult to refrain from wondering just what the propositional or Intentional content of a mental state is, or just how it is that a mental state comes to have such an Intentional content and so to have conditions of satisfaction. Searle believes he can resist such questions, partly on the grounds that his basic notions are 'logical' rather than 'ontological' ones. He insists, in particular, that propositional contents are not to be construed as entities,

especially not abstract entities; but that itself means they are not 'propositions' in any traditional sense. I shall at later points return to some of these issues.

2. The 'Representationalist' Approach to Intentionality

Searle's 'speech-act model' of Intentionality is an example of what he appropriately characterizes as a 'representationalist' theory. In this review, I shall be emphasizing some fundamental similarities between Searle's version of this theory and the traditional phenomenological version articulated by Husserl. The emphasis is motivated in part by Searle's own participation in the 1980 Summer Institute on 'Continental and Analytic Perspectives on Intentionality' and in two subsequent 'mini-institutes' on the same topic.³ The ultimate motivation, though, is to put Searle's views in more direct contact with some of the traditional issues surrounding this type of approach to Intentionality. In this section I concentrate on the basic thesis underlying it – that Intentionality is solely a matter of the *internal* nature of mental states – and on Searle's commitment to that thesis.

All theories of Intentionality have to account for two notorious features of Intentional mental states: (1) There are mental states that are correctly characterized as Intentional, and so as being of or about certain objects or states of affairs, even though there actually do not exist any such objects or states of affairs. And (2) when we say what it is that an Intentional state is of or about, it is important that we characterize the object or state of affairs in just the right way. Searle's theory of Intentionality as representation treats these problems in a revealing way.

What the first problem shows, according to Searle, is that the representational properties of a mental state are inherent in the nature of the mental state itself: a mental state has these properties and so is Intentional just in case it has an Intentional content, *whether or not it is actually related to some extra-mental object or state of affairs*. By virtue of its Intentional content, a propositional mental state has conditions of satisfaction, and that makes it a 'representation' of a state of affairs. But to say this is only to say that its Intentional content determines what is *required* for the mental state to be satisfied; it is not to say that the required state of affairs actually obtains. If it does not, then the conditions are of course not satisfied. But the mental state still has those conditions of satisfaction and so is Intentional, although the Intentionality does not, so to speak, succeed in reaching an object. Intentionality as representation is in this sense an *internal property* of mental states: it is the property of being satisfied if and only if such-and-such state of affairs exists, and the mental state has that property by virtue of its Intentional content alone, whether or not there actually is such a state of affairs. Thus, says Searle, to explicate the Intentionality of a mental state is to describe its *content*, not its *object*.

Searle's handling of the second problem shows another way in which representation is an 'internal' matter. To specify the conditions of satisfaction and so the Intentionality of a mental state is to say what would count as satisfying the propositional content of the mental state. But count for whom? Oedipus, for example, intends to marry the Queen, but he does not intend to marry his mother, despite the fact that they are the same person. From an 'outside', third-person, point of view *we* can see that Oedipus will succeed in marrying the Queen if and only if he succeeds in marrying his mother. But, of course, that is not how things appear to Oedipus. The Intentional content of his mental state represents this

complex objective situation only from his own, first-person, point of view, only 'under an aspect' that would count as satisfying his intention. In a similar way, Searle holds, all mental states represent an object or state of affairs under certain aspects and not others. And for the purpose of capturing the representational character *inherent* in a mental state, conditions of satisfaction must be stated from the *subject's* point of view.

According to Searle's account of Intentionality as 'representation', then, mental states are not Intentional because of any 'objective' relations that obtain between them and extra-mental reality. Mental states are Intentional because they 'intrinsically' have representational properties: not because of how they are related to something *else* – not, for example, by virtue of their being 'interpreted' by someone or being caused by an appropriate state of affairs – but purely by virtue of their own internal character. And, differences in terminology notwithstanding, this is very much Husserl's view as well.

Like Searle's, Husserl's theory of Intentionality is predicated on a distinction between the *content* and the *object* of a mental state or experience. (Husserl preferred the term 'act' to 'state', but I shall stay with Searle's terminology.) The *object* is that which a mental state is 'of' or 'about', usually some extra-mental thing or state of affairs. The *content*, by contrast, is that *in* a mental state that *accounts for* its being that very mental state and so being of or about its object in the way it is. Underlying the distinction are the generally Cartesian theses that the important properties of mental states *qua* mental, including their Intentionality, are due to features inherent in the very nature of mental states themselves, and that these features could be just as they are even if extra-mental reality and its actual relationship to the mind are radically different from what we presume. Indeed, Husserl thought, we each have a kind of first-person knowledge of these features of mind that is *independent* of the truth or falsity of our beliefs about the 'external' world – including our beliefs about the actual psychological or physical nature of the mind itself.

