

Part I

Surveying the Territory

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The Mental Landscape

The starting-point is description. With the minimum of philosophical sophistication, we need to describe the features that make up the mental landscape. Fortunately, this task will not require field trips. Equipped as we are with minds, each of us is perfectly well-placed to do the job with little more (but no less) than thought. Of course, it may well be that the proximity of mind can, in the end, be a source of error. As you will come to appreciate, there can be two views here: one stresses that the mind is special precisely because it is knowable from the ‘inside’, whilst the other view, insisting that real knowledge must be observer-independent, demands that we study the mind from somewhere more objectively ‘outside’. Exactly what the ‘inside/outside’ metaphor comes to will be considered in later chapters, but for the present we will proceed without worrying too much about this.

Ideally, I should like to ask you to think about how to answer the following question: what things or phenomena count as mental, as showing the presence of minds? These answers would then serve as the starting-point of our investigation. Though circumstances do not allow me to gather this information directly, I can do the next best thing. Over the years, I have handed out a questionnaire to students before they have done any philosophy of mind, asking them to list the sorts of things that they would count as showing the presence of minds. Below is a lightly edited collation of their answers:

ability to learn	acting intentionally	agency
awareness	believing	building a house
ability to represent	choosing	ability to value
consciousness	deciding	desiring a holiday
dreaming	emotions	experiencing a pain
experiencing happiness	feelings	getting the point of a joke
having a point of view	having free will	hearing a violin
imagining	intending to write an essay	introspecting

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loving	melancholy	painting a picture
perceiving	perceiving	pleasure
reasoning	reflecting on a problem	remembering
seeing a tree	self-consciousness	speaking
theorizing	the self	thinking
understanding language	understanding symbols	wanting
will-power	anger	

No doubt one could think of ways in which this list could be altered. First, the list seems to include a lot of unnecessary redundancy. For example, *seeing a tree* seems to be at the same level of generality as *hearing a violin*, and both would count as *perceiving* something. It is thus not clear why we need to have all three in the list.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the list I have given is a collation of the answers given by many different students, and you may not agree with a number of the choices. Most importantly, you might feel that some item does not belong on the list – is not genuinely mental. For example, a number of students argue that actions should be counted as at most the *outcome* of what goes on in minds, and therefore as not deserving the same status as feelings. To this I can only say that further discussion is needed to decide whether this is a reasonable view, for many students are convinced that human action is just as important to the characterization of the mind as other phenomena, and we must not begin our inquiry by closing off the possibility that they are right.

Let us call the subject-matter which is partly defined by the above list the ‘mental realm’. This somewhat grand-sounding title has a certain vagueness, but the items on the list are such a heterogeneous bunch that any less vague term would prejudice further discussion.

Order out of Chaos

The first thing to note about the list is that it contains broadly two sorts of item: (i) activities, that is, things which are naturally reported by verbs; and (ii) the products or outcomes of these activities which are reported by nouns. For example, *thinking of a number between 1 and 10* is certainly something done, whilst *the thought of a number between 1 and 10* could be considered the product or upshot of some such activity. We use a verb to describe the former and a noun phrase to describe the latter. (But don’t think of ‘product’ in its most literal sense. Certainly, I do not want to be taken as saying that a thought is *manufactured* by thinking.)

Leaving ‘products’ on one side for the moment, it seems to me – and to the students with whom this was discussed – that there are three importantly

different kinds of mental activity, which are represented in the list with more or less general entries. With several specific examples of each, these main categories of mental activity are as follows:

Experiencing (having a pain, ‘seeing’ stars when you bump your head),
Attitudinizing (wanting chocolate, believing that the Earth is round),
Acting (signing a cheque, making a chair, reaching for a glass).

Each of these is a recognizable activity of mind, at least in so far as we count verbs as markers of activity. Admittedly, there might be some puzzlement about the second of these items. Experiencing and acting are themselves represented in the original list, and I have simply drafted them in to be the names of general categories. But we do not ordinarily speak about ‘attitudinizing’ (at least in the way intended) and this term requires, and will be given, further comment. However, everyone has some idea what it is to want or believe something, so I shall let the examples serve for the moment, returning later to the mysterious ‘attitudinizing’.

In so far as each of the above is an activity, each of them will have a characteristic or associated ‘product’. They are as follows:

Experiencing → **consciousness**,
 Attitudinizing → **attitudes**,
 Acting → **actions**.

It might be thought odd that I have used the word ‘consciousness’ as the outcome of experiencing, rather than using the obvious word ‘experience’. In fact, nothing much hangs on this, and my reason for having broken the symmetry is simply that ‘experience’ can be either a noun or a verb, whereas what was wanted was something more clearly a noun. Also, the point of the strange word ‘attitudinizing’ might now be a little clearer. Speaking of such things as beliefs and wants as attitudes is closer to ordinary usage. None the less, to want something – to *adopt* that attitude – is a kind of doing; it is something we report with a verb. All I did was to use a more general verb.

