INTERPRETATION, INTENTIONALITY, AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR CONTENT IDENTIFICATION: THE STUDY OF THE MIND AND ITS METHODOLOGICAL TENSIONS

Interpretação, intencionalidade e condições sociológicas para identificação de conteúdo: O estudo da mente e suas tensões metodológicas

Interpretación, intencionalidad y condiciones sociológicas para la identificación de contenidos: El estudio de la mente y sus tensiones metodológicas

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Abstract: This article will take the following route to explore a reflective approach to the problem of mind and its possible contents. First, we will highlight the tension between psychology and semantics in order to explain the content of mental acts from a third-person perspective. We will examine how Kant's theory of apperception explored the conditions of objective representative expression to determine the content of the intentional acts of mind. Second, we will outline how Davidson's theory of interpretation, using an extensional semantic theory based on Tarski, explores the underdeterminacy of compatible interpretive hypotheses in order to arrive at a collectively-sensitive conception of the mutual understanding and internal content of beliefs. Kant and Davidson agree that the conditions for understanding mental (or intentional) content depend on a theory of truth (or judgement) that provides the non-unilateral parameter for interpreting that content. We will then observe how this perspective accommodates skeptical notions of mind, content, and intention. We conclude with a series of remarks on the methodological tensions within psychology, showing that psychology and phenomenology face skepticism and possible absorption by sociologically infused conditions of study. The problem is that the study of the intentionality and content of mental beliefs can dissolve its object – the mind and consciousness – into a kind of ghost behind language or a mere reification of the normative conditions of rational behavior under the conditions of language influence.
Keywords: Mind, intentionality, interpretation, psychology, sociology

Resumo: Este artigo seguirá o seguinte caminho para explorar uma abordagem reflexiva do problema da mente e seus possíveis conteúdos. Primeiramente, destacaremos a tensão entre psicologia e semântica para explicar o conteúdo dos atos mentais a partir de uma perspectiva de terceira pessoa. Examinaremos como a teoria da apercepção de Kant exploraram as condições de expressão de representações objetivas para determinar o conteúdo dos atos intencionais da mente. Em segundo lugar, delinearemos como a teoria da interpretação de Davidson, utilizando uma teoria semântica extensional baseada em Tarski, explora a subdeterminação de hipóteses interpretativas compatíveis, a fim de chegar a uma concepção colectivamente sensível da compreensão mútua e do conteúdo interno das crenças. Kant e Davidson concordam que as condições para a compreensão do conteúdo mental (ou intencional) dependem de uma teoria da verdade (ou julgamento) que forneça o parâmetro não unilateral para a interpretação desse conteúdo. Observaremos então como esta perspectiva acomoda noções céticas de mente, conteúdo e intenção. Concluímos com uma série de observações sobre as tensões metodológicas dentro da psicologia, mostrando que a psicologia e a fenomenologia enfrentam o ceticismo e a possível absorção por condições de estudo sociologicamente influenciadas. O problema é que o estudo da intencionalidade e do conteúdo das crenças mentais pode dissolver o seu objecto – a mente e a consciência – numa espécie de fantasma por trás da linguagem ou numa mera reificação das condições normativas do comportamento racional sob as condições de influência da linguagem.
Palavras-chave: Mente, intencionalidade, interpretação, psicologia, sociologia