Thus, Husserl thought an account of Intentionality should be consistent with what he called 'transcendental reduction' or 'epoché' – i.e. that it should appeal only to the internal features of mind that we know after an epoché, or suspension, of all our beliefs about the empirical nature of mind and its actual relationship to extra-mental reality. His descriptions and analyses of the self, its mental states, and their 'contents' are thus not intended as empirical accounts of the psychological side of psycho-physical organisms. Rather, they are intended as distinctively philosophical accounts of features of mind that are 'transcendental' – transcendental inasmuch as those features constitute mentality itself (or at least mentality of the sort we humans have), no matter how they are in fact actually realized in us humans or in whatever other beings they are. In this sense, Husserl's analyses of the 'contents' that account for Intentionality are 'ontologically' neutral, if 'ontology' refers to what actually constitutes the world of nature.

Now, I think Searle's *Intentionality* is best seen as an extended defense of an 'internalist' approach to Intentionality much like Husserl's – i.e. an approach consistent with Husserl's idea of transcendental reduction – and in a moment I shall compare their notions of Intentional content. Searle himself sees the detailed parts of his book as attempts to do two things: to provide internalist analyses of hard cases – particularly perceptions and intentions to act, which are hard because they involve causal relations between mental states and their objects – and to

respond directly to arguments against the possibility of such analyses. (I shall examine some of these later.) And at least part of the force of Searle's distinction between logical and ontological analysis is captured by Husserl's idea of philosophy as 'transcendental': Searle explicitly wants to show that the analysis of Intentional states need not appeal to what is true of extra-mental reality, and his notion of Intentional content is not offered as a psychological or neuro-physiological notion but as part of an explication of what Intentionality itself is, however it is actually realized in the natural world.

Husserl's own account of the internal content that makes a mental state Intentional is in terms of an abstract entity that he called the 'noema' of a mental state or experience. Briefly (the theory has been detailed elsewhere),⁴ the noema of a mental state consists of two 'parts' or constituents. One of these, called its 'thetic' component, determines what Searle calls the 'psychological mode' of the mental state – i.e. it determines whether the mental state is a belief, a desire, or whatever. The other, more interesting, part is called the 'noematic *Sinn*', the 'sense' or 'meaning' in the noema. This noematic *Sinn* is what determines the 'of-ness' or 'about-ness' of the mental state: it determines just which object or state of affairs the mental state is of or about, and under which aspects. The noematic *Sinn*, to use Searle's term, 'represents' an object or state of affairs from the point of view of the subject of the mental state; in this sense, it is Husserl's version of what Searle calls 'Intentional content'.

In fact, Husserl's notion of noematic *Sinn* is a very close kin to Searle's notion of Intentional content. For Husserl, too, was led to his notion from an investigation of the way in which *language* represents the world. The meaning expressed by the use of a linguistic expression, he held, *is* the noematic *Sinn* of an underlying mental state, and so the expression refers to or otherwise represents the entity that is prescribed by that *Sinn*. Noematic *Sinne*, then, are meanings, and linguistic representation derives from a more basic mental representation.

The main difference between Husserl and Searle here is that Husserl holds a more ontologically weighty (but still not naturalistic) conception of meanings and Intentional contents: like Frege's linguistic *Sinne*, and unlike Searle's propositional contents, Husserl's noematic *Sinne* are conceived as abstract (or ideal) entities. Husserl invokes these entities in an attempt to explain *what it is* that *makes* a mental state intrinsically Intentional: a mental state is Intentional because of its relation to a special kind of entity, a noematic *Sinn*, that is itself inherently representational. For Searle, on the other hand, the notion of Intentional content plays no such explanatory role. His claim that mental states have Intentional contents is not an ontological claim about some entity that mental states 'have'. Rather, he says, it is just the 'logical' claim that these mental states have conditions of satisfaction and so are representational; and that's just what Intentionality *is* for Searle. Accordingly, when Searle says a mental state has an Intentional content he is only telling us *that* the mental state is intrinsically Intentional; and when he says Intentional content determines conditions of satisfaction, he is only telling us what Intentionality *consists in*, what kind of 'relation' Intentionality is – namely, the relation of 'representation'. So I think I was right in suggesting earlier that Searle never tries to explain how, by virtue of what properties, mental states come to be Intentional. It won't do to say 'because of their Intentional content', for that just turns out to be tantamount to saying 'because they are Intentional'. It is not clear just what sort of non-reductionist answer would be satisfying here (Husserl's surely

isn't quite it); but insofar as the question remains, the speech-act model does not completely succeed in de-mystifying the notion of Intentionality.

