False consciousness of intentional psychology

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ABSTRACT   *According to explanatory individualism, every action must be explained in terms of an agent's desire. According to explanatory nonindividualism, we sometimes act on our desires, but it is also possible for us to act on others' desires without acting on desires of our own. While explanatory nonindividualism has guided the thinking of many social scientists, it is considered to be incoherent by most philosophers of mind who insist that actions must be explained ultimately in terms of some desire of the agent. In the first part of the paper, I show that some powerful arguments designed to demonstrate the incoherence of explanatory nonindividualism fail. In the second part of the paper, I offer a nonindividualist explanation of the apparent obviousness of belief–desire psychology. I argue that there are two levels of the intelligibility of our actions. On the more fundamental (explanatory) level, the question "Why did the agent do something?" admits a variety of folk-psychological categories. But there is another (formation-of-self) level, at which the same question admits only of answers that ultimately appeal only to the agent's own desires. Explanatory individualism results from the confusion of the two levels.*

According to a psychologists' report (Gopnik & Wellman, 1992), small children when presented with a picture of a child looking under a bed, under which a cat is hiding, offer simple belief–desire explanations of the variety "the child wants to play with the cat," "the child thinks the cat is under the bed," and so on. There would be nothing controversial in these reports were it not for what they are taken to show. They are taken to confirm the philosophical view (which I dub explanatory individualism) that belief–desire explanations, which we quite skillfully employ beginning as early as four or five, are the only possible explanations of actions (*qua* actions).

I want to draw attention to a class of action explanations that cite another person's (not the agent's) desire. (The philosophical position that takes such explanations seriously can be called explanatory nonindividualism.) Social scientists including many social psychologists have, for various reasons, insisted on a nonindividualist perspective. Milgram (1969) has argued that under the pressure of authority we undergo an "agentic shift": we find ourselves in a state where we no longer obey our own desires and judgments but rather the commands of an authority figure. Goffman (1986) has argued that beliefs and desires of an agent are explana-

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torily relevant to her actions only within certain kinds of frames but not within others. Rational psychology, which has dominated contemporary philosophy of mind and which has also been influential among some psychologists, takes an explanatory individualist stance—it seeks to explain actions ultimately in terms of *the agent's* beliefs and desires.

In this paper, I offer a limited defense of explanatory nonindividualism. It is *prima facie* reasonable to suppose that the question of which perspective is better for conceptualizing human interaction should be adjudicated empirically [1]. However, the status-quo opinion among philosophers of mind is that this question is not to be decided empirically for it is (already) settled conceptually: explanatory nonindividualism is not just false—it is incoherent. After explaining the positions of explanatory individualism and nonindividualism (Section 1) as well as the spirit of my claims (Section 2), I show that the arguments in support of the contention that explanatory nonindividualism is incoherent are inconclusive at best (Section 3). Still, it is a fact that belief–desire psychology often seems so obvious as to become irresistible. In Section 4, I provide a nonindividualist explanation of that fact.

One cautionary note before I proceed. There is a way of interpreting folk psychology (as providing us with the description of the kinds of gears that operate within our heads) which is at least a candidate for reduction or replacement by the developments in neuroscience. Daniel Dennett (1969, 1978/1987) describes it as a "subpersonal" interpretation of folk psychology [2]. On such a reading, it might indeed appear that explanatory nonindividualism is unintelligible. Another person's desire cannot be understood as a kind of gear in the agent's head. Explanatory nonindividualism must be construed at a personal level. Its truth is thus *prima facie* compatible with any of the positions on what occurs at the subpersonal level within the heads of the actors (whether taking inspiration from intentional psychology *á la* Fodor or from neuroscience á la Churchlands).

1. Explanatory individualism vs. explanatory nonindividualism

1.1. Explanations in terms of others' desires

Let us return to the picture of the cat and the child looking under the bed. Let us ponder what explanations the children would give if presented with a slightly different picture. As before, let the picture depict a cat under a bed, a child kneeling at the bed's side, looking under it; but now, let us add a young woman to the picture, standing on the side, looking at the child. The above explanations are still plausible but interesting new ones can be added: "the mother told the child to look under the bed," "the mother asked the child where the cat is," and so on [3]. Indeed, it would be extraordinary if none of the children offered explanations of this sort. And yet it should be evident that the additional explanations are not belief–desire explanations, not on their faces at any rate. If the explanation why the child is looking under the bed in terms of his mother having told him to do so, appeals to a desire at all, then it is the mother's not the child's desire.

1.2. *Explanatory individualism and explanatory nonindividualism*

In fact, the thought that our folk psychology invokes others' desires, wishes, commands, requests, etc. as potentially explanatory of an agent's actions should strike us as very natural. When one is asked for salt at dinner, one responds to the request by passing the salt—one acts on another person's wish. When one is a part of a highly trained rescue team and is ordered to jump into water, one does so at a moment's notice—one responds to an order. For many of us, there used to be a time when our mothers' call for dinner resulted in our coming to dinner, whether we wanted to or not. And many of us have experienced the power of other people's desires (in particular charismatic or powerful people's desires) when complying with them, frequently despite ourselves. A powerful illustration of the latter phenomenon can be found in Stanley Milgram's (1969) experiments on obedience.

These phenomena are quite natural. They are of philosophical interest in part because there are at least two ways of understanding them. One might insist that all of these ways of explaining the agent's action are enthymematic: they fail to register the agent's desire (pro-attitude) [4] that is (and must be) operating behind the scenes, as it were. This is the position of *explanatory individualism*, according to which an explanation of α's action must appeal to some desire of α and only α's desires can explain α's actions.

(eI₁) All of α's actions must be explained by α's desires.
(eI₂) Only α's desires can explain α's actions.

But one might take the phenomena for what they appear to be and accept the fact that it is part and parcel of our folk-psychological ways of viewing the world that one person's action can be explained in terms of another's desire. This is the position of *explanatory nonindividualism*, according to which it is possible for an explanation of α's action to appeal to a desire of another person β without appealing to any desire of α.

(eN₁) It is possible that some of α's actions are explained by α's desires.
(eN₂) It is possible that some of α's actions are explained by β's desires.

According to explanatory individualism, we always ultimately act on our own desires. According to explanatory nonindividualism, there is nothing incoherent in the supposition that we sometimes act on our own desires but sometimes on the desires of others. Henceforth, unless indicated otherwise, I will mean explanatory individualism (nonindividualism) by the term "individualism" ("nonindividualism").

Although there are a few nonindividualists (e.g. Baier, 1985; Collins, 1987; Fleming, 1981; Nowak, 1987, 1991; von Wright, 1983; Wilson, 1989) [5], the position is generally either not considered or dismissed as untenable. I will confront some of the reasons for this assessment in Section 3. At present, it will do well to clarify it a little further. Note first that to allow that someone else's desire explains the agent's action is not tantamount to holding that *everyone's* desires play the same role. If I admit that I once did something because my mother thought it the right

course of action for me, this need not mean that I would have done it if my mother-in-law thought it the right course of action for me. There might be particular persons who have more influence on the agent than others, there might be particular situations in which the agent is under the influence of particular persons. But beliefs and desires likewise do not function out of contexts; their invocation is highly defeasible. Simply because α tells β to do something does not mean that β will do it; just as simply because β desires to do something does not mean that β will do it. β might not do what α told β to do, perhaps because γ asked β not to do it, or perhaps because β hates doing it, or perhaps because β hates doing what α tells him to do. And quite similarly, β might not do what β desires to do, perhaps because β desires not to do it even more, or perhaps because α forbade β to do it, or perhaps because α told β never to follow this desire of his.