Resumen: 1. Este artículo se propondrá seguir un recorrido que permita examinar un enfoque reflexivo sobre el problema de la mente y sus posibles contenidos. En primer lugar, se enfatizará la tensión existente entre la psicología y la semántica, con el fin de explicar el contenido de los actos mentales desde una perspectiva externa. Se analizará cómo la teoría de la apercepción de Kant investigó las condiciones necesarias para la expresión de representaciones objetivas, con el objetivo de determinar el contenido de los actos intencionales de la mente. En segundo lugar, se delineará cómo la teoría de la interpretación de Davidson, apoyándose en una teoría semántica extensional inspirada en Tarski, aborda la subdeterminación de hipótesis interpretativas que son compatibles, para alcanzar una comprensión colectivamente razonable del entendimiento mutuo y del contenido interno de las creencias. Tanto Kant como Davidson coinciden en que las condiciones para comprender el contenido mental (o intencional) están ligadas a una teoría de la verdad (o del juicio) que ofrezca un parámetro no unilateral para la interpretación de dicho contenido. Posteriormente, se examinará cómo esta perspectiva se relaciona con las nociones escépticas de mente, contenido e intención. Finalmente, se presentarán una serie de reflexiones sobre las tensiones metodológicas que emergen dentro de la psicología, evidenciando que tanto la psicología como la fenomenología se enfrentan al escepticismo y a la posible absorción por condiciones de estudio que están influenciadas sociológicamente. El desafío radica en que el análisis de la intencionalidad y el contenido de las creencias mentales puede desdibujar su objeto –la mente y la conciencia– convirtiéndolo en una especie de fantasma detrás del lenguaje o en una mera cosificación de las condiciones normativas del comportamiento racional, bajo la influencia del lenguaje.
Palabras-Clave: Mente, intencionalidad, interpretación, psicología, sociología.

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Introduction: Mind and Language

Among the proponents of the second cognitive turn, one can distinguish those who try to develop an updated form of physicalism, usually called eliminationism, from those who fall back on neo-Darwinism (D.C. Dennett). Dennet famously set himself the task of describing:

> a method of phenomenological description that can (in principle) do justice to the most private and ineffable subjective experiences, while never abandoning the methodological scruples of science (Dennett, 1991, 72).

However, in order to place the discussion of intentionality at all within the perspective of the third person scientific method applied to consciousness, this perspective had to be theoretically opened up, and the history of the conception of the laws of mental behavior ran ironically – or not – through the history of logic and semantics. The scientific treatment of intentional concepts was not possible until ways were found to describe correlations and identities between abstract things like patterns and classes. It is in the realm of these convergences and unities between abstractions that we can see something like identity between two beliefs:

> As Davidson has remarked, Frege's insights into the functioning of expressions of generality was a discovery of how a piece of our language worked, that stands as an exemplar for investigations into other areas. (Higginbotham, 1986, p. 40)

Indeed, the attempts to find convergences between brain processes and intentional and computational formatting, and thus to revitalize the field of cognitive neurology, were possible only because the core problem of the mind was developed in a new direction with the help of semantics. Conversely, the study of semantics has been considered a branch of cognitive psychology by great linguists and philosophers such as Chomsky. He argues that there is a particular mental organ responsible for linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1976). The core problem was developed to a much more advanced stage than in Descartes' time, through a horizon of understanding of the idea of mind – and of cognitive processes – that no longer depended on a private, subjective, or representationalist view. The beginning of this phenomenon took place long before Frege. Since Kant, the study of cognition has been presented as the study of a conceptual framework. This proposal offers the possibility of studying mental experiments, such as the forms of synthesis (or associations) that take place when we develop strategies to coordinate and unify sensitive stimuli.

To the extent that these experiments are conceptually accessible, the nature of a conceptual scheme is at stake when we ask what the mind is in its functional processes that can be studied. Semantics has been an inseparable part of this movement of study, but as we have seen, the excessive study of mind on the basis of language has led to undesirable reductionism and eliminativism. What remains is the idea of a conceptual scheme, and semantics can be considered a collaborator in the study of these schemes.

Kant, Husserl and Shared Conceptual Schemes

In this chapter we will work retrospectively. We remember that already in the 18th century Kant had a solution to save the not only private or internal character of the idea of mind. What Kant brought against the Cartesians was that Descartes left behind the problem of the private inaccessibility of consciousness itself, present in the act of synthesising apperception and forming a structure of mental representation that converges with a subject's judgmental position in the world – that is, mental processes such as "representation"," "belief"," "intention" converge with a theoretical higher order representation of "truth" based on the conceptual or categorical framework:

> The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object, but rather something under every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me, since in any other way, and without this synthesis, the manifold would not be united in one consciousness. (*KrV,* B 138)[1].

Even though Kant brought the mind into the public eye, he could not justify the study of the mind as a tool of study for natural data. We need not cite Kant's thesis of the spontaneity of mind, nor his moral philosophy and the separation between freedom and nature, to describe this limitation. Suffice it to say that the

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[1]Abreviattion for *Critique of Pure Reason*: *KrV* Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1781, 1787). Cited by A/B pagination.

author had to construct the representability of higher acts of synthesis outside the limits of sensible perception and conceptual analysis. He described it as a kind of supercompetence guaranteed by the innate presence of categories.