As you will come to see, these three pairs are particularly important to anyone trying to chart the mind’s landscape; like mountains, they constitute fixed landmarks in that landscape. Yet before we allow ourselves to use them in our map-making activities, we need to know in more detail what they are like. Considering that they all figure, at least initially, in most people’s list of contents of the mental realm, they are surprisingly different from one another.

Experiencing and Consciousness

The laughter of the class, graduating from the first shrill bark of surprise into a deliberately aimed hooting, seemed to crowd against him, to crush the privacy that he so much desired, a privacy in which he could be alone with his pain, gauging its strength, estimating its duration, inspecting its anatomy. The pain extended a feeler into his head, and unfolded its wet wings along the walls of his thorax, so that he felt, in his sudden scarlet blindness, to be himself a large bird waking from sleep. The blackboard, milky slate smeared with the traces of last night's washing, clung to his consciousness like a membrane. The pain seemed to be displacing with its own hairy segments, his heart and lungs; as its grip swelled in his throat he felt he was holding his brain like a morsel on a platter high out of hungry reach.¹

Perhaps the most persistent view that I have come across from students is that our ability to experience, and in so doing to be conscious or aware of something, is a central activity of the mind. Indeed, some consider that consciousness is the very essence of the mind. But what sort of things figure in this awareness? As the above quotation shows – graphically – there seems to be a special kind of awareness of the state of our bodies and an awareness of our perceptual interactions with the world. If you have been injured, as the teacher was in the Updike story, or if certain bodily events are taking place, then this will usually result in consciousness of pain or pleasure, pressure or fatigue, hunger or satiation. Or, if you are seeing something, this perceptual activity is often accompanied by particular conscious activity that determines what it is like to have such a perception. The teacher described in the passage sees the blackboard and, in seeing it, experiences it in a particular way. The phrase ‘milky traces smeared with last night's washing’ is a description of the blackboard, but it is also a description of the teacher's experience; the blackboard is said to have ‘clung to his consciousness like a membrane’.

In addition to bodily and perceptual awareness, there is a kind of experience that seems related to these, but does not seem to depend on there being a specific change to the body, or an object of perception. Think of the moods and feelings that rise in us and accompany our other activities, often for no obvious reason. Among these are, for example, a sense that all is well with the world, or a lurking anxiety that what you are doing is doomed to failure. In being features of our consciousness these are like pains and perceptions, but they do not seem to have the more narrowly oriented roles of bodily awareness or perception. They somehow float free of any particular business in our mental life, whilst colouring it in more shades than we can name.

An important thing to notice about all of the above phenomena is that they count as experience of what goes on 'inside', even when, as in the case of perception, they also embrace something external to our consciousness. Walking down a city street in the cool of March, you feel the wind in your face as it is funnelled through the gaps in the taller buildings, you have the experience of greys and browns of drab buildings and leafless trees, and you hear the hum of the traffic punctuated here and there by louder sounds of impatient drivers using their horns, or trucks accelerating away from traffic lights. The wind, buildings, trees and traffic are 'outside' of us, but we none the less count our experience of them – what goes on when we perceive them – as 'inside'.

This whole show of experience – inside and outside, repeated in thousands of varying ways as we move from place to place – is what counts for many as the core of the mental realm. The view of some of my students tends to be: to have a mind is nothing other than to have what is often described as a 'stream of consciousness' – a kind of show that is going on most of the time when we are awake. And the metaphor of a show is the one that crops up most often when I ask for a description of experience – a description of what it is like to be the possessor of a stream of consciousness. 'It is as if you were in a cinema watching a film from so close and with such involvement that you were only aware of *what* was happening and not *that* it was happening on a film in an auditorium.' Fine, I say to this recurrent sort of answer to my question, but it seems to require us to understand what it is to be *aware* of a film in some particularly close way, so it is not all that much help in telling someone what awareness itself is. Moreover, this account seems to apply exclusively to our perceptual experience, to the awareness – itself inside – of what is happening outside. But what about such things as pains and other wholly inner sensations and moods? The needed revision often runs as follows: 'Well, it's not exactly like the show in a cinema, but it does seem to involve witnessing various things – observing them, paying attention to them – even if from an only metaphorical distance. When I have a pain, I direct my attention to it, just in the way that I direct my attention to my present experience of, say, colours in my visual field. This is sort of like a film or theatrical performance which I can witness, and with respect to which I can differentially direct my attention from one character to another.'

Does this sort of metaphorical description help? Perhaps it points you in the direction of what I mean to speak about under the heading of 'experience', but I doubt it is much more informative than that. Indeed, it raises more questions than it answers: for example, who or what does the directing of attention in this case? 'The self' comes the reply. But this reply also gets us into very deep waters. Is the self separate from experiential activity and its

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attendant consciousness or are they united rather like the dancer and the dance? Here we are beginning to see some of the problems that lie just beneath the surface of our conception of experience and consciousness, and for the present we shall leave well enough alone. In any case, perhaps there is not much more that one can do in directly characterizing experience than to reach for metaphors like those found in Updike's wonderfully lurid description.