1.3. The methodological character of explanatory individualism and nonindividualism

I should stress that explanatory nonindividualism and individualism so understood address a methodological question, namely, what sorts of restrictions ought to be placed on psychological and philosophical theories of mind and action. Explanatory nonindividualism ought not to be confused with an empirical theory whose purpose is the explanation and prediction of behavior. In fact, it would be quite amusing if theses (eN) were to claim this status.

I should also make clear what the relation is between explanatory individualism and nonindividualism, on the one hand, and intentional psychology, on the other. Intentional psychology provides a framework for explaining human actions. As such, it is neither individualist nor nonindividualist in the sense that both an individualist and a nonindividualist can agree that some human actions are explained in terms of the desires of their agents. The conflict between individualism and nonindividualism begins when the individualist asserts (and the nonindividualist denies) the hegemony of intentional psychology as the only, and the only possible, framework for explaining human actions (*qua* actions, i.e. on the personal level). The nonindividualist points to a variety of already existing social science research (e.g. Goffman, 1986; Haney *et al.*, 1973; Milgram, 1969; Nowak, 1987, 1991) and claims that there is no need to reinterpret their results in terms of intentional psychology.

1.4. Individualist reduction

Explanatory individualists claim superiority for their position in that any action done because of another's desire can always be reinterpreted as done because of the agent's desire suitably directed at the other's desire. Let us consider as an example a person who is washing his boss' car because she asked him to. The case is certainly not necessarily a counterexample to individualism. It is possible that the person, after having calculated the value of his dignity and his job, chooses to fulfill his boss' wish. The mere fact that someone fulfills somebody else's desire does not yet indicate that explanatory individualism is false.

Quite so. In fact, it would be highly suspect if the explanatory nonindividualist

were to claim that it is *never* the case that we fulfill somebody else's wish because we *want* to do so. We should, however, take note of the force of the theoretical commitments. The explanatory individualist is committed to claiming that this is always the case and that it *cannot* be otherwise. He is committed to a reductive strategy toward all nonintentional explanations of actions (*qua* actions). The explanatory nonindividualist, in turn, may claim that cases where such a "reduction" is appropriate are *possible* but that it is also possible for there to be cases where it is inappropriate. It is one thing when the employee undertakes a choice—after considering his options he decides (more or less consciously) to fulfill his boss' wish. It is another thing when a person after considering his options decides (more or less consciously) not to obey a command and then—clearly and explicitly against his wishes and declarations—does too obey, as many of Milgram's subjects have done. It is yet another thing when a person (almost automatically) responds to a request for salt with an appropriate arm movement without consulting her or others' desires, without deliberating about the norms governing table manners—she simply reaches for the container and passes it forward, as she has been taught to do.

1.5. Explanatory nonindividualism and evolution

It might be worthwhile to throw the nonindividualist thought against the background of our evolutionary development. It has been argued that rational behavior was selected for in our evolution. Those who acted rationally were better off than those who did not. Since rational behavior involves belief–desire satisfaction, this gives one reason to believe that humans will be rather good at satisfying their beliefs and desires. While this line of thought is perfectly reasonable, there are other kinds of conduct that have evolutionary advantage, among them conformism. It has been argued (e.g. Boyd & Richerson, 1985) that there is a distinct evolutionary benefit for us to conform [6]. It is reasonable to assume that the patterns of behavior adopted by a particular group of people have been tested out in the particular kinds of situations and environment in which the group tends to find itself. It may be beneficial for an individual joining such a group to use the tried patterns of behavior instead of risking that his behavioral inventions will be selected out. This is the selectional advantage of conformism—of our acting not on our own minds but rather on other people's minds.

It is worth noting that these two parts of the evolutionary story stand in no competition with each other. They simply illustrate the presence of forces that support, on the one hand, the development of a tendency for us to be independent, to act on our own convictions, and on the other hand, the development of the converse tendency for us to depend on others. Insofar as both forces have been present in our evolutionary development, we would expect our lives to be an arena for a struggle between these two tendencies in certain situations. The nonindividualist thought that we sometimes act on our own desires and sometimes on others' desires simply reflects this evolutionary heritage. And just as the "individualist" part of the evolutionary story (taken on its own) would support the individualist's commitment to the thought that we always act on our own beliefs and desires, so the

whole story should support the nonindividualist thought that we ought to extend our understanding to encompass not only our acting on our own desires but also our acting on others' desires.

2. Methodological intermission

Before venturing on to present and disarm various reasons for holding explanatory individualism, let me address a background point. One could distinguish two methodological approaches in philosophy. On one, let us call it "the conservative approach," one aims to develop such an argument for one's view whose premises could be accepted by everybody (including those who intuitively oppose the proposed view). If successful, the conservative approach provides a very strong defense indeed. A different ("progressive") approach, inspired by a Popperian–Carnapian methodology, dispenses with the strife for accumulation of reasonable knowledge on neutral territory and places value instead on the development of coherent alternative ways of looking at the phenomena in question. The principal defense, on this approach, consists not so much in proving one's claims by appeal to neutral premises but rather in showing the explanatory prowess of one's view. Such a defense is thus much weaker than the conservative one: it provides no argument (in the conservative sense) to accept the view in question and it is unlikely to have any persuasive power on an audience that is not already sympathetic (or at least open) to the view. But the "progressive" approach also has certain advantages. The methodological conservative can never make (legitimate) claims beyond what is licensed by the neutral ground. It is thus completely contingent on what happens to be intuitive at a given point in time. Given what we know about the way in which intuitions are shaped, and in particular about the way in which accepted theories influence intuitions, the methodologically conservative approach is conservative in one more sense, namely of preserving what happens to be the status quo at a given time.

I have already remarked that, from an evidential standpoint, what the methodological progressive tries to do is minute in comparison to what the methodological conservative tries to do. My aim in this paper is minute even in comparison with what the methodological progressive aims to do. For while the paper is a contribution to a methodologically progressive defense of explanatory nonindividualism, it only aims to establish the *coherence* not the explanatory prowess of the view.

I should make absolutely clear that I aim to offer no (methodologically conservative) argument for explanatory nonindividualism. To the contrary, I believe that it is very unlikely, if not impossible, that such an argument could be given (not until the intuitive currents sway in a different direction, that is). Indeed, I offer a (methodologically progressive) reason for thinking that this is unlikely in Section 4, where I identify a stronghold for the individualist intuitions.

3. Why is explanatory individualism so prominent?

Once the positions of explanatory individualism and nonindividualism are character-
ized as above, it becomes astonishing that explanatory individualism is considered to
be the default position, as it were. After all, it is explanatory individualism that
makes exceedingly strong claims (marked by the use of two universal quantifiers),
and yet hardly anyone feels impelled to justify them, placing the onus on the
challenger. Such justifications are available, however, and I want to consider a
representative portion of them, though certainly not all [7].

3.1. Cartesianism

One prominent source of motivations for explanatory individualism comes from the
meta-philosophical picture prominent since Descartes. It is in part due to Descartes'
solipsistic epistemological project, which has helped to define the very category of
the mental (Rorty, 1970), that we find it natural to interpret the question "What
moves the agent to act?" as the narrower "What (within the agent) moves the agent
to act?"

