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The perception of intentionality

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SY105

The perception of intentionality. *de Gelder, B. Tilburg University, The Netherlands.*

A fundamental dimension of the mind/brain is its capacity to perceive intentionally, eg. to process information as a function of its meaning in ongoing actions and interactions of the organism. Intentional perception encompasses phenomena that range from the attribution of meaning to objects to the interpretation of the movements of agents as actions. Attribution of mental states is the name for the mechanism subserving the perceptual attribution of meaning when what is to be perceived are not objects but movements of other agents. The papers in this symposium examine the cognitive and neuropsychological basis of the brain's semantic engineering.

SY105.1

The perception of intention in the movement of simple objects. *Flores d'Arcais, G.B. Max Planck Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen.* The paper will be concerned with the perception of intentional characteristics in

the movement of simple objects. In an object in displacement an observer does not only perceive properties such as speed, but also expressive properties such as causality and intention. The classic studies of Michotte and of his students have revealed several of the figural and kinetic features of the movement of objects which yield the impression of a causal effect. The paper will first review some literature on the perception of intention in the movement of simple objects. For example, when an object in displacement stops and then resumes its movement, in which conditions does a perceiver see an intentional action of "stopping and waiting"? The second part of the paper will report on some experimental studies on the perception of intentional behavior in the movement of simple objects. For example, one of the experiments to be reported looked at the figural and kinetic conditions which elicit perception of an "active", intentional braking (such as a car slowing down as the result of the intention of the driver) as opposed to a "passive" braking, (such as a car which stops because it happened to run into a bank of sand).

SY105.2

Structural and semantic aspects of face processing. *de Gelder, B., & Teunisse, J.-P. Tilburg University, The Netherlands.* The paper reports studies examining some aspects of semantic processing in autistics. Data from face processing studies and from voice and intonation recognition experiments will be presented. The discussion will address the issue of the locus of the observed impairments. On one view those impairments proceed from processing different deficits each in specific domains of ability and respect, eg, the encapsulation of modular faculties (face recognition impairments independent from linguistic processing impairments). On another approach a taxonomy of semantic processing and its impairments is expected to cut across the processing domains.

SY105.3

There is only one mind/body problem. *Harnad, S. Princeton University, USA* In our century a Frege/Brentano wedge has gradually been driven into the mind/body problem so deeply that it appears to have split into two: the problem of "qualia" and the problem of "intentionality". Both problems use similar intuition pumps: for qualia, we imagine a robot that is indistinguishable from us in every objective respect, but it lacks subjective experiences; it is mindless. For intentionality,

we again imagine a robot that is indistinguishable from us in every objective respect but its "thoughts" lack "aboutness"; they are meaningless. I will try to show that there is a way to reunify the mind/body problem by grounding the "language of thought" (symbols) in our perceptual categorization capacity.

SY105.4

Hemispheric differences in pictorial semantics. *Zaidel, D.W. University of California, Los Angeles, USA.* Pictorial scenes convey meaning much as sentences do. If the figures are manipulated to form a particular organization, different meanings may be conveyed by the scene. We have used this tool to study long-term semantic memory (knowledge-of-the-world) in the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Organized, unorganized, or incongruous scenes have been administered in a memory paradigm to patients with unilateral focal brain damage as well as to normal subjects. The left-right asymmetries in remembering these scenes as well as the intrahemispheric disassociations that we have found suggest left hemisphere flexibility and right hemisphere rigidity in the organization of long-term semantic memory.

SY105.5

Hemispheric control of natural language pragmatics. *Zaidel, E.(1), Kasher, A.(2), Giora, R.(2), & Graves, D.(2). (1)UCLA, USA; (2)Tel Aviv University, Israel.* A battery of pragmatic tests including humour, emotion, nonliteral language and integrative processes which show selective deficit after right hemisphere damage yielded mixed results in the disconnected left hemisphere of split brain patients. Only a few tests showed universal deficits following the commissurotomy (prosody, pictorial metaphor, narrative retelling); there were no tests on which all patients performed at chance level; and all but one test (verbal metaphor) showed some deficit. Thus the right cerebral hemisphere appears to be selectively involved in three tests and has some involvement in all but one. These results suggest that right brain damage may mask pragmatic competence in the left cerebral hemisphere. This issue will be addressed with data from a new pragmatic battery aimed to explore the modularity of pragmatics relative to syntax, semantics and non-verbal cognition.