I have emphasized Searle's methodological affinity with Husserl because the methodology itself is so controversial. Once we see what Searle is really up to, we can better appreciate the truly radical (or reactionary?) nature of *Intentionality* and also see why, unless I miss my guess, many philosophers will find some of it rather elusive. For *Intentionality* goes counter to most of the major trends of the last fifty years in philosophy of mind. Behaviorism, for example, has denied the relevance of the internal features of mental states to psychological explanation, sometimes to the point of denying their very existence, and has turned instead to an examination of overt behavior. Wittgensteinians have held in effect that there are no significant internal features common to mental states of the same kind, and so no mental 'contents' worth investigating; they often insist, instead, that mental life can be understood only in the 'external' context of cultural and social norms and practices. In a similar vein, Heidegger and other existential phenomenologists have argued, against Husserl, that one's Intentional relations to the world are essentially dependent on one's 'being-in-the-world', and that therefore epoché leads one to overlook the very grounds that make Intentionality possible. And Putnam, Kripke, and others have lately mounted a set of arguments against an 'internalist' account of reference, urging instead a causal-historical explanation of semantic representation. These are all formidable challenges that predispose us to reject the approach to Intentionality taken by Husserl and Searle. But Searle's analyses of Intentionality are successful enough to constitute a defense of that approach, and we shall see that he meets some of its challengers head-on, responding explicitly to the 'causal theorists' and implicitly to Wittgenstein and the existentialists.

3. Causal Self-Referentiality

Some of Searle's very best work in *Intentionality* revolves around a feature of certain Intentional contents that he calls 'causal self-referentiality'. It is the key concept in his internalist analyses of perception and intentional action and in his response to arguments for a causal theory of reference. Here, especially, Searle's discussions are much richer and more detailed than my general remarks will be able to reveal.

Let's begin with the causal part of this notion. Perceptions and intentions to act pose a challenge to representational theories of Intentionality such as Searle's: because they involve *causal* relations between mental states and the 'external' world, they seem not to be explicable in terms of Intentional content alone. Some have treated perceptual relations, in particular, as just being causal relations, but we will get to perceptions more easily by first considering intentional action. (For these purposes I will be supposing the simpler case of what Searle calls 'prior intentions', where the intention to act is temporally prior to the ensuing action; but he also discusses the case of 'intentions in action', where there is no such temporal distinction.)

The intention to perform an action is a real (conscious or unconscious) mental state Searle says, and he agrees that its occurrence, when successful, causes that action to take place (either directly or by originating an appropriate causal chain). In successful cases, then, there is a causal relation connecting an intention to an

action; but the two are also representationally related: the intention *represents* the action to be performed (indeed, that's what makes the result an *intentional* action). And Searle's concern is really just with the latter. When he examines that representational relation, though, he discovers something very interesting: the Intentional content of the intention to act not only represents the action; it *represents* it as one to be *brought about* by that very intention. Thus, causality does enter into the analysis of the Intentionality of the mental state. But in what way? Only as part of the analysis of its *content*, Searle insists – i.e. only because the *conditions of satisfaction* of the intention include the requirement that there *be* a causal relation between the intention and the action. Now, of course, these conditions of satisfaction do not themselves specify any physical mechanism by means of which this is to happen, and so Searle is not concerned with it. The actual causal relation *itself* is not a part of the *content* of the intention but a part of what it *represents*, a part of its 'object'.

It is worth noting, before we go on, that what I've just said explains what might appear to some readers as a serious omission in Searle's book. Searle never offers any suggestion as to just *how* it is that mental states are causally productive of behavior. He rejects the 'formalist' notion of mental contents sometimes appealed to by proponents of artificial intelligence,⁵ and that entails rejecting their 'computational' account of mental causation as well, but he does not himself suggest any alternative account. But that only reveals what I have emphasized about his fundamental approach to Intentionality: Searle seeks to elucidate Intentionality only in terms of what is intrinsic to mental states. What counts for Intentionality, for Searle, is not really causality *per se* but causality *as represented* in the conditions of satisfaction of certain kinds of mental states, by virtue of special features of their Intentional contents. To speculate on just how mental causation actually works would be to abandon the *internal* analysis of the intention and its content and to explore instead the nature of the *object* of intentions to act. In Husserlian terms, Searle's concern is with 'causality' as a meaning-component in the noema of intentions to act, not causality as a natural relation in the world.