   While this methodological restriction is accepted widely, it is not clear that there
is any decisive consideration that forces it. After all, we are social animals born into
interactions with others. It is true that to some extent we grow to be independent
individuals who can evaluate the world (including the social world) from their own
point of view. But we only develop into beings that approximate such an ideal from
complete dependence on others. It is *prima facie* quite appropriate to investigate
human agency not in abstraction from, but precisely in recognition of, our social
embeddedness and our dependence on others.

3.2. The nature of agency

One might think that the explanatory nonindividualist is confused about what is
meant by "action." If "action" means "behavior," then anyone (the explanatory
individualist included) should agree that we can "act" (in the sense of "behave" or
"respond") to others' commands. But this is not what philosophers mean by
"action." When they speak of actions they sometimes mean *intelligent behavior*,
behavior that can be described intentionally, i.e. that can be explained by a belief
and a desire of the agent [8]. But if so then the nonindividualist not only is not but
can not be right. The very understanding of action *qua* action necessitates that it be
caused by the agent's desire.

   The strategy for the nonindividualist is clear. He must drive a wedge between
the concept of action and that of being caused by a belief and a desire of the agent.
He might do so by challenging the intuition that the only actions worthy of the
honorific term "action" rather than "behavior" are the ones that display the agent's
intelligence [9]. Or, he might accept that action is intelligent behavior but challenge
the thought that it involves belief–desire satisfaction [10]. Or, he might pursue an

even more radical strategy and challenge the received account of action according to which it involves a belief and a desire of the agent.

Though the latter strategy might appear radical, there is in fact a long tradition of understanding action that does not sneak in a conceptual connection to the agent's desires. Any theory of action must account for the distinction between genuine actions (the agent raising an arm) and mere happenings (the arm rising on its own). One (popular) strategy is to give an account of what it is for a performance to be an action in terms of it being intentional under a description (often rendered in terms of having been caused by, among other things, the agent's desires). Another (less popular) strategy is to give an account of what it is for a performance to be a mere happening in terms of it having occurred as a result of the operation of some defeating condition (caused by a spasm or by someone pushing the agent) and understand actions as performances that occur in the absence of such conditions. On the former strategy, an agent's raising his arm is an action to the extent that the performance has been caused (in the right way) by his beliefs and desires. On the latter strategy, an agent's raising his arm is an action of his to the extent that the arm movement has *not* been caused by a spasm, by someone else raising the agent's arm, etc. The latter strategy dates as far back as Aristotle [11] and has been more recently pursued by H.L.A. Hart (1951) as well as the contextualists (e.g. Melden, 1961). It is a strategy that is noteworthy for the explanatory nonindividualist because as long as it is possible to give an account of defeating conditions without appealing to the agent's desires, the conceptual tie between actions and the agent's desires is lost.

3.3. Action at a distance

None of this will help alleviate the impression that acting on another's desire would involve a kind of action at a distance. How could another person's desire move one to do anything unless it were mediated by the agent? Recall, however, that the nonindividualist is not committed to there being no mediation. He insists only that it is possible for there to be no mediation *by the agent's desires*. But this is quite compatible with the action being mediated by the agent's beliefs, for example, or other cognitive states. So, one might insist that another person's desire is going to explain the agent's action only if the agent believes that the other desires it of him. It will only make sense to explain that a child went to the store because his mother wanted him to if the child believed that the mother wanted him to go [12].

It is also important to emphasize that the nonindividualist does not hold that anyone's desire can move everybody else to act. To the contrary, the nonindividualist position is highly context-bound. Only in certain contexts (usually of close interpersonal interaction) will one person's wanting another to do something have the power to actually cause her to do so.

3.4. Others' desires are idle

The thought that the agent's beliefs mediate between another's desire and the agent's action may invite the following objection. One may argue not so much (at

least not directly) that there must be some desire on the part of the agent but rather that it cannot be the other person's desire that does the explaining. Consider two cases. In one case, a child goes to the store because his mother wants him to. The nonindividualist will insist that it is possible to understand the case as involving at least three explanatory elements: (a) the mother's desire for the child to go to the store, (b) the child's belief that his mother desires him to go, and (c) the absence (or at least inefficacy) of the child's desire to go to the store (under some description). The individualist will then suggest another analogous case that is lacking (a). Suppose that the situation is analogous except that the child believes that his mother desires him to go to the store while she does not in fact do so. (One can imagine the mother substituted by a robot, etc.) In such a situation, it is plausible to think that the child will act in exactly the same way. The mother's desire is not necessary to explain his action. In the original case, then, whatever it is that explains the child's action it is not the mother's desire, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding [13].

It is not exactly clear, however, how the individualist conclusion is to follow. Note first that the nonindividualist can embrace the claim that the mother's desire is not necessary to explain the child's action. But the nonindividualist need only be construed as claiming that it is efficacious as a matter of fact not that it is somehow necessary. (Just because the same event can be brought about by different causes does not undercut the causal efficacy of either of the causes [14].)

Presumably, the individualist means something stronger than this. It is not just that the efficacy of one (alleged) cause is to be undermined by the possibility of there being another. Rather the point is that one of the causes (the belief) screens off the other (the desire). Had the desire not been present, the belief would still suffice to bring about the action. Once again, however, this conclusion is not inescapable. Consider the following example from Lynne Rudder Baker (1995, p. 106). Suppose that a brick falls on John's foot causing him to cry out in pain. Baker points out that there is an intermediate cause of his crying out in pain, a certain state of the nervous system S. It would appear that S "screens off" the brick falling on John's foot. If the brick did not fall on John's foot but his nervous system were in S, John would still cry out in pain. Yet we want to resist the thought that when the brick actually falls on John's foot, it is not the brick falling on his foot but rather the state of his nervous system S that causes him to cry out in pain. Rather, what we ought to say is that the brick's falling causes John to cry out in pain via (causing) a certain state of his nervous system. Likewise then we should say about the case envisaged by the individualist that the mother's desire causes the child to act via (causing) him to acquire an appropriate belief.

3.5. Flexibility of intentional psychology

Even if nonindividualism were not deemed to be incoherent on the above grounds, it will appear extremely implausible to some. After all, as the psychologists' experiments show, we learn to apply intentional psychological categories very early. As a result, it is exceedingly easy for us *always* to find some desire that could explain any

action. Moreover, in cases where one agent acts on another's desire, it is after all possible for the agent to have not so much the desire to perform an action *per se* but rather the desire to satisfy another person's desire for him to perform the action. Even if the child does not want to go to the grocer's, he may want to oblige his mother.

I will say more about this feature of intentional psychology in Section 4. For now, let me note that the mere fact that it is always possible to concoct some pro-attitude (however meek) on the part of the agent does not yet vindicate explanatory individualism. There is a difference between the agent having a reason to act and the agent acting for that reason [15]. Just because we can always find some desire that *could explain* (i.e. that rationalizes) the action does not mean that we can always find some desire that actually *does explain* the agent's action. An argument would be needed to establish the stronger explanatory connection between the action and some desire on the part of agent. Indeed, the individualist can offer such an argument—the argument from breakdown cases.