Attitudinizing and Attitudes

All this was lost on Alice, who was still looking intently along the road, shading her eyes with one hand. 'I see somebody now!' she exclaimed at last. 'But he's coming very slowly – and what curious attitudes he goes into!' (For the Messenger kept skipping up and down, and wriggling like an eel, as he came along, with his great hands spread out like fans on each side.)

'Not at all,' said the King. 'He's an Anglo-Saxon Messenger – and those are Anglo-Saxon Attitudes. He only does them when he's happy.'²

In the subtle shift of perspective in this passage – the shift from attitude as posture to attitude as a feature of a mind – Carroll has given us several important hints about mental attitudes. We are invited to imagine the Anglo-Saxon Messenger as taking up odd postures, setting his limbs in awkward or uncomfortable positions. However, in ways it is perhaps more tactful for me to leave unsaid, the Anglo-Saxons have the reputation of having odd, sometimes downright 'uncomfortable', attitudes – by which is meant beliefs, desires and expectations – in respect of a variety of subjects.

The appeal of this passage is that it effortlessly manages to shift our attention from a set of bizarre postures to a set of perhaps equally bizarre attitudes towards life. In using the two senses of 'attitude' in the same context, Carroll succeeds in getting us to pause over something that we don't usually bother much about – the aptness of the word in its 'posture' sense for characterizing such things as beliefs and desires.

A posture is something we manoeuvre ourselves into, and which is therefore observable in our behaviour. Similarly, we usually tell what someone believes or desires by things done and said – by behaviour; an attitude in this sense is a mental state which we often 'read' off from behaviour. Moreover, it is true of attitudes, even in the posturing sense, that they can be directed to, or indicative of, something. When someone is said to adopt a menacing attitude, what is in question is not merely how a person is standing, though some such bodily position is being described. Rather, what is special about a 'menacing attitude' is that it is a posture directed towards someone or something. And of course, this

is precisely what is typical of such things as beliefs and desires. They are not merely states of mind we discern through behaviour, they are states of mind that have a special kind of directedness. I don't just believe or desire, I believe that something is the case, or I desire someone or something.

The two crucial defining features of attitudinizing displays are:

- (a) A kind of behaviour which is typically characteristic of the particular attitude in question. (Imagine how you could tell the difference between someone who desired something, believed something, intended something, etc.)
- (b) A 'something' towards which the attitudinizing is directed, as when we say that:

Harry believes *the telephone is out of order*,
 Jane desires *a new car*,
 Bill intends *to boil a kettle*.

Note that the items towards which an attitude can be directed are quite various. In the above three examples we have these three items:

the telephone is out of order,
 a new car,
 to boil a kettle.

Focusing on the sentences we use to report attitudes, and borrowing a term from grammar, we shall call the 'something' towards which attitudes are directed the *complement* of the attitude. That is, in the sentences given in (b) there are complement phrases which report the particular direction of the attitude. Note that the first of these has a declarative sentence as a complement. This is important because sentences like this are typically used to say, truly or falsely, how things are; they report what philosophers call 'propositions'. Moreover, it seems possible (even if it might sound awkward in given cases) to report virtually all attitudes using declarative sentences as complements. We could have expressed the other examples in (b) as:

Jane desires that she has a new car.
 Bill intends that he will make the kettle boil.

Because complements of belief reports typically contain a complete declarative sentence that expresses a proposition, and because the other attitudes can

apparently be twisted into this shape, philosophers have settled on the idea that the products of attitudinizing can all be called *propositional attitudes*. So, what Carroll has shown us is that the Anglo-Saxon messengers strike odd postural as well as propositional attitudes.³

We can also call the item to which an attitude is directed its *content*. The notion of a 'complement' seems to many to be too grammatical and too closely tied to the report of an attitude, whereas the word 'content' seems to capture something about the attitude itself. But for the present it won't matter much whether you think of the attitudes as having complements or contents.

The above is little more than a sketch, and much more remains to be said about the role of the attitudes in the mental realm. However, even this sketch is enough to make obvious just how important a part they play in our characterization of that realm. And this comes as a bit of a surprise to those who are convinced that experience is the central feature of the mind. For, whatever else we come to say about them, the propositional attitudes are not obviously items of experience. For example, suppose someone were to ask you, out of the blue, whether the present government will be returned to power at the next election. I have no doubt that your answer would be readily forthcoming and might well begin like this: I believe that . . . But to get to this answer did you have to search the elusive stream of consciousness we just discussed? Does that stream contain a sort of banner on which is written 'the present government will not be returned to power at the next election'? This is highly unlikely. Of course, I don't doubt that images of governments – a sort of collage of images of politicians, government buildings, television coverage of elections and perhaps even images of words – might be prompted by the original question. Yet these do not constitute the belief itself. In fact, those not so wedded to the experiential picture of the mind as to rule out everything else tend to report that consciousness plays very little role in our ability to know and say what attitudes we have. (This is not to deny that we might think consciousness, or the capacity for consciousness, is a prerequisite for a creature who can be said to adopt attitudes.)

