

Intention-Based Semantics

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We are physical objects in a physical world; our bodies, collections of molecules, move, and among the myriad products of these movements are marks and sounds. These physical phenomena have physical explanations, forthcoming, in principle, from the physical sciences, from physics, at the most fundamental level, to the neuro-biological sciences at more specialized levels. So much for the unassailable.

At the same time, we are apt, pretheoretically, to suppose that some of these marks and sounds have semantical properties, and that those who produce them have psychological states, notably beliefs, desires, and intentions. The sequence of marks 'Mitterand defeated Giscard', for example, is a *sentence* of a *language*, it has *meaning*, viz., that Mitterand defeated Giscard, it is *true*, it contains *names* that *refer* to people, and a *predicate* that is *true of* pairs of things. One producing this sequence of marks is not unlikely to *believe that Mitterand defeated Giscard*, and to *intend*, in producing those marks, to instill the same belief in another.

The subject matter of the philosophy of language, if it has one, is the nature of the semantical properties of linguistic items. But no complete account of those properties will leave unanswered these two questions:

- (1) How is the semantic related to the psychological?
- (2) How are the semantic and the psychological related to the physical?

I believe, for familiar reasons, later briefly to be touched on, that (2) is the urgent question, in this sense: that we should not be prepared to maintain that there *are* semantic or psychological facts unless we are prepared to maintain that such facts are completely determined by, are nothing over and above, physical facts. I am also inclined towards a reductionist response to

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