3.6. The argument from breakdown cases

Consider an example of an action that is apparently explained by another person's desire. Suppose a child goes to the store because his mother wants him to get some carrots. The individualist will claim that not only is it possible to attribute some desire on the part of the child but that it is imperative that we do so or else the action will remain unexplained. To see that the child must be moved by some desire of his own consider what would happen if he did not have such a desire. Clearly, if he did not want to go to the store (under some description [16]), he would not have gone *ceteris paribus*. So, since the child did go to the store, he must have wanted to go to the store (under some description).

The argument seems to be credible at first sight. The only potentially problematic premise central to the argument (had the child not wanted to go to the store, he would not have done so; henceforth, (C)) is highly plausible. After all, we have little difficulty imagining that had the child really dug in his heels, he would not have gone to the store. A closer inspection, however, suggests at least three problems with the argument, all of which center around the crucial premise (C).

The first problem concerns the fact that (C) is in fact scope-ambiguous with respect to negation. A claim of the form "α doesn't want to φ" can mean either that α wants to not-φ (α has a con-attitude toward φing) or that it is not the case that α wants to φ (α lacks a pro-attitude toward φing). We are notorious for obscuring the difference between these two readings. Consider the exclamation "I have no intention of complying with the court's order!" Contrary to the form of words used, which indicates the latter reading, in fact the former is intended.

There are accordingly two possible readings of (C):

(C₁) Had the child lacked a pro-attitude toward going to the store (under some description), he would not have gone to the store *ceteris paribus*.

(C$_2$) Had the child had a con-attitude toward going to the store (under some description), he would not have gone to the store *ceteris paribus*.

In order to establish that the pro-attitude is necessary to explain the action, the individualist would have to rely on (C$_1$) rather than (C$_2$). At the same time, however, it is only (C$_2$) that he can make use of. When we imagine the child digging in his heals and not wanting to go, we are imagining not merely that the child *lacks* a pro-attitude toward going to the store but rather that he *has* a *con*-attitude toward it. Indeed, intentional psychology can only aspire to telling us not what happens when agents lack intentional attitudes but rather what happens when they have intentional attitudes [17]. If so, however, then the argument does not and *cannot* establish that a pro-attitude on the part of the agent is necessary for him to act.

We have seen that even if the nonindividualist accepts the central premise at face value, there is still room for her to claim that, in cases where the agent lacks a con- and a pro-attitude toward performing an action, i.e. in cases where the agent is indifferent toward performing the action, another person's desire can move him to act. It is not clear, however, that the nonindividualist should accept the central premise so easily in the first place. She could argue that the *ceteris paribus* clause in fact already covers up nonindividualist contents. So, while we might believe that very often when the child wants not to go to the store, he will not go to the store, we might also believe that when his parent wants him to go to the store he will go *ceteris paribus*, whether or not he wants to. This is a very natural thought given the kind of dependence structure that is, if not inherent then at least, preponderant in parent–child relationships. And there are numerous further cases that support the thought that we do sometimes act contrary to our intentional attitudes. Milgram's experiments on obedience once again spring to mind.

Finally, note that (C) is extremely vague. The qualifier "under some description" is meant to remind us that in the case under consideration it may not be so much that the child wants to go to the store as that the child wants to help his mother or perhaps that he wants to fulfill the mother's desire or … But it is surely open to the nonindividualist to object at this point that the qualifier functions as a "catch-all" for the rich repertoire of desires that intentional psychology allows us to attribute to the agent. Recall that the argument from breakdown cases was supposed to *demonstrate* that *there is always some* desire of the agent that actually explains it (rather than merely rationalizes it). All that the argument could afford (if successful, which it is not, as argued above) is a schema for arguing that any one *particular* desire (say, the desire to go the store or the desire to help the mother) has been efficacious. But were such particular desires to be found inefficacious in particular cases, the argument gives us no assurance at all that *there is some* desire on the agent's part that was efficacious [18]. In other words, it does not exclude the possibility that, in some particular case, we would have to reject as inefficacious all the desires that our flexible intentional psychology would produce as rationalizing candidates.

3.7. *"Why did you do what he told you to?"*

Consider the following objection: even when one person's action can be explained by appealing to the desires of others, that does not exclude the deeper explanation that she does what others desire her to do because she desires to please the others, or herself, by accommodating the wishes of others. In other words, if we keep pressing the issue by asking why one would act to accommodate the desires of others, we can only explain it ultimately by appealing to the agent's desire to please the other [19].

The objection here attempts to rise to a higher (in some sense) level of explanation. In particular, it envisages those cases left untouched by the argument from breakdown cases where the agent is said to be indifferent and yet acts because of another person's desire. The point here is that even if one grants that the argument from breakdown cases allows the nonindividualist to hold some ground, this ground is rather shaky since the individualist can still ask why would any one act to fulfill others' desires unless she wanted to.

It is not exactly clear whether this objection brings in any new force to the individualist cause. It does not really offer an argument *why* the *only* explanation to this second-round question would have to appeal only to the desires of the agent. (One would surely not want to go through a second round of the argument from breakdown cases since this would only lead to other rounds *ad infinitum*.) Surely an individualist explanation is intuitive and perhaps the first one that comes to mind— at first at any rate. But that is easy to understand given the fact that is both granted and understood by the nonindividualist, namely, that intentional psychology is so prominent.

Perhaps the following reveals a non-question-begging reason for thinking that the only answer to the second-round question would appeal to the agent's desires. Jim passes the salt when asked. Why does he do what the other person asked him to do? Perhaps the reason why we are inclined to think that we can only explain it in terms of his desire to please the person asking for it, say, is that we do not think that we could explain it in nonintentional terms. After all, we are asking for why he would act because of another's desire. "Because of another's desire" may appear an unlikely candidate. But that is not necessarily so. Let us change the example. Jimmy asks Susie to get his toy back. Susie gives him the toy back because he has asked for it. Why did she do that? Because his mother wants her to learn to be less possessive and told her that she must give toys back to their owners when they ask for them. This is a plausible example offering a deeper (or, at any rate, further) nonintentional explanation of a nonintentional explanation. In other words, there is nothing "logically forbidding" about having a nonintentional explanation of a nonintentional explanation. But this is not to say that the individualist will not strike back with the question, "But why would Susie do that unless she wanted to obey her mother perhaps because she fears punishment or wants to please her?" [20].

It is not clear, however, why other kinds of explanations might not be possible. One could explain why we act on others' desires in Wittgensteinian terms, broadly speaking, in terms of the social practices that we enter. Jim passes the salt when

asked. Why does he do what the other person asked him to do? He has learned table manners. Why does Tim follow the commands of the captain of the cliff rescue team? He has been trained to do just that. (In the latter case, more than the former, it may be appropriate to ask the further why-question. In the latter case, one might get an explanation in terms of the agent's desire to rescue people but not necess-arily—perhaps his father was involved in cliff rescue and he has just followed his lead. In the former, the answer may invoke just our cultural milieu.) Why does Susie do as her mother tells her to do? This is part of what it means to be a child of a parent, that one does as one's parent tells or advises one to act. (We rebel only against a background of conformity.)

Of course, the debate is not going to stop here either because the individualist will just keep pressing. But, again, that is not surprising to the nonindividualist. What should be surprising to an uncommitted (and hard to find) bystander ought to be the persistence of the individualist in making sure that the "buck" stops with an intentional explanation. (Surely one would want *some argument* why it cannot stop with something else, a practice, say. The argument from breakdown cases? But then we are back to another round.)

