

INDIVIDUALISM AND PSYCHOLOGY\*\*

Recent years have seen in psychology - and overlapping parts of linguistics, artificial intelligence, and the social sciences - the development of some semblance of agreement about an approach to the empirical study of human activity and ability. The approach is broadly mentalistic in that it involves the attribution of states, processes and events that are intentional, in the sense of 'representational'. Many of these events and states are unconscious and inaccessible to mere reflection. Computer jargon is prominent in labeling them. But they bear comparison to thoughts, wants, memories, perceptions, plans, mental sets and the like - ordinarily so-called. Like ordinary propositional attitudes, some are described by means of that-clauses and may be evaluated as true or false. All are involved in a system by means of which a person knows, represents, and utilizes information about his or her surroundings.

In the first part of this paper, I shall criticize some arguments that have been given for thinking that explanation in psychology is, and ought to be, purely 'individualistic'. In the second part of the paper, I shall discuss in some detail a powerful psychological theory that is not individualistic. The point of this latter discussion will be to illustrate a non-individualistic conception of explanatory kinds. In a third section, I shall offer a general argument against individualism, that centers on visual perception. What I have to say, throughout the paper, will bear on all parts of psychology that attribute intentional states. But I will make special reference to explanation in cognitive psychology.

Individualism is a view about how kinds are correctly individuated, how their natures are fixed. We shall be concerned primarily with individualism about the individuation of mental kinds. According to individualism about the mind, the mental natures of all a person's or animal's mental states (and events) are such that there is no necessary or deep individuating relation between the individual's being in states of those kinds and the nature of the individual's physical or social environments.

This view owes its prominence to Descartes. It was embraced by Locke, Leibniz, and Hume. And it has recently found a home in the phenomenological

tradition and in the doctrines of twentieth century behaviorists, functionalists, and mind-brain identity theorists. There are various more specific versions of the doctrine. A number of fundamental issues in traditional philosophy are shaped by them. In this paper, however, I shall concentrate on versions of the doctrine that have been prominent in recent philosophy of psychology.

Current individualistic views of intentional mental states and events have tended to take one of two forms. One form maintains that an individual's being in any given intentional state (or being the subject of such an event) can be *explicated* by reference to states and events of the individual that are specifiable without using intentional vocabulary and without presupposing anything about the individual subject's social or physical environments. The explication is supposed to specify - in non-intentional terms - stimulations, behavior, and internal physical or functional states of the individual. The other form of individualism is implied by the first, but is weaker. It does not attempt to explicate anything. It simply makes a claim of *supervenience*: an individual's intentional states and events (types and tokens) could not be different from what they are, given the individual's physical, chemical, neural, or functional histories, where these histories are specified non-intentionally and in a way that is independent of physical or social conditions outside the individual's body.

In other papers I have argued that both forms of individualism are mistaken. A person's intentional states and events could (counterfactually) vary, even as the individual's physical, functional (and perhaps phenomenological) history, specified non-intentionally and individualistically, is held constant. I have offered several arguments for this conclusion. Appreciating the strength of these arguments, and discerning the philosophical potential of a non-individualist view of mind, depend heavily on reflecting on differences among these arguments. They both reinforce one another and help map the topography of a positive position.

For present purposes, however, I shall merely sketch a couple of the arguments to give their flavor. I shall not defend them or enter a variety of relevant qualifications. Consider a person *A* who thinks that aluminum is a light metal used in sailboat masts, and a person *B* who believes that he or she has arthritis in the thigh. We assume that *A* and *B* can pick out instances of aluminum and arthritis (respectively) and know many familiar general facts about aluminum and arthritis. *A* is, however, ignorant of aluminum's chemical structure and micro-properties. *B* is ignorant of the fact that arthritis cannot occur outside of joints. Now we can imagine counterfactual cases in which *A* and *B*'s bodies have their same histories considered in isolation of their physical environments, but in which there are significant environmental differences from the actual situation. *A*'s counterfactual environment lacks aluminum and has in its places a similar-looking light metal. *B*'s counterfactual environment is such that no one has ever isolated arthritis as a specific disease, or syndrome of diseases. In these cases, *A* would lack 'aluminum