

Intentionalizing Nature

In this paper an attempt to found reality on intentionality is presented. Instead of trying to naturalize intentionality we try to intentionalize nature. That is to develop a framework in which intentionality is the most elementary component of reality and nature derives from it. From this approach The Enlarged Mind (TEM for short), a theory of mind and consciousness, is derived.

Several solutions have been proposed to fill the void left by the mind (emergent properties, functional states, linguistic entities, information processing, and material objects among the others). Unfortunately, it can be shown that it is impossible to define such entities without falling into some kind of dualism or without adding new ontological 'realms' (as Frege did). Besides, these entities require conscious observers in order of being meaningful. As a result, the separation between the ontological and the epistemological problem has been one of the main sources of controversies by producing several apparently unsolvable problems, including the mind-body problem and the related problem of how it is possible to naturalize intrinsic intentionality, and inasmuch, to explain representation (in the sense of Kantian phenomenon) in a purely extensional world.

*Given these premises, we argue that, although it is impossible to naturalize intentionality, the solution is to intentionalize nature (equal to reality). Reality, as it is experienced, is the result of what we are and of what we are in relation with. Nothing can be said of being without being in relation with something (we would not even know of it without some kind of relations). Nothing can be said of being a relation without being an event in itself (the fact that we can know that there is a relation must require a cause). Nothing can be said of being a representation without being something and without being in relation with something. To represent this fundamental reality, a new unifying principle called **intentional relation**, capable of being the foundation of epistemological and ontological framework, is introduced. In particular, by accepting it, it is possible to solve the problem of representation that is the basis of consciousness itself. An alternative framework to the orthodox materialism is proposed which permits to avoid several well-known puzzles (among the others the zombie problem, the problem of Mary, the inverted spectrum paradox, and the problem of representation).*

By using the intentional relation it is possible to produce a constitutive theory of the self by reconsidering fundamental concepts like reference, meaning, causation, subjective experience, objective knowledge. Because mind is, at the same time, a 'piece' of reality and a representation of reality, mind is the natural place in which the question about what there is and about how we know what there is must converge. Subjective experience and objective knowledge must find their final and long expected reunion. In particular we will show that objective knowledge and subjective experience cannot be a product of the subject but must be two different aspects of reality. The presented framework is called the Enlarged Mind. Mind becomes the result of an aggregation of intentional relations. Such a theory, to be accepted, should pass through at least two criteria: Occam's principle and the capability of forecasting subjective phenomena. Science is now unable to give an explanation of subjective events (inverted spectrum paradox, zombies, and the Kripke's identity puzzle are three valid examples) whereas TEM is.