3.8. Rational choice theory

There is a view that intentional psychology, just like its more elegant and formalized cousin rational choice theory, is conceptually necessary (von Mises, 1966). It is simply a tautology that people act on their preferences or desires.

This view fails to take sufficient notice of the fact that rational choice theory is a *formal* theory. As a formal theory, it tries to capture conceptual dependencies between such concepts as desire (utility), belief (probability), choice, rationality, etc. Rational choice theory in particular does not explicitly address or raise the question "Whose preferences is the agent realizing?" It is not impossible to believe at this point that there *might* be formalizable relations between the concepts of other-per-son-preference, agent-preference and rationality that would yield what one might call a nonindividualist rational choice theory [21].

It is, however, likewise possible that such a development will not take place. It might simply turn out that the explanations of actions invoking the desires of others are, from a formal point of view, entirely uninteresting. Moreover, it is not as if such actions fall out of the range of rational choice theory altogether. To the contrary, they can be roughly accommodated by means of the formal maneuver I earlier called "individualist reduction" (see Section 1.4) [22]. As long as there are no *formal*(iz-able) differences between acting on another's desire (mother's desire that her son bring her some flour) and acting on one's own desire directed at another's desire (son's desire to fulfill his mother's desire that he bring her some flour), one should not expect that the distinction in question will have any impact on formal rational choice theory.

The emphasis should be put on "formal" [23]. For to say that rational choice theory, as a formal theory, simply does not distinguish between acting on one's own preferences and acting on another's preferences is also to say that the invocation of

the agent's own preferences only comes at the point when the formal theory is interpreted. Nothing stands in the way of formulating an "anti-individualist interpretation" of rational choice theory [24]. One could interpret the expression "$u(x)$" (which usually stands for the agent α's subjective utility assigned to option x) as standing for the individual Ω's subjective utility assigned to α's choosing option x. So, for example, the principle of transitivity of preference would read: if Ω prefers that α choose x to y and Ω prefers that α choose y to z then Ω prefers that α choose x to z. The dominance principle in turn would read: if Ω prefers α's choosing x to α's choosing y then Ω prefers α's choosing x to the lottery (x, p, y), where "p" stands for the probability of x and $1 > p > 0$, and Ω prefers lottery (x, p, y) to α's choosing y. Further, one would have to reinterpret the principle of rationality. One would have to assume (in accordance with anti-individualist intuitions) that it is rational for α to maximize the expected utility understood as above, i.e. with reference to Ω's preferences.

From a formal point of view, the anti-individualist interpretation of rational choice theory is equivalent to the individualist interpretation simply because the formal framework does not change at all—the reference to Ω is not used in any way. At the same time, it would be premature to defend the individualist interpretation on the grounds that it better fits our intuitions. First, one cannot claim that the anti-individualist interpretation fails to take into account α's preferences. Of course, it does take α's preferences into account—thanks to the anti-individualist reduction, i.e. insofar as Ω's preferences are appropriately directed at α's preferences. Second, perhaps more important, one could wonder what claims the preferences of some individual Ω have on the rationality of α's actions. Indeed, if the referent of "Ω" were to be John Doe, such an interpretation might appear to be outright amusing, but if God (or some other authority figure) were to be its referent, it certainly ceases to be humorous and there may have existed a time in history where such an interpretation would have been taken as the default.

I am not trying to argue for a theological interpretation of rational choice theory. What I am trying to point out is that we are too quick in associating rational choice theory with explanatory individualism. Just as it would be baseless for the proponents of the anti-individualist interpretation to rational choice theory to claim that we never act on our own preferences (unless they are mediated by Ω's preferences), so it is baseless for the supporters of the individualist interpretation of rational choice theory to think that we never act on another person's preferences (unless they are mediated by our own preferences). Formal rational choice theory should be clearly separated from its semantic interpretation. In and of itself, formal rational choice theory is neither individualist nor anti-individualist (it simply does not have the resources to address that question), though it can be given an interpretation that is "individualist" or "anti-individualist." Such interpretations will be accompanied by "individualist" and "anti-individualist" reductions of non-basic preferences. Again, it is important not to misunderstand the nature of such reductions. They should not (reasons to the contrary notwithstanding) be understood as reductions of phenomena but only as ways of encompassing certain phenomena that, from a *formal* point of view, are indistinguishable from one another. Finally, it

is crucial to realize that even if actions done because of others' desires are formally uninteresting, this does not yet mean that they are uninteresting from other points of view—in particular from the standpoint of the psychological reality of such actions.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of explanatory individualism, the nonindividualist picture of agency is not unfamiliar. It portrays us as only *sometimes* independent of others' will, but other times as quite dependent on the will of others. Sometimes we act because we want to—whether or not others want us to; other times, we act because others want us to—whether or not we want to. It will not be in vain to note that this way of seeing us as agents is not very flattering. There we are, occasionally at the mercy of others' wants and wishes, now and again managing to resist them but also capable of uncritically unreflectively following others. Far from always being independent, tough-minded, strong-willed, we are sometimes dependent, feeble-minded, weak-willed. But as we know from our experience, quite frequently there is a gap between what we would like to and what we ought to think about ourselves.

4. The explanatory and the formation-of-self levels of folk psychology

We arrive at an impasse. On the one hand, I hope to have given some reasons for thinking that the explanatory nonindividualist position is natural and that what makes it seem unnatural are philosophical arguments that lose much of their power under closer scrutiny. On the other hand, however, I have done nothing to suggest that explanatory individualism is not an intuitive position. Indeed, perhaps the sense that both positions are natural adds some ammunition for the explanatory individualist who seeks to reconcile these conflicting intuitions by arguing for an individualist reduction—the rendition of the nonintentional explanations in terms of the intentional ones (it is not the mother's desire but the son's desire to fulfill the mother's desire that moves him to act). Here, I want to propose a nonindividualist reconciliation. I will conjecture that folk psychology operates on (at least) two levels: normative and explanatory. On the explanatory level, nonindividualism is the correct position to hold: explanatory individualism is false. But there is room for an individualist position at the normative level.

4.1. The normative (formation-of-self) and the explanatory level

The aims of folk psychology at the explanatory level are familiar: to offer an account, however provisional, of why people do what they do as well as to offer some means for predicting their behaviors. Unlike explanatory individualism, explanatory nonindividualism pictures our explanatory practices as being extremely messy. Not only are the generalizations, if any, half-baked but they are relative to various social contexts.

At the normative level, the concern is not so much with the explanation of our actions as with casting them in a special light. The guiding purpose is to offer such explanations that would further the image of ourselves as independent, autonomous, strong-willed persons and thus help shape us as such individuals. It is thus that the

individualist thought finds its place. It is not so much that we *do* act on our own reasons but that we *should* act on our own reasons if we want to deserve being considered individuals. At this level of folk-psychological discourse, only those explanations that foster such an image of ourselves are acceptable. There is thus a sense of the question "Why did you do it?" that admits as answers only those that ultimately refer to the agent's desires.

Consider two examples that support this division. Imagine a housewife answering the question why she cleans the house, mends the socks, cooks the food, and so on, by (seriously) explaining that it is her social role as a housewife and that the social role is a part of the ongoing patriarchal order of things. There is something wrong here (we think), even though many (and perhaps by now most) of us believe that the facts to which she would appeal are *true*, and are more than likely to indeed *explain* why she cleans house, mends socks, cooks food. So why is our explanation of her action not all right when she offers it? Why should not her saying it simply confirm our explanation?

