

Fodor, me and Propositional Attitudes

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Definitions of Some Relations

1. belief_r(S,t,w,x,y,z)

Here

- S is the subject – believer
- w is a symbol for R (for S) at time t
- x is a symbol for a (for S) at time t
- y is a symbol for b (for S) at time t
- z is a symbol for c (for S) at time t
- This is an example with a relation of 3 objects, the actual number of objects could vary. I started to work out other logical relations at
http://dennisdarland.com/philosophy/my_modalB_001.html

Notice:

- The belief_r relation I is in the language of thought for the person S.
- Symbols may vary from person to person.
- There are similar relations for desire, fear, etc.

2. symbol_r(S,t,x,a)

Here

- S is the subject – believer
- x is a symbol for a (for S) at time t

3. external_symbol_r(S,t,m,x)

Here

- S is the subject – believer
- m is a external symbol for x (for S) at time t
- the idea is that even though different subjects (S's) often have different internal symbols (x's) for the same object(a) they may share the same external symbol (m).

Application of these Relations to Fodor's examples

I will go through the cases in "Propositional Attitudes" in Jerry A. Fodor's Book Representations: Philosophical Essays on the Foundations of Cognitive Science

I. (page 178) "Propositional attitudes should be analyzed as relations."

My analysis is also in terms of relations. Fodor's would be something like believes(S,w(x,y,z)).

Mine here would be $(\exists w)(\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists z)\text{belief_r}(S,t,w,x,y,z) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(S,t,w,R) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(S,t,x,a) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(S,t,y,b) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(S,t,z,c)$. The main reason I use this form for belief_r rather than Fodor's is that the application of predicate logic is more straightforward. Russell called this the multiple relation theory of belief, except that for him it related the subject to the predicate and other external objects of the belief rather than internal symbols.

All the arguments Fodor uses to support this view also support mine. (pp. 178-181). However Fodor doesn't have a way of representing separately the internal and external (possibly shared) representations.

To express John thinks Sam is nice and Mary thinks Sam is nasty, I would have.

$$(\exists w_1)(\exists x_1)(\exists w_2)(\exists x_2) \ \text{belief_r}(John,\text{now},w_1,x_1) \ \& \ \text{belief_r}(Mary,\text{now},w_2,x_2) \ \& \\ \text{symbol_r}(John,\text{now},w_1,\text{nice}) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(John,\text{now},x_1,\text{Sam}) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(Mary,\text{now},w_2,\text{nasty}) \ \& \\ \text{symbol_r}(John,\text{now},x_2,\text{Sam}) \ \& \ \text{external_symbol_r}(John,\text{now},w_1,\text{'Nice'}) \ \& \\ \text{external_symbol}(John,\text{now},x_1,\text{'Sam'}) \ \& \ \text{external_symbol_r}(Mary,\text{now},w_2,\text{'Nasty'}) \ \& \\ \text{external_symbol}(Mary,\text{now},x_2,\text{'Sam'})$$

Here John and Mary have their own internal symbols for Sam. They share an external symbol via their internal symbols. I think Fodor is correct that our initial learning of public language starts with some innate capabilities. But I think that innate part is fairly small. We learn most of the rest of language only with the aid of the learned shared language. However we think with our internal language, which for me is mostly the internalized sounds of the words of the public language.

BTW Visual recognition would require: $(\exists x)(\exists y)\text{sees_r}(John,\text{now},x) \ \& \\ \text{visual_recog_r}(John,\text{now},x,y) \ \& \ \text{symbol_r}(John,\text{now},y,\text{Sam})$.

Also note, opacity is the result of subjects having different symbols for the same object. Thus Tom may believe Cicero denounced Cataline but not Tully denounced Cataline. They (the symbols for 'Cicero' and 'Tully') would need to be different internal symbols.

II (page 181) 'A theory of PAs should explain the parallelism between verbs of PA and verbs of saying. ("Vendler's Condition")."

I think my theory here does even better than Fodor's. Fodor seems to leave unclear or confused the distinction between the internal and public languages. We have an internal language of thought, but although some of it must be innate, I believe most of it is acquired from the contact with a public language. Because of this relation. (external_symbol_r) we can understand what others say, and others can understand what we say.

III. (page 181) 'A theory of propositional attitudes should account for their opacity. ("Frege's

condition").'

The example in I of opacity follows.

($\exists w$) ($\exists x$) ($\exists y$) belief_r(Tom,now,w,x,y) & symbol_r(Tom,now,w,denounced) &
symbol_r(Tom,now,x,Cicero) & symbol_r(Tom,now,y,Cataline) &
external_symbol_r(Tom,now,w,'Denounced') & external_symbol_r(Tom,now,x,'Cicero') &
external_symbol_r(Tom,now,y,'Cataline')

but not

($\exists w$) ($\exists x$) ($\exists y$) belief_r(Tom,now,w,x,y) & symbol_r(Tom,now,w,denounced) &
symbol_r(Tom,now,x,Cicero) & symbol_r(Tom,now,y,Cataline) &
external_symbol_r(Tom,now,w,'Denounced') & external_symbol_r(Tom,now,x,'Tully') &
external_symbol_r(Tom,now,y,'Cataline')

because 'Cicero' not equals 'Tully', even though Cicero = Tully.

IV. (page 182) 'The objects of propositional attitudes have logical form. ("Aristotle's Condition").'

I see no conflict with Fodor here, but I think any possible problem (which he mentions) with opacity no longer applies.

V. (page 186) 'A theory of propositional attitudes should mesh with empirical accounts of mental processes.'

I think my view does the same here as Fodor's, except better as explaining how both a language of thought and a public language are possible.