These observations point the way down a number of difficult roads. If consciousness figures less (and sometimes not at all) in our apprehension of our beliefs, how do we tell what we believe, want, intend, etc.? We certainly don't do it in the way we tell these things about other people, that is, by looking at what they do and say. Moreover, what relation is there between the 'self' which made its appearance in our discussion of experience and the item which is the subject of attitude reports? In what way is the 'I' of 'I am in pain' related to the 'I' of 'I believe that it will snow'? These sorts of question are typical of the next stage of investigation. But our interest at present has only been in the

kind of thing that comes under the headings 'attitudinizing' and 'attitude', and we have completed that task. The activity of attitudinizing results in our having attitudes with contents. Each attitude has typical manifestations in behaviour, and all of them seem suitable for treatment as propositional attitudes, as allowing their contents to be reported by declarative sentences.

Acting and Actions

The astonishing thing about action is that it is possible at all. For, if a man is making a chair, you will find a physical causal explanation of the movement of each piece of wood from its initial to its final setting; everything that happens is in accordance with law; but you will look throughout this world or universe forever in vain for an analogous physical explanation of their coming together in the form they did, a form that mirrors human need and the human body itself. (Try it.)⁴

As I mentioned earlier, there is a strong tendency to overlook actions when thinking about what to count as items in the mental realm. Those who find themselves only reluctantly admitting attitudes into the fold, dig in their heels at what they regard as too physical a thing to count as anything mental. Such is the pull of the idea that the mental consists in the 'inner' – the show of experience and consciousness – that actions can seem just too far removed from this centre to count as anything more than the mind's wake as it moves through the physical world. But this view is by no means universal, and one would do well to listen to those who oppose it.

The passage above emphasizes the difficulty of fitting actions into the picture of the world encouraged by science. Thus, whilst each movement of the arms and hands, hammer and nails might well be explicable in terms of science, the fact that all these things come together as the making of a chair can seem quite mysterious. Discussion of how the mental realm fits in with the scientific picture of the world will figure later. But the situation described in the passage can be used to illustrate something more pertinent to our present concerns.

Begin by supposing that everything is as described in the passage, except that the agent making the chair is invisible. To an unsuspecting witness, the pieces of wood seem to rise up and be nailed and glued into place; the chair just seems to come unaided into existence. This would of course be astonishing, but we can leave this on one side for the moment. What I want to ask is this: would the witness actually observe the action, the making of the chair? Clearly, by hypothesis, the agent goes unseen, but if you are one of those who

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think of the action as nothing but some sort of change in the physical world, you should be prepared to say that the action is seen, even if not the actor. Yet surely that is not how we would describe it. Why? Well, the very idea of an action – even of a purely ‘physical’ action – seems to require us to identify some sort of mental component. As the passage notes, were there not human desires and needs at work, as well as the further beliefs, desires and intentions to fulfil them, then we would not have the faintest idea of what was going on. When we do see the actor, we see some or all of these attitudes *in* the transformation of the materials, and unless we can see the mind in the process unfolding before us, we simply don’t count that process as an action; for all we know it might just be the accidental product of some strange cosmic wind.

The idea that an action is in this way at least partly a mental phenomenon is what one of my students had in mind with the astute comment: ‘actions are the mind’s purposes seen in the movement of matter.’ But those who insist that actions are not themselves mental still have something to say. Here is a typical rejoinder:

What the example shows is that you couldn’t imagine the pieces coming together unless there was some mind *orchestrating* the movements. But the action itself – the physical movement of the pieces – is not mental. What happens is that you see these movements – the action – and then *infer* that there are mental states directing them. In seeing the action, you don’t literally *see* the mind.

This rejoinder throws up many intricate problems and these must await further discussion. However, whatever we end up saying about an action such as making a chair, it must be pointed out that the class of things called actions is much broader than we have so far allowed.

Making a chair is usually called a ‘physical action’ – an action in which some change is effected in some physical object or event. Examples of this kind of action are what most people think of when they are asked to imagine an action taking place, and it is this kind of action that leads to the greatest disagreement in measuring the boundaries of the mental realm. However, there is another kind of action that has been staring us in the face, the mental status of which must be beyond doubt. I have in mind here the very activities of experiencing and attitudinizing. Recall that I was careful to insist that the main categories of the mental realm had both an activity and a product sense: *experiencing* and consciousness, *attitudinizing* and attitudes, as well as *acting* and actions. But surely, for example, to direct one’s attention to some item in the stream of consciousness – to experience it – is nothing short of an action, and a purely mental one at that. Moreover, once you begin to think about it, there

seems to be a whole host of other things that we do which are ‘in the mind’ in this way. Think of your favourite colour! Work out (but don’t say) the sum of 15 and 22! When you accede to these requests, you are certainly doing something – acting – only in neither case is there any ordinary change wrought in your physical environment. These episodes of thought and inference would thus seem to be the tip of a very large iceberg consisting of actions whose claims to belong in the mental realm are unimpeachable.