Her explanation of her actions in terms of the patriarchal structure of the society is not all right because it is not the kind of explanation that we want *from her*. G.E.M. Anscombe (1963) was surely right—we want to know *her* reasons. While the factual claim that ordinary explanations of action always cite the *agent's* reasons is questionable, it seems nonetheless true that the reason why we find the housewife's sociologically sophisticated explanation hard to accept is that it does not give *her own* reasons to so act. To the contrary, it seems to offer reasons for her not to so act. After all, who would want to continue living in servitude?

Take another example. After Milgram conducted his famous obedience experiments, he contacted the subjects, asking in particular those who have obeyed the commands of the experimenter to the end to reflect on what and why they did. One kind of response he obtained is particularly revealing: "I don't know." There is a level (the explanatory level) at which the response is obviously false. He proceeded to the end because the experimenter commanded him to. But there is a level (the normative level) at which the response is exactly to the point. What the person is expressing is that there is no explanation of his behavior of the sort that is wanted. He can give no reasons (of his own) that would support the behavior as compatible with the image of the self he should be fostering.

4.2. Intentional psychology can ensure that your attitudes reflect your actions: how?

It is significant to emphasize that the extreme flexibility and ease with which intentional psychology can be applied makes it a perfect tool for this normative purpose. It provides a plethora of attitudes to choose from in giving the most charitable account of the action. The ambiguity noted in rebutting the argument from breakdown cases is instructive in this context. We will remember that we are notorious for confusing the lack of a pro-attitude with the presence of a con-attitude. It is instructive to see how the mentioned ambiguity renders the law of excluded middle as applied to the having of a pro-attitude:

(LEM) for any action, either it is the case that the agent wants to perform it or it is not the case that the agent wants to perform it,

More idiomatically: for any action, the agent either wants to perform it or does not want to perform it. Our slick equivocation allows one to render (LEM) as the false:

(PPA) for any action, the agent either has a pro-attitude toward performing it or the agent has a con-attitude toward performing it.

We might call this rendition of (LEM) the principle of polarization of attitudes (PPA), for what it licenses us to do is to attribute to the agent *some* attitude (whether pro- or con-) for *any* action. This is important for in view of the ideal to which we aspire, the worst that could happen is if the agent had no attitude and were indifferent. You ate spinach—so you must have liked it, because had you not liked it you would not have eaten it; you did not eat spinach—so you must have disliked it, because had you liked it you would have eaten it. Of course, it is possible for you to offer *another* reason (like the fact that you wanted not to be rude), i.e. to exhibit another attitude, but exhibit an attitude you must. The possibility of your having simply eaten the spinach, without having shed one thought, like or dislike, vanishes under the universal reign of (PPA). (PPA) makes sure that you stand behind your actions, that *your attitudes reflect your actions*.

4.3. Intentional psychology can ensure that your attitudes reflect your actions: some consequences

Let us consider some further corroborating evidence for the suggestion that the purpose of intentional psychology is to promote a certain picture of our selves. I have already remarked on the extreme flexibility of intentional psychology. Aside from its ability to provide us with a multitude of attitudes to choose from it leads to instructive conceptual tensions. What is instructive about them is that they arise exactly at the places one would expect them to arise if the intentional framework were geared toward giving us a picture of ourselves as independent strong-willed individuals. There are certain phenomena such as altruism, akrasia and enslavement that appear to contradict the image of us as independent individuals who always act on their own reasons. Indeed, though the existence of these phenomena is unquestionable, it is very hard to express particular cases of them in the framework of intentional psychology. The very attempt to try to understand such phenomena in intentional terms leads to a reversal of the intuitions we harbor about them.

Perhaps the most famous conceptual tension is the paradox of altruism. Although much more is involved, one argument nicely summarizes the issue:

With regard to altruism, the … intuition is that since it is I who am acting even when I act in the interests of another, it must be an interest of mine which provides the impulse. If so, any convincing justification of apparently altruistic behavior must appeal to what *I* want. (Nagel, 1970, pp. 80–81)

The very attempt to formulate what an altruistic action is, namely, action done for

the sake of another, seems doomed because we must understand the action as done because of what the agent wants or intends. And if so then his action must be conceived as furthering the agent's end (even if that end will be to further another's end), and must ultimately be conceived not as an altruistic action, as might have been thought, but as an egoistic one.

The paradox of altruism is interesting because it arises out of nowhere, out of the very way that the vocabulary functions, and yet contrary to the thoughts that are to be conveyed. Of course, one may take this fact to show that we are indeed egoists, or one may try to specify the kinds of wants that could be candidates for confirming that we are egoists. But one may also try to look back at the phenomena and juxtapose a greedy businessman and someone who stakes his life for the life of another. It is when one does the latter and hears someone insisting that both are egoists in *some* sense that Wittgenstein's diagnosis of our language sometimes going on a holiday seems the most appropriate. But it is more than a holiday. There is a deeper purpose that this function of the intentional language is designed to play, namely, to present the individual agent as autonomous master of his actions.

A similar tension has been involved in the conceptualization of the very phenomenon of weakness of will. When we imagine an akratic agent who resolves not to φ, is fully motivated not to φ, and then φs, we are almost immediately drawn into supposing that he must have wanted to φ in *some* sense. Perhaps a momentary desire to φ, a momentary change of mind, governed his action, so that his action was not weak-willed after all. And indeed if one looks at particular cases of akratic actions, it is very tempting to reconstruct them in ways that turn the weak-willed into strong-willed actions. As a result, we are more confident in the existence of akrasia as a phenomenon than in the existence of particular instances of akratic actions. Once again, our skill in interpreting actions as strong-willed is remarkably consistent with our charity toward the individual.

One last example of a conceptual tension involves cases of undue influence of others on the agent. On one conceptualization of such cases (Nowak, 1987, 1991), most of us have a tendency to respond with hostility if exposed to continued acts of malevolence on the part of another. However, there comes a point when, if the acts of malevolence increase in intensity, our tendency to respond with hostile actions becomes broken and we tend to respond with benevolent acts [25]. The telling examples here involve cases of people who have been "broken." The best literary example is Winston Smith (Orwell, 1949). Others include prisoners, soldiers, mental patients, women, slaves, subjected to mental, physical and situational torture. When a person in such a situation behaves with benevolence toward her oppressor, we want to interpret the action as servile. But when we try to understand the action intentionally, the agent acting because she *wants* to be benevolent or even because she *wants* to be servile, the characterization of the action as servile seems threatened. It is almost as if we want to say that she is within her rights to do as she wants, and if *she wants* to behave in that way toward her oppressor that is *her* privilege. But if this is the psychological portrait of the agent then she appears as a strong-willed independent person, not servile at all. Once again, the intentional

explanation seems to turn around the intuitions that we harbor about the phenomena.

In these three cases, of altruism, of akrasia and of enslavement, we see a tendency for intentional explanations of actions to falsify our intuitions about the phenomena. It is as if the intentional framework provides its explanations with an inertia that is hard to overcome. To say that it is hard to express our intuitions using intentional language is not yet to say that it is impossible. Volumes have been devoted to the casting of those phenomena in intentional terms with the help of various distinctions. The point I am making concerns only a simple-minded application of intentional language. But the existence of the tensions at this pre-systematic intuitive level is all that is needed to support the picture of the place of intentional psychology I am advocating.