Kant, then, did not have at his disposal a simple and innocuous alternative to Descartes. He needed a very robust and conceptually enriched notion of mind – a mind apt for complex empirical, modal and counterfactual ways of knowing and codifying, such as knowing concepts from Newton's theoretical physics and able of contrasting semantically – or assertorically – two different hypothesis about the workings and behaviour of natural things. This conception of mind involved a more comprehensive notion of logic, a transcendental logic that could not be reduced to the notion of non-contradiction. It also involves a more rich concept of association, one not limited to empiricist one. In sum, Kant depends on too much to explain what the mind does and what mental terms describe. The "mind" and conciousness under Kant's theory is far from being a tabula rasa. It is built into the web of conceptual interpretive possibilities compatible with time-space and causal knowledge. If we imagine that both our understanding of time-space and of causality have changed since the 18th century, we may have reason to believe that Kant failed, by trying to construct the idea of mind over too many presuppositions.

The reason this seems unattractive to psychologists is that a theory of mind receptive to the study of psychology should be limited – according to the folk theory - to actions and representations that do not exceed the competence of the mind – whereas Kant's theory requires either (1) an enrichment of mental representability by semantics, categories and other extra-mental complements (such as collective learning conditions, etc.) or (2) a non-mentalistic theory completely independent of psychology. Since semantic principles in Frege arose as an anti-psychologism and, as we have seen, the way phenomenology approaches the subject also rejects empiricist psychology, we can imagine that the inclination to take the second path was never off the table. Moreover, this conception is not free from the shadow of skepticism: if all we can know about the content of intentionality is underdetermined, this may seem too little for a strong, fundamental conception of mind.

However, is this an argument against Kant or against psychology? Is it not the fault of psychology to conceive the mind as a too static, simple and badly adaptable structure of psychological facts? A Kantian current at the end of the 19th century, the phenomenology of Husserl, believed that this offered grounds against psychology as the ultimate ground for epistemological study of logical validation. The phenomena that offer those grounds for judging scientific validity is categorical or ideal in nature and can be revived in a consciousness through an objective format governed by conceptual laws:

> The basic error of Psychologism consists, according to my view, in its oblitetartion of this fundamental distinction between pure and empirical generality, and in its misinterpretation of the pure laws of logic as empirical laws of psychology. (Husserl, 1977, p. 39)

Kant's contribution and reference to Husserl mark the singularity reached by the study of something like consciousness even within conservative psychological boundaries: The result was to take psychology out of the picture and focus on a particular phenomenon – intentionality – as the mode of the process of consciousness. However, if we are to understand the lesson of Kant and Husserl without its exorbitant cost, namely, its antipsychologism, we need a richer concept of mental phenomena that is prepared to explain the horizons of meaning and truth of conceptual schemes. Robert Hanna agrees in attributing more than unconditional antipsychologism to Husserl. His theory promised to achieve phenomenology as the focus of investigation of mental phenomenon in its pure cognitive potential, i.e., its possibility of cognition of meanings:

> Instead of inconsistency, I by contrast see here a highly original move by Husserl in the general strategy of anti-psychologism: a move that relates the rejection of logic's essential dependence on the mind, to a simutaneous affirmation of a necessary relation between logic and mind. (Hanna, 1993, p. 252)

Under this new assumptions, the "mind" exists in a vast network of historically constituted meaning, including analytic and synthetic truths that emerge from interactive, constructed debates and paradigmatic revolutions in scientific fields. This is, of course, a non-orthodox description of the idea of mind, unless we can call "mind" a form of content that is neither completely internal nor limited to the conditions of a personal and private expression. There is a set of categorical presuppositions that allow something to be interpreted as mental content, and it is the sharing of these presuppositions that guarantees access to that content.