Searle treats the causal element in perception in much the same way, though here the 'direction of causality' is world-to-mind, not mind-to-world as in intentions to act. Perceptions, too, are actual mental events (conscious 'visual experiences' in normal cases); and they are veridical just in case they are appropriately caused by the states of affairs they represent. The conditions of satisfaction for a visual experience, therefore, include the requirement that it be *caused by* the state of affairs it represents. And so the Intentional content of a visual experience not only represents a state of affairs; it also *represents* that state of affairs *as causing* that very visual experience itself. Again, causality enters into Intentional analysis only because some Intentional contents determine a causal requirement as part of their conditions of satisfaction.

For perceptions and intentions, then, Searle offers analyses that seek to do justice to the special way in which these mental states causally interact with the world. And these analyses are quite detailed, especially for intentions to act. Searle tackles many of the classical puzzles about how intentions connect with just the appropriate actions in just the right way, and he even offers an original answer to Hume's questions about our knowledge of causality in nature. But for neither perceptions nor intentions does he offer a 'causal analysis' of their Intentionality. For his analyses never look 'outside' these mental states themselves and their Intentional

contents, nor does he attempt to explain any of their representational properties in terms of the causal relations that actually connect experiences with their objects.

The special causal feature of the Intentional contents of perceptions and intentions is accompanied by another. For a perception, the causal requirement is that the represented state of affairs cause *this visual experience*; for an intention, it is that the represented state of affairs be caused by *this intention*. In each case, the Intentional content of the experience is *self-referential*: it determines conditions of satisfaction that refer to the very experience whose Intentional content it is. This self-referential character of certain Intentional contents plays a huge role in Searle's responses to the arguments of Putnam, Kripke, Donnellan, and other 'causal theorists' of reference.

The causal theorists argue against the view that linguistic reference is determined by the Intentional contents of mental states or, as Putnam puts it, by meanings 'in the head'. The arguments are familiar, and I shall not be so boring as to repeat them here. (One example is Putnam's 'twin-earth' argument,⁶ which purports to show that *whatever* a person's mental state may be when referring to some particular thing, it is theoretically possible for one to be in exactly that same mental state and be referring to something *else*.) Searle's extensive replies to these various arguments make a substantial contribution to the philosophy of language. Since my remarks cannot cover all these, let me just catalog some of what Searle does: he argues against the view that some beliefs are essentially 'de re', in the sense of being directly about an object without the mediation of Intentional content; he responds to the views of Perry and Kaplan by defending a generally Fregean account of indexicals; against Kripke, Donnellan, and Putnam he argues that the reference of proper names is determined by their sense; and in response to the latter three and others he offers an internalist account of the role of causality in reference.

Searle's discussion of the causal theorists is especially interesting to me because I used some of their arguments myself in posing a challenge to Husserl's approach to Intentionality.⁷ Since the same challenge applies to Searle, and some of his main points are relevant to answering it, I'll briefly summarize my discussion. Because Husserl gives noematic *Sinne* a role to play in Intentionality that is very like the role Frege's philosophy of language gives to meanings, these contemporary attacks on Frege can be recast as attacks on Husserl's approach to Intentionality as well. But they turn on a particular conception of what meanings or Intentional contents are like: they suppose that what is 'in the head' consists only of general or descriptive concepts. If that were so, the content-approach would be committed to something like Russell's definite-description theory of reference: an Intentional content could represent a *particular* thing only if the general, descriptive concepts it comprised were such that collectively they could be satisfied by just one thing, i.e. only if they constituted the meaning of a 'definite description'. And it is really that 'definite-description' model of reference that the causal theorists argue against. But suppose Intentional contents or meanings could include elements that are radically different from general concepts, elements that pick out a particular thing without depending on its satisfying some definite description. Husserl himself thought that demonstrative expressions – 'this', 'here', 'now', etc. – refer in some such direct way; and he apparently believed that noematic *Sinne* included elements that would find linguistic expression in the use of such demonstrative terms. I proposed, as have others,⁸ that Husserl's *Sinne*, or Intentional contents, include not only general concepts – 'red', 'ball', and the like – but also 'demonstrative meanings' – 'this',

'here', and so on. When I see the ball, then, the ball is the object of my perception, not because it satisfies the *descriptive* content 'the red ball', which is what the causal theorists argue against (nor because of its *de facto* causal relation to me, which is what they argue for), but because it satisfies the *demonstrative* content 'this red ball'. But I saw a serious problem for Husserl in this modified notion of content: what satisfies the demonstrative content 'this red ball' is not determined by that internal content alone but depends also on the *external* circumstances of the perception: at a different time and place, or with a different ball in the appropriate spatial relation to me, that very *same* content would be satisfied by a *different* ball. I concluded that such an appeal to demonstrative content would therefore be incompatible with Husserl's commitment to a strictly internalist analysis of Intentionality.