5. The two levels of folk psychology and the perspective of reasons

There is a general question here that should be addressed, at least provisionally—at the very least as a way of marking a question [26] that deserves a much more complete and balanced answer. The question concerns the relation between what I have been calling the normative or formation-of-self dimension of intentional explanations and the moral or justifying dimension thereof. After all, intentional explanations often cite reasons and the primary function of reasons is to justify. One might wonder then how these two—certainly both normative—functions are related. I will sketch a (largely) speculative picture that might help a little bit, though it will no doubt only raise further questions. In brief, the thought is that there are at least three dimensions in which the framework of folk psychology is involved: explanatory, formation-of-self and justificatory. Two of these roles (explanatory and justificatory) have been already much discussed in the literature [27]. However, philosophical thinking about the explanatory dimension of folk psychology has been filtered through the *justificatory* focus on reasons. But it is difficult to see *why* the *explanatory* sight of folk psychologists ought to be focused *exclusively* on the agent's reasons. It is not, as is evident from actually looking at the practices, and there are no decisive reasons to construe it as such, as I tried to argue.

One might speculate that what is revealed in these three dimensions is a certain development that we undergo as agents. We enter this world as very complex beings, already capable of a lot of things but relatively undeveloped as agents. We must, at the very least, learn to understand our actions in various circumstances, learn to understand ourselves as independent selves and learn to attend to the right sorts of facts, to reasons. So one might think that these roles of folk psychology, and corresponding expectations that others have of us (one might use Dennett's language and speak of stances here) are integral in our becoming agents, who respond to their complex social environment, who become and are able to see themselves as autonomous selves and who, as such selves, respond to reasons and eventually must find their place among others.

In adopting the *explanatory stance* (appropriate at what I have been calling the explanatory level), we try to explain the agent's actions in terms of her desires and

beliefs, her character traits, others' desires, commands and requests, the social roles that she occupies, and so on and so forth. At this stage, the agent (*qua* moral agent) is not yet in sight. But this stage is helpful as the first stage of reflection on our agency. That we respond to these various circumstances is simply a fact that we can understand, for example, by reflecting on our evolutionary heritage. What the explanatory stance helps us to do is to acquire some self-reflective knowledge of this fact, which may not always be very flattering (especially if we are also aware of various pressures pushing us to conform to norms of reflective, independent or moral behavior) but which might be motivating for us to change our ways. It is only when we come to be aware that we, as a matter of fact, willy nilly, discriminate against certain groups of people, for example, that we can then take steps to counteract those tendencies of ours.

In adopting the *normative (self-formation) stance* (corresponding to what I have been calling the normative level), we try to understand the agent's actions *only* in terms of her perspective, as it were, sometimes forcing them into her own belief–desire mold. At this stage, it does not matter how good the agent's reasons are as long as they are the agent's own. In this way, the agent learns to view her actions as *her own*. It is plausible to suppose that it is crucial for parents and educators in general to adopt such an attitude toward children—in making them recognize themselves as autonomous selves. This is a point at which at least some decisions need to be left to the child and be uncontrolled by guardians. Children who are very dependent on their parents not only *de facto* but who also see their parents' decisions and desires in all (or almost all) they do, can be helped to see their selves in what they do precisely by employing the rich resources of intentional language. This is a point where it may be beneficial for such agents to use intentional psychology as a kind of false consciousness, to force them to see some independence in deep dependencies.

Finally, one may adopt a further evaluative or properly *justifying stance* and try to evaluate the agent's actions in view of the reasons for them. The agent is expected to attend to reasons and to act in accordance with them. At this stage, it is less crucial that the reasons be the agent's own but that they be good reasons. In fact, one might think that a form of normative nonindividualism is applicable here [28]. The fact that *a child wants to* play the piano is a good reason *for his parents* to send him to take piano lessons. It would be awkward to think that it must be *their wanting* to realize their child's wish that constitutes the proper reason for sending him to take piano lessons. Indeed, we do uphold ideals of helping others, working toward the good of the community, placing the good of another before one's own, etc. The existence of such other-regarding reasons need not, however, conflict with the fact that we adhere to normative individualism at the formation-of-self level. It is plausible to think that the justifying stance presupposes the self-formation stance. The justifying stance is properly directed to independent agents, who already are selves, who are able to see their actions as their own. It would be premature to adopt the justifying stance to individuals who cannot properly adapt to our adopting the self-formation stance, who do not properly respond by giving their own accounts of their actions but still defer to their parent's advice or to the bully's demand. The justifying stance is appropriate only when an individual can be properly viewed as a

person facing a choice, say, between helping others and thinking about herself. We might praise her choosing the former option not the latter. But our evaluation is based on the fact that we are considering *her* choice between other-regarding and self-regarding reasons. In other words, the normative-nonindividualist ideals we uphold are framed against the background of the normative-individualist ideal of the agent acting on *her own* desires. We would still think less of a person if all he ever did (including helping others, acting toward a common good, etc.) was only because his mother told him to do so.

6. Conclusion

I have suggested taking an alternative perspective on the variety of folk-psychological explanations of actions, in particular explanations in terms of others' desires. It is common to take the explanatory individualist approach and think that such explanations are enthymematic—that they need to be reduced to or at least supplemented with belief–desire explanations. The outstanding reason for the prominence of this position is that the explanatory nonindividualist approach appears to be incoherent. I have tried to argue that this appearance is deceiving. I have further suggested a nonindividualist explanation of the source of the popularity of the individualist position. The reason why we find individualism so inescapable derives not from the fact that it offers us an accurate reconstruction of our folk-psychological explanatory practices, for explanatory nonindividualism fares better at this level. Rather, it derives from the fact that intentional psychology is perfectly suited (due to its flexibility, for example) to playing the normative role in helping us shape our selves on the model of independent individuals. It is at this normative level that the individualist thought that we (should) act on our own desires is constitutive of the kind of explanations that are eligible. This means, however, that the apparent inescapability of individualism is the worst reason for thinking that it is true. It is the best-intentioned false consciousness but a false consciousness nonetheless.

Toward the end I should like to make a comment about the general import of the line of thought pursued here. One might worry that the dispute between explanatory individualism and nonindividualism is relatively insignificant, as is suggested by the main topic of the dispute, namely, the reconstruction of folk psychology. It pays to be reminded, however, that folk-psychological categories are directly relevant to the way in which we understand the nature of the mental. The choice of the directive of explanatory individualism constrains not only the choice of conceptions of the mind but also the range of scientific disciplines to which we look for answers to specific questions about the mental to such sciences as (narrowly construed) cognitive psychology, cognitive science or neuroscience. Furthermore, it invites the thought that the choice of the directive of nonindividualism opens the horizons on such scientific disciplines as personality psychology, clinical psychology, social psychology or even sociology. The question "Which group of sciences ought we to consult in addressing the issue of the nature of the mental?" is by no means trivial.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] See also von Eckhardt's (1997) call for an empirically responsible account of folk psychology.

[2] The distinction is central to Hornsby's (1997) naïve naturalism.

[3] What the actual experimental results would have been is from our point of view of less significance as long as we recognize the plausibility of these explanations. It would be interesting, however, to see what the frequency distribution of these explanations would be, and how it would depend on various types of factors: the child's response to the first picture; the child's experiences with his parents; the child's personality (independent vs. submissive); what is under the bed (a cat vs. a toy); the facial expression of the mother (friendly smile, angry/determined look); the gender/age of the adult person.