The Impossibility of an Unreinterpretable Interpretation in Davidson and the Transcendental Characteristics of this Theory

The semantic laws, schemes and set-theoretical framework used to describe the profile and behavior of a conceptual schema can be reconciled with sciences such as cognitive science and the evolutionary study of the progress of intelligence. This problem is reborn in modern naturalism in connection with the evolutionary question: How is it possible for an organism to be successful in its communication strategies and in interpreting signals from the external world without having a sufficiently rigorous parameter for selecting its

true beliefs? And what is the nature of this parameter and the limits of its normative power? How much can we trust it?

Viewed in this way, the seemingly normative constraints on our thoughts can be traced back to the actual conditions of interpretative success. This leaves room for a evolutionary and adaptive conception of what is successfull and what is not in interpretation strategies. The evolutionary concept demystifies normative pressure without ignoring it. The pressure of the norm arises naturally – and not from God's rule – from the need to succeed and adapt: if we do not have parameters of interpretative success, communication breaks down. Therefore, the parameters of successful communication would push to filter out only the belief systems that best match inter-acessible reality. Skepticism already fails because an interpretation parameter that is supposed to decode the content of beliefs and other mental contents must presuppose that these beliefs obey a non-cryptic, hermetic and incomprehensible pattern. Barry Stroud has noted the similarities between Davidson's theory and Kant's on this very point:

> I am primarily concerned with the status of Davidson's conclusions, and its implications (…). His starting point, like Kant's, is distinctive in bringing to the centre of philosophical attention the conditions of out having the very beliefs that constitute the subject matterof the traditional epistemological assessment. (…) Davidson explores what is involved in ascribing beliefs with determinate contents, and what a person has to do, think or known in order to have the concept of belief (Stroud, 2000, p. 175)

The conclusion is Kantian, for Davidson comes to the antiskeptical conclusion that in order to think about the notion of belief with content, we need parameters that are universal enough for the interpretation of that belief to be public or multi-lateral: "A community of minds is the basis of knowledge; it provides the measure of all things. It makes no sense to question the adequacy of this measure, or to seek a more ultimate standard" (Davidson, 2001a, 218). This also shows that interpreted beliefs must be presupposed as true, since a belief whose content is not considered true under the conditions of its assertion is neither generalizable nor interpretable by a publicly available rule. Even if the interlocutor's intention is to deceive us, and he has the means of ingenuity to construct discursive labyrinths, in order to interpret him correctly we must find generalizable parts of his code system and thus presuppose some contact with a public world on which we can rely:

> It should now be clear what ensures that our view of the world is, in its plainist features, largely correct. The reason is that the stimuli that cause our most basic verbal response also determines what those verbal responses mean, and the content of the beliefs that accompany them. The nature of correct interpretation garantees both a large number of our simpler beliefs are true (Davidson, 1991, p. 160)

This leads to a conflation between our normative parameters and the natural pressures on those standards coming from nature or the outside social world. Quine, who starts from naturalistic premises and is therefore not very sympathetic to a normative view of our parameters of truth in the first place, nevertheless concedes that the pressure of biological adaptation exerts some normative force on our theories (statistical or otherwise) of truth:"Creatures inveterately wrong in their inductions have a pathetic but praiseworthy tendency to die before reproducing their kind" (Quine, 1969, 126).

In this interpretation, at least hypothetically, it is possible to know the conceptual keys that lead to the decoding of the representative order and present it as a computational set, even if this is programmed as a categorical base that the unconscious being uses passively to teach itself unreflective (and unconscious) habits that are heuristically successful (in the biological or psychological sense). Thus, every time a machine is programmed to function like an abacus, it reproduces the core behavior of an intentional entity, namely, to recognize unity between series of compatible classes and report possible inconsistencies or undecidable cases. For this reason, Davidson holds that interpretation is incapable of decoding a fundamentally hermetic and disoriented content, since the mental phenomenon behind decoding the content of a belief needs to be inserted into the world in which the belief makes sense. So there will be no interpretation which is so hermetic that it cannot be reproduced in a new interpretation. In a extremist formulation of his thesis Davidson even goes so far as to say that "It would be no easier to interpret what l'homme machine means by what it 'says' than to interpret the words of a man, nor would the problem be essentially different" (Davidson, 1973, p.258).