As with experience and attitudinizing, each case of an action comes with a subject, or, perhaps more appropriately in the case of action, an *agent*. Indeed, just as for particular items of consciousness or attitudes, it is simply impossible to have an action without an agent. The kind of impossibility here seems to be conceptual: we cannot conceive of an unowned pain, a subjectless belief, nor can we conceive of an action that lacks an agent. And now we have another element to add to the problem raised earlier: what relations obtain between the ‘I’ of ‘I am in pain’ and ‘I believe that my keys are in the cookie jar’ and the ‘I’ of ‘I pruned the ceanothus too late in the year’? Clearly, there is an enormous pull in favour of saying that the items picked out by each pronoun are one and the same person or self. Indeed, this tends to be such a universally held view among my students that it takes them some time to see that there might be a problem – that the differences between experiencing, attitudinizing and acting might make it less than obvious why one and the same thing does all three.

Estimating Distances

My thumbnail sketches of consciousness, attitude and action are useful starting-points, but they must be supplemented if we are to have any hope of using them in a realistic ordering of the mental realm. However, even before we do this, it is important to get clear about how the ordering is to be achieved.

One way – perhaps the obvious way – of bringing order to a large list is by putting items in the list under various headings. The game of sorting things into animal, vegetable and mineral is a model here, but this is inappropriate for the mental realm. Take an emotion like anger, which is certainly a mental phenomenon if anything is. If we were to play the sorting game here by trying to decide whether anger was a phenomenon of consciousness, attitude or action, we would not only distort our understanding of the emotion itself, but the headings used. For anger has features of all three; it is, so to speak, in some respects animal, vegetable and mineral.

What this suggests is that we should think of the three categories, not as headings, but as poles towards which the phenomena of mind are more or less

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attracted. Anger is in some respects a conscious phenomenon, in some an attitude and in still others a pattern of action; it is in these ways pulled toward each of the poles. Order is generated then not by headings under which we sort, but by estimating the distance of each item from the three polar categories.

This sort of ordering depends crucially on our being able to say more about the respects in which something is like experience, attitude or action. But what are these respects and where do they come from? The list is as follows:

Observability,
Accessibility,
Expressibility,
Directionality,
Theoreticity.

As with everything at this surface-mapping stage, this list has its basis in the untutored judgements of my students. However, I have had to invent my own names for these respects, and some of the discussion will seem more committed to this or that philosophical view than has heretofore been the case. This is perhaps inevitable, given that I pushed my informants for their views about the underlying nature of various mental phenomena; after all, philosophical theorizing does not necessarily need professional philosophers. Still, even if what follows reveals what might seem only prejudice when exposed to proper philosophical scrutiny, it is fairly widespread prejudice. And that makes it no less part of the mental landscape than our original list. Indeed, after some clarification of the labels, I expect you to recognize, perhaps even agree, with much of what is said. Deeper investigation of the phenomena and the scheme of classification will come in part II of our inquiries.

(i) Observability

Confronted with a mind (someone else's), how easy is it to tell whether you are in the presence of experiencing, attitudinizing or acting? This is not meant to be a deep question. There is a long tradition in philosophy of considering how, if at all, we can justify our faith in the mindedness of others. This is not what we are up to here. Assume that others do have minds, that the extreme sceptical stance is inappropriate, and ask yourself this: how easy is it to tell just by looking that some mind is experiencing something, maintaining an attitude towards something, or acting? To many, at least part of the answer is straightforward. Philosophical argument might well shake our convictions in respect of all three, but it is certainly easier to wreak sceptical havoc in respect

of experiencing than in respect of acting. The usual thought is that we can conceal what we experience, sometimes with no effort at all, but that what we do – our actions – are there for the looking. However, we must be careful not to read too much into this apparently obvious conclusion.

There are experiences which would be regarded as easily observable and actions which are not. It is natural to think that the victim of a serious accident can be seen to experience pain, whereas someone can do something completely away from even the possibility of prying eyes – something like adding up two numbers, as we say, ‘in the head’. That is, there would seem to be cases where experiences are out in the open, and also cases of actions that are ‘inside’. Moreover, the idea of observation that is in play here cries out for further elucidation. Still, having agreed that the proper place for this elucidation in our part II investigations, let us say for now that ‘in general and for the most part’ experience comes at the low end of the observability spectrum, while action lies at the other. A typical case of experiencing something – having an ache in a limb – is usually counted as fully discernible only to the subject of the experience, whereas a typical case of acting – signing a will – is rated as something anyone in the right place can witness.

But what about attitudes? How easy is it to see that someone wants an ice-cream or believes that it is about to rain? The temptation is to say: it all depends. If the circumstances are right, for example, if there is enough behaviour to go on, it would seem to be quite easy. The child irritably resisting his parents’ best efforts to distract him from the ice-cream vendor can be clearly seen to want an ice-cream, whereas the academic comfortably engaged in reading a book might well believe that it is about to rain without giving our observational abilities any purchase at all. Still, if we abstract away from special cases and, as in respect of experiencing and acting, think only in general and for the most part, the attitudes seem to be somewhere in between the two extremes in respect of observability. It is easier to see what people do than what they believe, but it is also easier to see what they believe than what they experience.