Now, Searle's response to the causal theorists is like mine in two important respects: he, too, concludes that a key assumption in their arguments is that Intentional contents include only general concepts, and that the notion of content needs to be expanded to include demonstrative or indexical elements. Indeed, we have already seen that his analysis of the conditions of satisfaction for perceptions and intentions introduces not only a causal element but a demonstrative element as well: a perception represents its object as causing *this* visual experience; an intention represents an action as one to be brought about by *this* intention. But Searle's demonstratives differ from mine in an important way: they point to the *experience* in whose content they play, whereas my goal was to find some element of content that would pick out the external *object* of an experience. That is what Searle is after too, insofar as he is responding to the causal theorists; and, interestingly, his handling of the causal relation is what turns the trick. To see this, let's consider again my experience of seeing the red ball, whose content I analyzed as 'this red ball'. This analysis ignores the causal element of the perceptual content. According to Searle, its conditions of satisfaction are really something more like 'there is a red ball in my field of vision and the fact that there is a red ball in my field of vision is causing *this very experience*'. (Let's assume that the 'my' can be spelled out in internalist terms.) So which ball am I seeing? The one that is causing this very experience and so is playing the appropriate role in the satisfaction of these conditions. And that's just the same object that my analysis specified as 'this red ball'.

In this way Searle's analysis can enlarge the traditional notion of meaning or content with demonstrative elements and replace my externalist treatment of demonstrative content with an internalist one. But its success depends heavily on just how one deals with the appeal to causality here. If Searle is right in thinking its relevance to Intentionality can be explicated in content-analysis alone, then he has gone a long way toward defending a generally Fregean approach to reference and a generally Husserlian approach to Intentionality.

4. Network and Background

An Intentional state only determines its conditions of satisfaction – and thus only is the state that it is – given its position in a *Network* of other Intentional states and against a *Background* of practices and preintentional assumptions that are [not] themselves Intentional states. . . . (p. 19)

Thus Searle introduces his theses of the Network and the Background. They modify, in two distinct ways, the form of Searle's internalist approach to Intentionality. Let's see how they come about and whether they compromise that approach in any serious way.

To motivate the thesis of the Network, recall Oedipus's intention to marry the Queen. We capture the Intentional content, and so the representational character, of Oedipus's intention by stating the conditions of satisfaction for his mental state. And we do that by indicating what would have to be the case in order for Oedipus himself to count his intention as having been realized. Thus, of course, the conditions of satisfaction include the requirement that he in fact marry the Queen. Oedipus does not intend to marry his mother, though; and so, although that fear may not actually be wafting through his mind right now, the conditions of satisfaction seem also to include the requirement that the Queen not be his mother. But also required, and in much the same way, are such things as that the Queen not just appear but actually be a woman, that she not have another living husband, and so on. And of course Oedipus will realize his intention only if certain social conventions and practices obtain: Jocasta can be a queen only if the ruling government is a monarchy, he can marry her only if there is an institution of marriage, and so on. A problem begins to emerge. Since none of these extra requirements need actually be going through Oedipus's mind as he forms the intention to marry the Queen, it seems implausible to reckon them all a part of the Intentional content of that intention. Besides, each new requirement can be expected to lead to others, so that ultimately, perhaps, everything Oedipus believes about the world would have to be counted in the Intentional content of not just this but every one of his mental states. On the other hand, if these requirements are not part of the content of Oedipus's intention, then perhaps the Wittgensteinians and the Heideggerians are right: it is not the content of a mental state that makes it what it is but its being 'embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions'.⁹