Davidson's Theory of Interpretation as the Defense of the Impossibility of Inaccessible Hermeticism

Davidson's theory can be explained as a defense of the impossibility of an encoding so hermetic that it is not within a realm of possible reinterpretation. For this reason, his theory of interpretation appears as an inheritor of Tarski's semantic theory, which defines the possibility of "meaning" by the purely mathematical-formal determination of the non-paradoxical conditions of a sentence, i.e., the conditions under which a sentence can be understood only by an interpretative parameter that is equivalent to assigning it as true – or, if false, as false (implying the truth of its negation). What Davidson adds is that the assumption of literality of the sign-sentence used to convey information is given not only by the speaker's association of the sentence

with a semantic value (true or false), but also by the pattern (represented by Tarski's theory) that this speaker uses to secure that this association is consistent and not paradoxical, which gives him some rational command over his system of association. That command is what counts as the recursive competence to formulate any complex sentence from simpler structural elements.

Davidson's theory, then, limits our understanding of meaning by making interpretation dependent on our ability to conceptualize the mathematical structure or hierarquical order that allows the transition from simple to more complex cases without loss of reference or reversal of truth value (violations of the *salva veritate* rule). But this mathematical structure is not a platonic object. It is determined inductively as a statistical average and thus empirically. Richard Rorty has summarized the issue: "We emphasize a point made by Davidson himself: that a Tarskian truth definition is an empirical theory, designed to find an underlying order behind a lot of confusing uses" (1998, p. 65).

Davidson's physicalism is certainly distinct from the simplistic reductionism that was once the framework for this kind of position. The author was read by leading commentators as material for a long-standing discussion between *die Natunvissenschaften* and *die Geisteswissenschaften* (see William Taschek, 2002).

> In the standard case, when we are puzzled by an agent's actions and want to make sense of why she acted as she did, we attempt to determine her reasons for so acting. We want it to make sense to us that she acted as she did for the reasons she shed. Reflection on these cases suggests that an action (including an utterance) will be intelligible to us-in the relevant sense—only if it makes sense to us that it made sense to the agent that she did what she did. It is important that there be no equivocation here on the relevant notion of making sense. (Taschek, 2002, p. 28)

In order to tackle the issue, Davidson must explain how two theories of truth compatible with the T-scheme can disagree on which propositions are true and which are false, and how we can objectively represent this disagreement. At the beginning of *On the very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme*, he shows himself well aware of this problem: "Languages that have evolved in distant time or places may differ extensively in their resources in dealing with one or another range of phenomena. What comes easily in one language may come hard in another (…)" (Davidson, 2001b, p. 84).

The author agrees that a sufficiently common reference point is required if we are to compare different patterns of semantic mapping at all, in order to establish the inductive record of true propositions in the comparison between different theories of truth:

> what we need, it seems to me, is some idea of the considerations that set the limits of the conceptual contrast. (Davidson, 2001b, p. 84)
> if all we know is what sentences a speaker holds true, and we cannot assume that his language is our own, then we cannot even take the first step towards interpretation without knowing or assuming a great deal about the speaker's beliefs. (Davidson, 2001b, p. 196)

Davidson concedes that the only way to organize our own orientation in the face of this challenge is to imagine a standard based on the only one we have, i.e., to imagine (or idealize) that the speaker meets more than he misses in his connection between p is true and the conditions under which p is proved or asserted. But the author allows this dry and mechanical strategy, because his extensionalism leaves him no other choice. He has not given up looking for other answers, and the compatibility, however remote, – of his theory with issues in sociology and anthropology can be read as the point at which his reasoning was most open and sensitive.

Charity, Empathy and Sociological retro-conditions of recognition

We are confronted with the perspective according to which the determination of correct interpretations is analogous to the projection of sufficiently general similarities between two systems of interpretation. To do this, we must not only imagine that the interpretive speaker's belief system is consistent. We must imagine that he manages to coordinate the consistency of his beliefs with the consistency of the conditions under which they are true; that is, we must also imagine that he is right rather than wrong in his associations between p-is-true and the reference of p at the most basic level (the level or proof or satisfaction). To even start forming a parameter for interpretation, something common must remain constant at the most basic level and not be paradoxical at the more complex levels. Only in this way will a pattern of truth always be reproducible without mixing with the false, so that two systems of interpretation, even if determined by different experiences, will form the same pattern of extensional correlation. The inscrutability of this reference and the indeterminacy of the various assumptions about the interpretive pattern do not undermine the fact that it is possible to communicate consistently across these parameters.

