

Summaries

How to Understand an Action?
FERENC HUORANSZKI

In this paper I argue that we need to distinguish two questions often conflated in discussions about the nature of intentional action. The question about the nature of action concerns the distinction between those episodes in our life that are actions and those that are not. According to an influential tradition in the philosophy of action, the nature of action should be understood with reference to how the agent understands her own behavior. Anscombe and her followers try to cash out the nature of action in terms of the agents' first-person practical knowledge. Davidson and his followers argue that this account needs to be supplemented with a causal criterion, according to which in order to act intentionally, agents' reason must cause their action. This criterion is potentially available only from a third-person point of view, if at all. I argue that both types of accounts fail to grasp the distinguishing feature of intentional action and agency. Instead, I suggest following a proposal by Jennifer Hornsby, according to which actions should be understood as manifestations of agent-relevant abilities and capacities. I argue that although such an account is neither causal nor does it require practical knowledge, it can explain well the possibility of practical self-interpretation.

Explanation and Understanding in 'Mental Science Psychology':
A Hundred Years Later
CSABA PLÉH

The paper reviews the relevance of the key concepts of a psychology based on understanding rather than explanation, first proposed by Dilthey. Such a psychology was supposed to be a holistic, non-reductionist approach to mental life, opposed to the reductionist trends in early experimental psychology. The paper surveys the different early interpretations of this concept in Dilthey, Spranger, Simmel and Jaspers. The basic message has been a contrast between understanding and explanation, prefiguring a differentiation between hermeneutic and causal approaches to human phenomena. This shows up in contemporary radical approaches that propose to build a psychology merely based

on understanding. However, ‘understanding’ and ‘explanation’ should not be taken as mutually exclusive positions. Rather they should be interpreted as intentional and physical stances in interpreting human behavior in the sense of Daniel Dennett.

Interpretationism, Mental Causation and Physicalism –
and Davidson’s Proposal for a Synthesis
GERGELY AMBRUS

The paper investigates the question whether some interpretationist accounts of action in the analytic tradition, which hold that the determination of a subject’s beliefs and desires necessarily involves interpretative practices, may be reconciled with some substantial form of physicalism. This question is interesting because an affirmative answer holds out the promise that the two great traditions concerning action, based on understanding and explanation, may be reconciled. The paper addresses this issue by examining whether the interpretationists provide such an account of mental causation which accords with physicalism. Among the leading representatives of ‘analytic interpretationism’, i.e. Quine, Dennett and Davidson, only Davidson was concerned with this problem. The paper argues, however, that Davidson’s views relevant to his account of action, viz. the thesis that “reasons are causes” (i.e. explanation of action in terms of beliefs and desires is a causal explanation), physicalism (according to which mental events are token-identical with physical events), and interpretationism concerning mental attitudes, do not merge into a coherent and substantial conception. Hence, whether interpretationism may be reconciled with physicalism remains an open question.

Reinterpretation in the Drawer. Heidegger’s Criticism of Nazism: 1935-1940
TIBOR SCHWENDTNER

Heidegger’s relation to Nazism was increasingly critical in the second half of the 1930s. The emerging criticism of Nazism was, at the same time, inseparable from Heidegger’s turn (Kehre): the criticism of Nazism was an organic part of the “being-historical” (seinsgeschichtlich) thinking of the late Heidegger. This turn had had considerable antecedents in the texts before 1933, nevertheless, the two challenges, viz. confronting Nazism and elaborating a new philosophical orientation, became interwoven in the 1930s. These challenges resulted in Heidegger’s views that Western history is the history of Seyn, i.e. successive epochs of the abandonment of being [Seinsverlassenheit], and that his own time/epoch is to be considered as the fulfillment of this process. It must be noted, however, that this history of philosophy completely obfuscates the question of personal responsibility regarding the collaboration or symbiosis with Nazism.

Interpretations in Physics LÁSZLÓ SZÉKELY

Through the analysis of the interpretations of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity, the paper aims to demonstrate the following thesis: the Duhem-Quine thesis on empirical underdetermination can be extended to the claim that not only the empirical data, but the empirical data together with the mathematical formalism of a physical theory do not suffice to determine completely our theories of physical reality. As a consequence, beyond observational data and mathematical physics, cultural and social factors as well as the value-preferences of physicists also play role as constitutive elements of physical theories. For example, the indeterminist interpretations of quantum mechanics are not neutral but value-laden, and deterministic interpretations, which insist on classical determinism as a value, are also possible. On the other hand, the thesis of the underdetermination of physical reality by mathematical physics confirms neither radical relativism, nor extreme versions of sociology of science. On the contrary, the mathematical formalism to be interpreted is autonomous – and in this sense “objective” – to a great extent with respect to cultural, social and other non-scientific factors and, therefore, there is a firm consensus regarding it in science.

Determinism and Interpretation BALÁZS GYENIS

We show that the truth of determinism is not an interpretation-free fact and we systematically overview relevant interpretational choices that are less known in the philosophical literature. After bypassing the well known interpretational problem that arises in quantum mechanics, we identify three further questions about the representational role of the mathematical structures employed by the physical theories. Finally we point out that even if we settle all representational issues the received view of physical possibility may also allow the truth of determinism to depend on prior philosophical convictions, notably on one’s philosophical account of the nature of laws.