Searle's thesis of the Network proposes to solve this problem. The conditions of satisfaction for Oedipus's intention are that he marry his mother. Period. And the Intentional content of his mental state sets that requirement, and that alone, for its satisfaction. But the Wittgensteinians and Heideggerians have a point too. That requirement is the requirement it is for Oedipus only because of the way his world as a whole is represented by his mental states – not just this mental state but his whole 'Network' of Intentional representations. In order to form his intention, Oedipus must *believe* that Jocasta is a woman, that there is an institution of marriage, and so on. But it is not 'human customs and institutions' themselves or any other 'situations' outside Oedipus's mind that make his hope what it is. Oedipus could be just a brain in a vat, or in some other gross way completely deluded about how the world is. The thesis of the Network is not for Searle an 'externalist' thesis.¹⁰

The thesis of the Network maintains that the Intentionality of a mental state is determined by its Intentional content only in conjunction with other *Intentional* states and their *representational* contents. The thesis of the Background is predicated on two further claims. The first is that not all mental states are representational; the second is that the Intentionality of a representational mental state is partly determined by a Background of such *non-representational* states in addition to the Network of Intentional states. I shall just grant the first claim, especially as it applies to what Searle calls 'physical skills' – raising one's arm, walking, skiing, and so on. These are matters of knowing *how* to do certain things, and Searle's

view is that such know-how does not reduce to knowledge *that* such-and-such is the case. Searle finds it implausible, and so do I, that intentionally walking across the room, for example, requires a representation of the various bodily movements required to accomplish that feat. And the same can be said of various social practices: to use Dreyfus's favorite example, we know the appropriate distance to maintain, depending on the circumstances, when talking face-to-face with someone, but that seems more a matter of just being able to do it right than a matter of having memorized some complex set of social rules.

Granting the first claim is far from granting the second, however. If knowing how to walk is *not* a representational state, then of course an analysis that appeals to Intentional contents alone will not provide an analysis of *it*. But that fact does not show that the same is true of states that *are* representational. How, then, is the non-representational character of my 'skill states' relevant to the representational character of my (different) Intentional states? Suppose I form the intention to walk across the room, an Intentional mental state whose conditions of satisfaction are that I shall walk across the room. To *satisfy* those conditions I shall have to move in a certain fashion; and doing that is not just a matter of satisfying the propositional contents of other Intentional states, if the required movements are not themselves represented in such Intentional states. But *having* an Intentional content with those conditions of satisfaction is quite different from *being able to satisfy* them. Even if I do not know how to walk and so do not have the skills requisite for satisfying my intention to walk across the room, I can form that intention if I *believe that* I have the requisite skill. And that belief would belong to my Network.

There are no *easy* arguments for the thesis of the Background that I can think of, and Searle finds it a struggle, too. But he does offer some 'considerations', one of which is especially compelling. When we leave the explicit Intentional content of a mental state and begin to explore the Network for what its satisfaction requires we eventually come across some very fundamental presuppositions. Many of our mental states have the conditions of satisfaction they do only on the assumption that nature is a causal order, that gravity will continue to work tomorrow, that the earth will retain its solidity, that there is indeed an external world, and so on. If Intentionality works in conjunction with a Network of representational states only, then such presuppositions as these must be among them. But Searle thinks it is simply implausible to suppose that we have even unspoken beliefs about all these matters. They do show up in the way we represent the world to ourselves, he thinks, but not as propositional contents of unarticulated beliefs. Rather, they show up in our 'skill states' – in our knowing how to walk, to ski, even in our abilities to see and to engage in intentional actions. Even if it were *possible* for us to have beliefs about all these things and so to have Intentional states without a 'Background', that is in fact not the way it *is*.

Searle thus gets an argument for the Background in two steps: first, by noting that certain fundamental presuppositions are necessary in order for our Intentional states to have the conditions of satisfaction they do; and, second, by arguing that these presuppositions are in fact manifested, not in other Intentional states, but in our repertoire of skills and practices. But this argument alone does not establish quite what Searle claims: his thesis of the Background is not just that our Intentional states *in fact* function against a Background, but that they *necessarily* do so. Although any particular Background presupposition could be recast as a Network

presupposition, he argues, that Network presupposition would in each case itself presuppose a Background, and so the process of 'recasting' would have to be continued *ad infinitum*. Since our mental repertoire is finite, that can't be the case; and so ultimately we have to grant some Background that is not further reducible to the Network. Here I must simply admit that I never fully comprehended the reasoning behind the first premise in this further argument, and for me it remains a question whether the thesis of the Background is a contingent or a necessary thesis.