(ii) *Accessibility*

How easy is it for you to tell of *yourself* that you are experiencing, believing or doing something? That is, how accessible is your own portion of the mental realm? Do we always know what we are doing, or what we believe and want? No, but perhaps this is because we don’t always attend to these things; the idea would be that if we did attend, we would know. Yet couldn’t there be cases in which no amount of thinking about it would lead us to acknowledge particular actions or beliefs and wants as our own? Indeed, aren’t such cases

perfectly familiar? Smith sets out to help Jones dig the garden; he believes that he is doing this from the goodness of his heart, and that is what he would avow after reflection. But, to those who know him, what he is doing seems more appropriately described as competitively displaying his horticultural superiority over Jones; the way in which he goes about ‘helping’ seems to give him away. Ask Smith what he is doing, believing and wanting and you get one answer. Ask his friends and you get another. Perhaps Smith could be brought to see himself in the way others do, but that is not really relevant. All that I want this example to remind us of is the perfectly ordinary fact that we don’t always have instant accessibility to what we believe, want or are engaged in.

Experiencing, however, seems to be in stark contrast to these. Not only do we think that such things as pains and itches are highly accessible, we would find it difficult to imagine cases in which there was any attenuation of accessibility. Could you be in pain, for example, and not notice that you were? And here, by pain, I mean some fairly robust example of the kind, not a barely perceptible sensation which comes and goes too fleetingly to count as one thing or another. You could of course be stoical about it, not show others that you were in pain; you could even push it into the background so that it didn’t interfere with your present activities. But could you have a pain and not notice it at all? This is a difficult question, a question whose very status has been debated. In particular, is it a question about how things are as a matter of fact in respect of pains, or is it somehow a more conceptual question: is the very concept of pain such that it is logically impossible to have an exemplar of it without noticing?

As in the case of observability, nothing we are engaged in just now requires us to deal with these worries. Whatever is to be said in the long run when we start to dig deeper, here it is enough to note what seems the unvarnished truth to most people (and, in particular, to the students who so forcefully expressed this view): we have a much greater degree of access to items of experience than we do to attitudes and actions.

How do attitudes and actions compare in respect of accessibility? There is a tendency to think that we know more about what we believe and want than about what we do. The reason most often given for this is that acting requires some co-operation on the part of the world: we have greater accessibility to what we intend to do (an attitude) than what we are actually doing or achieving, because we are only doing or achieving something if certain worldly events are actually taking place, and we may be in error about whether they are. Dreams illustrate the point nicely.

If, in a dream, you are about to sign a cheque then you seem to have the intentions, desires and beliefs appropriate to that commonplace action. But if

you were actually signing a cheque, not only would there have to be this attitudinal background, your hand would have to hold the pen and move in some appropriate way. And it is precisely the latter that is missing in a dream. When you dream that yet another bill is overdue and, in a state of generalized anxiety, reach for your cheque-book and write out a cheque, hastily and without due care and attention to the balance remaining in your fragile account, you have a keen awareness of the attitudinal background – it seems wholly accessible to you. But, as you often come to realize on waking, one thing that didn't happen was that you signed a cheque.

Dreams are the extreme case here, but there are less dramatic cases of actions being inaccessible in ways that the attitudes are not. So, summing up: we usually rank experiences at one extreme – immediate and pretty full accessibility – whereas attitudes come somewhat further down the line with actions bringing up the rear.

(iii) *Expressibility*

It would seem equally easy to tell someone that you have a pain in your arm, that you believe right will triumph over wrong, and that you are cooking your dinner. But many feel that this way of putting things misses an important feature of these categories. In particular, there is a prevalent idea that, though we can tell someone *that* we have a pain in the arm, we cannot express or communicate the experience itself. Put colloquially, 'what it is like' to have a particular pain seems something that escapes even the most imaginative use of language. As we have found with other respects, intuitions like this one raise more questions than they answer. For example, what exactly would it be like to express an experience if we could? What would constitute success in this apparently difficult task? If we don't know even that much, then perhaps our conviction that experiences cannot be expressed is less interesting than it seems. Still, we must not stop just yet at such deeper questions; there is a consensus that experiences are very low on the expressibility scale, and that is good enough for the present.

But what about attitudes and actions? Actions seem to be straightforwardly expressible: in so far as you know what you are doing, you just put it into words – you describe your action in some appropriate way, chosen from amongst all the ones available to you. In appropriate circumstances, you just say: 'I'm signing a cheque,' 'paying the gas bill' or 'practising my signature on this already ruined cheque'. To be sure, there are cases where it is not quite that easy. I can imagine myself engaged in some intricate physical manoeuvre which is necessary to the well-being of my bicycle, but which I cannot properly describe – it is just too complex, even though the aim of the action itself

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is simple. Of course, I could always just say: 'I am adjusting the brakes' or 'fixing my bicycle' and this might do. Telling someone what I am doing does not always require detailed description. In the end, then, there doesn't seem to be much of a problem about expression here.