[4] I use the term "desire" as a synonym for the less idiomatic "pro-attitude." Desires in this sense include strong phenomenologically felt desires and wants, but also mere inclinations, wishes, intentions, etc. There was some opposition (especially among some moral psychologists) with respect to Davidson's initial introduction of this "umbrella" term that seems to violate natural linguistic division of the subject matter. I want to add one point to the thought that has already been offered in defense of Davidson, namely, that there are good theoretical reasons for having this all-encompassing category. The point is simply a reminder that the fact that English lacks such a term does not necessarily mean that this "umbrella" category "violates" natural linguistic divisions in other languages. In Polish, for example, there are two separate terms: "*pragnienie*" which best translates as "desire" (it can also be used narrowly to mean "thirst" just as the English "desire" can be used narrowly to refer to sexual desire) and "*dążenie*" which encompasses desires, wishes and intentions (Ajdukiewicz, 1938/1960).

[5] Decency requires that one add Wittgenstein's *Philosophical investigations* (1958). I do so eagerly but with some trepidation. Wittgenstein's writings have been claimed by many explanatory individualists and it would require serious argument to claim him as an explanatory nonindividualist. To realize that there is room for such claims, it suffices to reflect on the fact that one of the prime examples of an agent's action throughout the *Philosophical investigations* is that of obeying an order.

[6] Recently, Sober and Wilson (1998) have used a careful evolutionary analysis to argue that psychological altruism is possible.

[7] I discuss some other objections to explanatory nonindividualism in Paprzycka (1998).

[8] One may object to the equation of "behavior that can be described intentionally" and "behavior that can be explained by a belief and a desire of the agent." If one does, the objection against the nonindividualist loses its power. For its force relies on their being a conceptual connection between being an action and being explained by the agent's desire.

[9]   There are good reasons to think that the reason why we distinguish between behavior and action has to do with ascriptions of responsibility (see Hart, 1951; Paprzycka, 1997).

[10]   For the development of this influential thought, inspired by Heidegger, see e.g. Haugeland (1995).

[11]   See Aristotle's (1985, 1111a22–24) characterization of voluntary action in terms of what is not involuntary.

[12]   I ought to clarify here that I am not endorsing the thought that beliefs are in fact necessary for every action. My point is only that such a position is compatible with explanatory nonindividualism which bears the argumentative brunt in this paper. There are in fact attempts to claim that the view on which beliefs are necessary for every action is false. See, for example, Collins (1997) and Stout (1996). It is pertinent to note here that the concept of "belief" in this context is quite treacherous. When one speaks, in one breath, of beliefs and desires, what one usually has in mind are instrumental beliefs concerning the agent's thoughts of how to achieve certain goals. One does not then usually have in mind numerous perceptual beliefs that the agent has, and perhaps must have, about the world, his position in it, etc. Moreover, it is certainly not clear that perceptual beliefs are on a par with instrumental beliefs in that most of the former are best construed as belonging to the subpersonal account of the agent's behavior (the sleepwalker also has many "beliefs" about the environment that explain her navigating around most of the obstacles). The distinction is pertinent for we can imagine an action done solely on one's desire (just because I want to) without being guided by an instrumental belief (Mele, 1988, 1992) even though such an action is most certainly guided by many perceptual beliefs (most of which are plausibly construed as entering into the subpersonal account of what the agent is doing). This is plausible at least for simple actions such as raising one's arm, sitting down, clapping, smiling, etc. which the agent *knows how* to do. For such cases, however, it is also plausible to imagine the nonindividualist case: the agent raises an arm because her gym teacher tells her to do so. There need be no desire of the agent here and there need be no instrumental belief about how to achieve the teacher's command. There do need to be some perceptual beliefs, which constitute the right sort of hook-up to the world.

[13]   I am grateful to Peter Klein for bringing this objection sharply into focus for me.

[14]   This point is also made by Jonathan Dancy (1995) in not so different a context. He considers a variety of arguments that share a common form with the original argument from illusion. The paper illuminates our too quick tendency to resort to psychologistic categories in various philosophical domains.

[15]   The *locus classicus* of this distinction is Davidson's "Actions, reasons, and causes" (1963/1980).

[16]   This is meant to leave it open exactly what the content of the requisite explanatory desire is. I will say more about it below.

[17]   One could argue that to the extent that intentional psychology presents a complete account of our folk-psychological explanations, it does too tell us what happens when agents lack intentional attitudes. However, this claim is question-begging against the nonindividualist who challenges precisely the alleged completeness of the individualist account of folk psychology.

[18]   Another way of putting the point is that the argument reaches the general existential conclusion by existential generalization. It thus relies on finding a particular desire that was explanatorily involved in a particular action. But it offers no assurance that such an explanatorily relevant desire will be found for every action.

[19]   I owe this objection to an exchange with Robert Almeder.

[20]   The reader should be warned here that it is possible to build into the why-question a tone of asking it such that only answers in terms of the agent's desires count as legitimate. This danger is real because, as I argue in Section 4, there is a why-question, characteristic of *normative* individualism, that works in just this way. But there is a why-question that allows for a broader spectrum of answers. Obviously, the *explanatory* nonindividualist is and can only be interested in answering the latter question.

[21]   Formal theories after all can be seen as developing by taking a more fine-grained view of

reality (this is very in clear in the development of various logical calculi that take account of further and further conceptual connections among features of our language).

[22]   It is worth noting that understood as a formal maneuver, this move is entirely justified. If our aim is to find whatever aspects of reality are formalizable, then we may well note that certain actions (those done because of somebody else's desire) *would* be formalizable if they resembled certain other actions (those done because of one's own desires directed toward other people's desires). What would be problematic is if one later thought that this constituted a reason for denying empirical facts. The analogy here might be between, say, one first trying to argue that the material conditional *could* be thought as providing a basic interpretation of the English expression "if … then …" only later to claim the hegemony of the material conditional denying out-front any other attempts to capture the meaning of the English connective (e.g. by relevance logics).

[23]   Elizabeth Anderson (2001) distinguishes between multiple dimensions of rational choice theory, among them between the formal theory of rational choice and the rhetoric of rational choice. She chooses a study by Kristin Luker (1975) to argue that the actions of the women Luker studies can be understood as expressing a cost–benefit analysis (conforming to the formal theory of rational choice) but where the preferences the women satisfy are not theirs but those of other people (not conforming to the rhetoric of rational choice).

[24]   This interpretation is anti-individualist (not: nonindividualist) because it takes it that we *always* (not: sometimes) act on another person's desires.

[25]   Nowak suggests that aside from the relatively "normal" areas of human interaction where the agent responds with malevolence to malevolent actions and with benevolence to benevolent actions, there are two "abnormal" areas: of enslavement, where the malevolence of the other is sufficiently large that the agent responds with benevolence, and of satanization, where the benevolence of the other is sufficiently large that the agent responds with malevolence. His model is indirectly confirmed by constituting the foundation for his general theory of real socialism.

[26]   I am grateful to one of the referees of this journal for pressing me on this issue even if my response will be unsatisfying.

[27]   The distinction between motivating and normative reasons captures the consideration of them in these two lights: explanatory and justifying, respectively (see e.g. Dancy, 2000; Smith, 1994).

[28]   I am grateful to Mark Lance for making me ponder this point.

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