Still, there is one remaining issue that is perhaps more important: doesn't the thesis of the Background, if not that of the Network, constitute an abandonment of the internalist approach to Intentionality? The assumption that this is indeed the case was a core assumption in the institutes on Continental and Analytic Perspectives on Intentionality I mentioned earlier. There Searle's position on the Background was presented as supplying, from the analytic side, unexpected support for Heidegger's attacks on Husserl's methodology of transcendental reduction; so much so that Dreyfus and Haugeland could write in their summary of the results of the original institute:

The most conspicuous outstanding difference between the two thinkers [Husserl and Searle] – namely the latter's argument that meaning [and Intentionality] is possible at all only against a non-intentional background of shared skills and practices – provided a remarkable preview of one main point of contention between Husserl and Heidegger.¹¹

But it turns out that Searle's thesis of the Background, even in its strong form, provides no support for Heidegger against Husserl. If Searle is right, then Husserl is wrong in one way: he thought the Intentionality of a mental state could be explicated in terms of its Intentional content in conjunction with the contents of other *Intentional* states. But Searle's invocation of a Background of non-Intentional mental states does not constitute an abandonment of the fundamentally Husserlian internalist approach to Intentionality. In the first place, the appeal to Background is not an appeal to the (external) social and cultural milieu in which Intentionality occurs; the Intentionality of a mental state does not essentially depend on the subject's living in a world in which various conventions and practices are exercised by *others*. What is at issue is the subject's *own* abilities and practices (although *in fact* biology and society contribute to the subject's having them). In the second place, the Background consists only of the *mental* side of the subject's own skills and practices. That Intentionality requires a Background in Searle's sense does not mean that Intentionality can (logically) take place only in creatures with physical bodies, nor does it mean that Intentional relations involve, even in part, the body's physical relations to its environment. 'That I have a certain set of Intentional states and that I have a Background do not logically require that I be in fact in certain relations to the world around me', Searle says (p. 154). If Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' is that sort of factual relation to the world (and I am not at all sure it really is), then, Searle is no more Heideggerian than Husserl is.¹²

5. Intentionality and the Brain

In a short Epilogue on 'Intentionality and the Brain', Searle steps back from his 'logical' (or what I have called 'transcendental') analysis of Intentionality to specu-

late on how that analysis might be rendered compatible with a physicalist understanding of mind. Searle wants to avoid reducing mental states to brain states, or their Intentional properties to non-Intentional properties, and he suggests a model for how mental states could be related to the physical elements making up the brain and central nervous system without such a reduction.

The required model, he claims, is one that is already quite familiar: mental phenomena are related to the micro-structure of the brain and central nervous system in the same sort of way that the liquidity of water is related to its molecular structure. Liquidity is a property of water, and water just is a collection of H₂O molecules; in that sense, the liquidity of water is *realized in* its molecular structure. But the liquid properties of water and its molecular properties, though both are properties of the same substance, are different sorts of properties. Not because one is physical and the other not, but because liquidity is a property of water at 'a higher level of description than that of the individual molecule' (p. 266). And because these are properties at different levels, it makes sense to speak of causal relations between them: the liquid properties of water are *caused by* the behavior of the H₂O molecules. Similarly, Searle says, mental phenomena are *caused by* and *realized in* the structure of the brain and central nervous system. Intentional and other mental properties are properties of a different sort than neuronal properties; again, not because the former are mysteriously non-physical but because they are properties of the brain at a different level of description than the neuronal level. In the final analysis, Searle thinks, our mental states and experiences and their properties are a high-level sort of *biological* phenomenon, related to our bodies in no stranger way than are such other biological phenomena as thirst or digestion. This position he calls 'biological naturalism'.

This biological naturalism will undoubtedly provoke a host of replies, so let me just make two brief comments. First, I hope it is clear that this 11-page Epilogue is quite a break from the previous 261 pages of *Intentionality*. Everything in the earlier parts argues that nothing Searle believes to be *in fact* true about the relationship of Intentionality to the brain is to be taken as *essential* to his analysis of the Intentionality of mental states. That analysis remains ontologically neutral. Second, I think what Searle says here makes more pressing, not less, my earlier question about how it is that mental states come to be Intentional in the first place. Ultimately, Searle must say, being Intentional is a high-level biological property of mental states, caused by the neuronal and other micro-properties of the brain states in which mental states are 'realized'. But recall, now, what Intentionality is for Searle: it is not any ordinary sort of relation at all but a congeries of 'logical' or 'representational' properties – especially the property of having conditions of satisfaction. It seems that neurons must have strange causal powers indeed if they can cause brain states to have properties such as these. At one point Searle says: 'Intentional states . . . have logical properties in a way that stones and trees cannot have logical properties . . . because Intentional states, like linguistic entities and unlike stones and trees, are representations' (pp. 15–16). And even linguistic entities, he says, cannot have such logical properties *intrinsically*. If Intentional states are themselves just 'realized in and caused by' neuronal states, I think it remains a mystery why the same should not be true of them, at no matter what 'level of description'.