This means that learning a language is not just like learning a game: it is learning an organizational pattern to maximize the selection of true beliefs and thus acquire a kind of collective memory of sentences that have been shown to be true and thus also get to know the form of the most frequently occurring true sentences. As Rorty says in a commentary on Davidson:

Davidson became famous in the 1980s are more akin to those of the later Wittgenstein than to any views held by Carnap or Tarski. Consider his claims that most of our beliefs must be true, and that there is no distinction between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world. You can grasp his arguments for these claims even if you have no interest whatever in what Dummett called "a systematic theory of meaning" —the sort of theory which the later Wittgenstein thought implausible and unnecessary, but of which a Tarskian truth-theory for a natural language is paradigmatic. (Rorty, 1998, p. 50)

Needless to say, the challenge has become tougher. Now we have normative conditions that go beyond the purely factual ones. The normative character of this knowledge presents itself as an unavoidable necessity for competent representatives of the conditions of mutual understanding. What we need is a complete correspondence between the assertion that p is true and the belief that p is true, or an inductive average statistic in which the assertion that p is true involves for the speaker a rule involving the exclusion of p is false. And finding this rule will be an unfeasible task if we begin to organize our interpretive system on the premise that other speakers and old and dead old speakers are/were more wrong than right. Communication and normative correction of interpretation would not work on the assumption that the sentences held to be true in a language were so held by people who tend to support the belief that p is true under the conditions in which it is not. Davidson himself acknowledges the necessity of principles of generosity: "Charity is forced upon us; whether we like it or not, if we want to understand others, we must take it to be true in most matters" (Davidson, 2001, p. 197).

While not incompatible with a naturalistic view, this view is richer than the naturalistic one: it is not limited to observing the correlation between successful interpretive strategies and the pressures of life and survival, but also examines the dynamics of conceptual and conscious formation aimed at eliminating the organism' alienation from its conditions of survival.

Davidson's concept prove to be somewhat more nuanced than physicalist and naturalistic views of content. It offers itself as an alternative for a naturalistic explanation of intentionality. It sees the "intentional" as the content compatible with the mental state that ascribes a maximum degree of rationality to a speaker's behavior. But this attribution is made under complex conditions of collective mirroring. This means – which accords with some neo-hegelianist sociologism – that understanding what is "rational" cannot be done in isolation from a ideological field of collective mutual self-recognition, as we can see in Robert Brandom:

> what role must states, attitudes, and performances play in (as it turns out, social) practice for it to be correct to interpret them as being propositionally contentful? That is, how are propositional contents conferred by practice? What proprieties of practical employment does possession of such content consist in? As already suggested, any answer must specify what it is for the practitioners themselves practically to take or treat states, attitudes, and performances of others and of their own as having such contents, and thereby to confer those contents on them. (Brandom, 1994, p. 74)

The ultimate test for the selection of this content would not be merely the survival of the organism acting on these rational premises, for the rationality parameter itself is inherent in the dynamics of communication, not a physical-data found in the external world. The only test, therefore, is knowledge of the entire context in which interaction and the dramaturgical construction of empathy and self-identification take place among members of a speech community. It is in trying to make sense of the thoughts, words, and actions of others that we have developed the control parameters to command non-extensional concepts such as belief, meaning, intention, etc. This perspective leads us from a purely skeptical view to one based on the conception of horizons of possibility of interpretation, returning to the study of the mind and its structures of meaning an objectivity borrowed from sociology: "Our styles, both in their epistemic and in their normative aspects, help us navigate the matrices of intelligibility,possibility, and value we share with others" (Aldea, 2019, p. 6).