With belief, want, and other attitudes, the problem comes down to getting hold of some appropriate sentence to use in the complement place in the attitude report. In most cases, this is straightforward. To be sure, there are times when you are not quite sure whether you believe something to be the case, or merely hope that it is. And there are also bound to be times when, for example, you expect something to happen, but would be hard put to find the exact sentence which captures the content of your expectation. (I am assuming here that expectation is a specialized form of belief – belief about some future course of events.)

In sum, there are problems for both actions and attitudes in respect of expressibility – problems which make them about equal in this dimension. But they are nowhere near as severe as the problems encountered in respect of one's experiences.

(iv) *Directionality*

An attitude is a mental item which can show itself in activities and behaviour. Of course, this is not invariably so; one can easily conceive of beliefs, desires and the like which happen never to leak out into the realm of action. Still, it is not unreasonable to think of the attitudes as having particular and typical kinds of manifestation in activity. A desire to buy a new coat, for example, will 'look' very different to observers from a belief that coats keep you warm in winter.

However, what is particularly characteristic of the attitudes is that they are attitudes *about* something – they are reported in sentences which contain complement clauses, or, using the other idiom, they have *contents*. Yet another way of putting this is to say that attitudes are never merely expressed in behaviour, they are also, and essentially, *directed* to, or at, something. For example, compare desire with, say, vanity. Both have a claim to be the kind of thing appropriate to the mind, but there is an important difference between them. A vain person, like a desirous one, is disposed to act in various ways, but to understand the desire fully, we must know what it is a desire *for*. There is no counterpart to this directedness in the case of vanity.

On the face of it, directionality is virtually absent in those items that most naturally group themselves around the category of experience. Taking pain as the first example, imagine that you have overdone some exercise and that you are now suffering for it. You have various aches and pains and these seem to

be located in various parts of your body. They are located – and they have specific characteristics, each different from one another – but they don't seem to be *about* anything; they lack directionality. Your aching thigh is not an ache *for* anything – it is not reported in a sentence containing a complement clause, and thus it does not have a content.

One must be careful here. The notion of content as just used is somewhat specialized. It is that item to which an attitude is directed. The content of the desire that you have a new coat is, roughly, the state of affairs of your having a new coat. If you had it badly enough, one could describe your state – somewhat fancifully – as an ache for a new coat. In a more general sense of the word 'content', of course it is true that a pain has a content. But this is not the sense of the word in question.

I said that directionality is virtually absent in typical cases of experiencing such as the pain case. Certainly, there is nothing that corresponds to the robust use of complement clauses with which we report beliefs. But why only 'virtually'? Well, it seems to many as if there is a kind of directionality in the pain case which it is easy to overlook. It is a lower grade of directionality than we have in connection with the attitudes, and it may in the end be nothing more than the result of an attitude being linked to an experience, but it is worth remarking on. Certainly, pain is not usually a neutral item of experience: it is something unpleasant and which we seek to avoid. The directionality of an experience of pain may be no more than 'would that it would go,' but it is at least possible to see this as a primitive version of the kind of directionality we have in full-fledged attitudes. Of course, one might take the view that pains just happen to have (in us, and for the most part) a kind of *connection* to the attitudes. On this view, it is not the pain that has any kind of directionality, it is just that pains bring with them desires to get rid of the pain. The idea is that the desire, not the pain, is directed.

Somewhat different from the pain case is this: think of what it would be like to be standing just in front of a blue wall, looking squarely at it. Your perception would be directed: it would be described as a perception of a blue wall. But that is not quite what is at issue. Try to forget about the fact that you perceive a blue wall (which is surely directional, like an attitude), and think instead of the conscious experience occasioned by the expanse of blue. Clearly, this is something that you are aware of when you perceive the blue wall, but it is distinct from the latter. It is the experience found, as is said, by introspection in the stream of consciousness, and it can be separated from what causes it (the wall), or what it is about (the blueness of the wall). As the struggles of the last few sentences show, it is not an easy matter to use words to point to the phenomenon in question. But most people are, on reflection,

only too eager to admit that there is such a thing as the what-it-is-like-to-see-blue sensation in their stream of consciousness when they direct their attention to a blue object.

Does the qualitative experience you have when you are perceiving a blue wall constitute a case of pure, non-directed experiencing? It certainly doesn't seem to have even the most primitive form of directionality. Unless the colour is particularly shocking, your experience of blueness does not come with the feeling: 'would that it would go away.' So perhaps the colour perception case is a better example than pain of non-directedness. Or perhaps the pain case really constitutes just as good an example, which only seems different because pain is hooked up *in us* to genuine attitudes such as the desire to get rid of the pain? Well, whether pain has a kind of primitive directionality is not something we need to settle here. For whatever we end up saying, it seems that directionality is typical of, and central to, attitudinizing, and is only of marginal importance to experience.