There are many good things, as well as some problems, in Searle's book, and I have not been able to discuss all of them either. But the good things are extensive

and significant, and the problems are stimulating. On both scores, *Intentionality* deserves the close attention of analytic and phenomenological philosophers alike.

NOTES

- 1 Searle capitalizes 'intentionality' when he uses it as the term of art in philosophy that I here define, and I shall observe his convention in this review.
- 2 See Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Vol. I (*Husserliana III*), ed. by Walter Biemel, Nijhoff, The Hague 1950, pp. 84 and 146.
- 3 The original institute was held in Berkeley, California, in 1980; the mini-institutes were held in conjunction with meetings of the American Philosophical Association in Columbus, Ohio (1982) and Berkeley, California (1983). All were directed by Hubert Dreyfus and John Haugeland, under the auspices of the Council for Philosophical Studies with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- 4 In David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language*, D. Reidel, Dordrecht/London/Boston 1982, esp. Chs. III–V. Our interpretation of Husserl derives from the work of Dagfinn Føllesdal; see esp. his 'Husserl's Notion of Noema', *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66 (1969), pp. 680–7.
- 5 See Jerry Fodor, 'Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology', *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 3 (1980), pp. 63–73; reprinted in Hubert L. Dreyfus (Ed.), *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1982, pp. 277–303. I discuss this view of mental representation and its relationship to Husserl in 'Phenomenology and Cognitive Science: Fodor and Husserl on Mental Representations', forthcoming in *Topoi*.
- 6 Hilary Putnam, 'The Meaning of Meaning', in his *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, *Mind, Language and Reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1975, pp. 215–71, esp. pp. 223–7.
- 7 See my 'Intending and Referring', in Dreyfus (Note 5 above), pp. 215–31, and 'Husserl's Phenomenological Conception of Intentionality and its Difficulties', *Philosophia*, Vol. 11 (1982), pp. 223–48.
- 8 Izchak Miller and David Woodruff Smith, for example, both argued for this point in papers that pre-date mine. For their latest views, see Miller, 'Perceptual Reference', and Smith, 'Content and Context of Perception', both in *Synthese*, 1984 forthcoming; see also Miller, *Husserl, Perception, and Temporal Awareness* (The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1984). The view Miller details, on the basis of what can be found in Husserl, is a developed version of the one I sketch here and thus seems subject to the same criticism. Smith's cited paper proposes to defend an essentially Husserlian view from such criticisms by developing a novel theory of how demonstrative contents work. There are large similarities, but also important subtle differences, between Searle's and Smith's answers to the problem I pose; readers interested in these issues will find it fruitful to compare the two.
- 9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Macmillan, New York 1958, p. 108.
- 10 In case some person should be so foolhardy as to read both Searle's book and mine and Smith's, it should be noted that what he calls 'Network' coincides with what we call 'background'. For reasons that will emerge, our discussion of Husserl contains no discussion of what Searle calls 'Background'.
- 11 'Continental and Analytic Perspectives in the Philosophy Curriculum', *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*, Vol. 2 (1981), p. 2.
- 12 Because this issue loomed so large in the institutes, I questioned Searle before writing this paragraph. He assured me that everything he says about the Background is meant to be

completely compatible with Husserl's transcendental reduction. Dreyfus has subsequently reminded me, though, that treating experiences in a way that is compatible with their being had by a brain in a vat is (of course) not equivalent to treating them from Husserl's 'transcendental' standpoint. After transcendental reduction, what we say about mental states must be compatible, not just with our brain states being realized in a 'disembodied' brain, but also with our mental states being 'disembodied'. It makes sense for Searle or Husserl to speak of *Intentional* states in this way, for they can be characterized in terms of psychological mode, Intentional content, conditions of satisfaction, and so so – none of which appeals to any account of how mental states are physically realized. But skill-states cannot be characterized in *those* terms if, as Searle maintains, they are not Intentional states and so have no representational properties. The question Dreyfus raises, then, is whether there is *any* 'transcendental' characterization of know-how, any appropriately Husserlian 'mental' component – as opposed to merely a brain component – of skills and practices. The compatibility of Searle's thesis of the Background and Husserl's methodology of transcendental reduction depends on an affirmative answer to that question.