Underdetermination and Skepticism about Mental content

Considering this vision, we can say that it is based on an optimism about the possibility of communication. The solvability of communication problems derives not from the transparency of concepts such as analyticity, intention, and content (of beliefs), but from the fact that the access to these concepts is public and does not require a formal second-order bureaucracy. Accessibility to the reasons of others is provided by the fact that we can interact with those reasons on the basis of our own reasons, just as the market self-adjusts on the basis of the defensive adjustment of all its members. Any solution to the problem of interpreting the behavior of an organism that is consistent with its survival will be valid. This brings with it the problem of the underdetermination of hypotheses about the mental content of the organism, but there is a whole modern intellectual culture – not always unified, though it agrees on this issue – that is willing to pay this price. This solution pays the price of underdetermination in order to allow a free transition and a full, unbureaucratic opening between conceptual schemes: Since the idea of "conceptual scheme" is nothing more than the common profile of one of many rules compatible with a speaker's rationality, there is nothing private or special in

this scheme that cannot be reproduced by another rule – and thus human communication does not depend on bureaucratic, hermetic and incommensurable inter-access.

This view is not free from suspicious details. Philosophers with a more skeptical streak may start from the same premises without drawing the same optimistic conclusions. In some of his works, Wittgenstein presents a version of our ability to follow consistent rules that does not suggest that we have access to the mind, to the content of beliefs, or even to an internal notion of "understanding."

> A sentence in a code: at what moment of translating does understanding begin? The words of a sentence are arbitrary; so I replace them with letters. But now I cannot immediately think the sense of the sentence in the new expression. The notion that we can only imperfectly exhibit our understanding: the expression of understanding has something missing that is essentially inexpressible. But in that case it makes no sense to speak of a more complete expression. (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 6)

A similar skepticism can be derived from Quine's anti-mentalism. Even if it allows for a concept of intersubjective access between different standards of interpretation, pragmatism does so at the cost of dissolving the idea of interpretation into a concept of "following rules" as long as they have a tolerable margin of compatibility.

The interesting thing about this new form of skepticism is the fact that the interpretive context pointed out by Davidson and compatible with Kant-Husserl's transcendental theory only shows that in a dimension where we can say that we speak the same language, no question relevant to skepticism arises. But what is the criterion for speaking the same language? And once we are in the language, are we not in a circle where we presuppose the counter-skeptical conclusion because we cannot get out of the spell of the language itself?

Human ingenuity has succeeded in transforming rules of interpretation into common patterns and in transforming these patterns into a system of categories that articulate means of mediation, giving rise to complex tools such as language with its grammar. But with ingenuity comes mystification. We enter under the spell of language. When these grammatical conditions become philosophical expressions, mere consistency and the capacity for non-paradoxical expression across the categories of language become mystifications of a higher order, and we begin to speak of things like "intentions" or "essences", although all we are doing is to consistently follow rules. Moreover, the code we use to interpret and follow a rule is ultimately fallible and contestable, and its validity depends on socio-normative conditions that are not obviously logical or philosophical. A skeptical shadow has accompanied this view since it appeared in Quine as a defense of extensionalism and a subsequent underestimation of the value of higher order semantic notions such as the notion of intension and analyticity.

This skepticism shows that the very idea of consciousness loses its utility when the study of processes of interpretation and meaning in general can be reduced to the study of the choice of categorical foundations of a language, and to a codification of its possibilities of recursive reproduction, which extends conservatively. At best, mind-conciousness becomes a heuristic concept related to computational processes; at worst, it is seen as a vestige of pre-scientific notions, a ghost behind the concrete workings of language. Even worse, it becomes the reified expression of a mystic spell of language over our theoretical view of the world.

This tension is not just a problem for psychologists. Phenomenology itself, in order not to get stuck in a static conception of the structures of the mind, must address these phenomena at the point where the tension between the "object" and its "normative formation" comes to a head, as Andreea Smaranda Aldea notes:

> if phenomenology is to be a radical critique, it must expose both the normalizing tendencies of the meaning-constituting process under investigation and thenormalizing forces at work in its own critical work. As such, phenomenological analysis must beat once diagnostic and subversive with respect to its subject-matter as well as self-reflective withrespect to its own methods of investigation and theoretical goals. (2019, p. 7)

This perspective takes up – in a more rigorous and scientific technical form – Heidegger's way of integrating phenomenology and hermeneutics, observing how the question of mental experience – or the thinkability of structures of meaningful experience – becomes, or must become, a question of the conditions of insertion into an interpretable and collectively shared world. This transition shows that the study of the "object" reified as "mind" is already structured to function as a normative possibility that governs life by establishing modal horizons about what is possible and necessary.

