

Reaction to Stich

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The Autonomy Principle

Stephen Stich uses his autonomy principle (in [From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science](#), pp. 164-170) to argue for his Syntactic Theory of Mind (STM) as opposed to what he calls the Strong Representational Theory of Mind (Strong RTM). (There is also a Weak RTM, but I haven't read that far yet.) Stich says, "The basic idea of the [autonomy] principle is that the states and processes that ought to be of concern to the psychologist are those that supervene on the current, internal, physical state of the organism. (One class of states and processes supervenes on another when, roughly speaking, the presence or absence of states and processes in the first class is completely determined by the presence or absence of states and processes in the second.) What this amounts to is the claim that any differences between organisms which do not manifest themselves as differences in their current, internal, physical states ought to be ignored by a psychological theory." (p. 164).

The "belief_r" relation used in <http://dennisdarland.com/philosophy/naming.pdf> is autonomous in this manner. But it is not observable. It is inferred. Psychology (MRI's PET scans, and our knowledge of the brain) have not progressed that far. The "symbol_r" relations connect the relata of the "belief_r" relation in some cases to objects and words we share (to some degree) with a linguistic community. To the extent that uniform relations to internal symbols (of some sort) and objects and words are shared by a linguistic community there will be isomorphic "belief_r" relations across a linguistic community in relevantly corresponding situations. When subjects (people) of the belief_r relation have different histories, the same symbol may have a different semantics. (John knows Tully = Cicero, but Tom doesn't know this). Many of Stich's examples rely on this sort of problem – what Quine called "opacity". Both syntax (belief_r) and semantics (symbol_r) are important. The systematic ambiguity Stich denies (pp. 111-123) is real and exists, but across differences in symbol_r relations for different people.

Russell's Crisis

I think (I'm relying on memory). Wittgenstein's criticism that paralyzed Russell was that Russell tried defining propositions in terms of understanding, (CPBR, Vol 7, p.117), but that there might

logically need to be propositions that S did not understand that followed from propositions S did understand. I believe we must live with this. Logic is a ideal. Computer theory reasons about computability with models of computers that could never be realized. Likewise logic reasons about logic that will never be fully realized in human minds. But computers are useful, and so is logic to people.

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