We conclude the section by pointing to alternatives in the recent literature that are able to provide phenomenology (and psychology) with a methodology of meta-evaluation capable of examining the structure of mind itself from a critical, revisionist perspective and historical opening:

> a modal platform of analysis – one dealing in questions regarding conceivability, possibility, necessity, and impossibility – capable ofshedding diagnostic as well as prescriptive light both on the experiences under investigation andon phenomenology's own methods of inquiry. (Aldea, 2019, p. 1)

Concluding Remarks and Questions: The Methodological Tensions within Psychology

We have seen in retrospect that Kant's and Husserl's conception of mind agrees with Davidson's in determining the "content" of acts of intentionality through the unity of interpretive rules used as parameters of understanding. This is a first obstacle to skepticism: it shows that there is no possible parameter of understanding that is not interpretable, that is, reproducible in a system of categories accessible to those who can formulate propositional problems. Kant called this unit apperception, emphasizing its nature as the cognitive basis for distinguishing truth from falsehood - that is, for representing a judgment (KrV B 141). Davidson also pointed out that a (Tarskian) theory of truth is part of any effective parameter of interpretation, for if we develop our parameters on the basis of the hypothesis that propositions thought to be true are asserted under unfavorable conditions (conditions under which they would be false), we would not have access to a non-paradoxical (and non-pathological) standard of interpretation. In this way, the psychological part, which is subject to interpretation, does not become private, which is why Husserl's phenomenology was accompanied by an anti-psychologism, which was complemented by a phenomenology describing the ideal content of mental representations. But we have also seen that this dissolves psychology into semantic representations that ultimately become a sociological theory of the conditions of mutual understanding that are in force when we establish consistent rules of use for interpreting the other.

This whole process brings a methodological tension to psychology. This is the astonishing question: which science is responsible for determining mental content? It does not seem that psychology gains much from the trade-off if it must resolve itself into non-unilateral sociological parameters in order to recognize objective phenomena instead of only private and mysterious ones.

Having examined the semantic, conceptual-schematic, and pragmatic views, we arrive at a particularly vague notion of the content of intentional acts based on the vast possibility of competing interpretations that are equally compatible with a pragmatic communicative goal. This view resolves the idea of consciousness into dynamic processes of interactive pressure and counterpressure that push communication into normative conformity, and finally, to the concept of what it means to "speak the same language" or to share a consistency-base for world-interpreting (even if underdetermined by experience of the speakers).

The methodological alternative is that psychology could be supplemented by complex expressions of mental activity, at the risk of expressing the mental phenomenon as a whole in a context of expression that is highly dependent on the presence of the "other" or on a mirroring principle that leads the discussion to sociology.

What these dilemmas entail for the methodological question of the foundations of psychology and the determination of its object of study is that the very approach to the study of this discipline is in conflict with itself at a fundamental point: when it must proceed to the objectification of the phenomena that constitute it as mental activity. At this point, we are either led to a supra-psychological theory of thought (semantics, phenomenology, conceptual schemes) or we are forced to accept that the objectivity of an intentional phenomenon depends on a collective consensus capable of normalising subjective experience by constituting an underdetermined field of possible shared interpretation as a form of intersubjective non-bureaucratic access between consciousnesses. If we opt for the latter case, we must deal with the new kind of skepticism set forth in the last chapter: We must prevent the study of something like mind, intentionality, and consciousness from being a mere reification of the processes of constructing standards of consistency that enable us to speak the same language and blind us to anything outside that standard, much like a scientific community caught in the paradigmatic spell of its official language.

If we are not to indulge in skepticism about the content of consciousness and the dissolution of psychology into another kind of science, we must observe how the history of the use of mental expressions in the vernacular dimension has attempted to present this inherent methodological dilemma in the question of objectifying the mental, by showing the socio-collective transformation of the subject into a "thing" from the perspective of representing its inner learning, its reformulation and recoding, its experiences of alienation and reconciliation when subjected to contact with other subjects, cultures and historical perspectives.

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