What of the third category – acting? We have briefly discussed the question of the degree to which actions are mental items. Our discussion was admittedly inconclusive, but it was suggested that even a physical action could not be thought of simply as a sequence of physical movements: the mind is either actually present in the action or is intimately involved in it in some way. Thus, signing a cheque certainly involves various hand movements, but these are (at least) mind-directed. The movements have as their aim, for example, the payment of the electricity bill.

As always, there is much more to be said here. But for now it is enough to note that, with respect to directionality, attitudes have it as a central feature, actions include elements which are directional, and items of consciousness have at most a minimal kind of directionality.

(v) *Theoreticity*

Is it possible to see electrons? Not an easy question, nor one we have to settle definitely here. But this much seems true: whether or not one can stretch the notion of 'seeing' sufficiently to allow it to be said that we see electrons, any seeing of them would be a wholly different kind of thing from our seeing of tables and chairs. Though not a precise business, it does seem that some items count as immediately or directly observable, whereas others are less directly observable (if observable at all). What have been called 'middle-sized dry goods' – taking tables and chairs to be representative – falls under the first heading, whereas electrons fall firmly under the second.

Recognizing that electrons are at best indirectly observable, the next question to ask is: do they really exist? Here again, brushing aside the deeper rumi-

nations of certain philosophers, the answer is surely 'yes, there really are electrons.' But having admitted that electrons are only indirectly observable, what grounds do we have for saying that they exist? Undoubtedly, many people regard the best grounds for something's existence to be its direct observability, but there are other grounds. For instance, one could say this: the notion of an electron forms an essential part of a theory we have about the nature of matter – a theory which is by now established in the scientific community. Even though we may never be able (even in principle) to observe electrons directly, we are generally happy (give or take a few philosophical qualms) to say that they exist. They exist because they are integral to our well-established *theoretical* understanding of the universe.

Against this background, here are some things we can say about the feature of theoreticity: chairs and tables – things we regard as directly observable – have a *low* degree of theoreticity. We don't believe in the existence of these things on the basis of our theory of the universe – we just see them. On the other hand, electrons have a *high* degree of theoreticity: their very existence is bound up with our theoretical understanding of nature.

What about the items in the mental realm? There is generally a consensus (one that some philosophers have challenged) for the view that, whatever else we say about other items, experiences have a very low degree of theoreticity. We do not regard a pain, a visual appearance, an experience of a sound, the changing coloured image which comes before our closed eyes just after we have seen a bright light, as things whose existence depends in any way on a theory we may have about how things work. Items of experience seem to be immediately apprehended. Indeed, there is a tendency, which has been encouraged, though not invented, by some philosophers, to consider items of experience as *more* directly observable than the middle-sized dry goods which surround us. Introspection can seem a more direct and reliable guide to what exists than modes of 'extrospection' such as seeing, touching and hearing.

Allowing strength of opinion on this to be our guide, and leaving on one side any investigation of the basis of that opinion, we shall count experiencing as at the lowest end of the scale of theoreticity. But what about the other two categories: attitudes and acting? Here matters get more complicated. In discussing the accessibility of the attitudes, it was noted that, whilst we *sometimes* either make mistakes as to the direction of our attitudes, or, on occasion, just fail to register attitudes that others can more accurately gauge from our behaviour, we *often* have fairly immediate access to what we desire, intend, believe, etc. But one thing we also noticed was that, even when the access we have is fairly immediate, it doesn't appear to be like the access we have to such things as pain. For example, if asked whether next Sunday was the 15th, you

would surely do some kind of ruminating before answering. However, compare this rumination with what you would go in for if I asked whether you could feel the pressure exerted by the chair you are now sitting on. Your answer in the second case seems something like a case of looking and discovering; that is why the expression ‘*introspection*’ seems so apt. But this kind of introspection seems the wrong sort of method for discovering whether you believe next Sunday to be the 15th.

In cases of the attitudes and experiences of others, the contrast seems even more pronounced. You find out what someone’s attitudes are by being sensitive to behaviour. Of course, you may be told point-blank what someone believes, but even this may not settle the issue. Perhaps they are not facing up to things, or are trying to see things in a better light. In cases more complicated than the one about Sunday the 15th, perhaps they are mistaken about what they believe. However, in the case of experience, it would seem that the verdict of the subject is both necessary to an accurate judgement and final.

How can one explain this difference? One way is this: an experience is something that is directly observable – though only by the person whose experience it is – whilst an attitude is something not directly observable by either the subject or his friends. On this view, attitudes are items we attribute to ourselves and each other as part of trying to make sense of – to explain – behaviour. One way of putting this would be to say that attitudes are part of our *theory* of human nature. (There will be more about this later in this chapter and in subsequent ones.) Clearly, a consequence of this view would be that attitudes are more theoretical than experiences. Of course, this is not to say that they are just like electrons. After all, the explanatory theories of physics do seem different from the ‘theories’ with which we explain human activities. But the discussion of electrons was only meant to illustrate the notion of theoreticity.

Accepting then that attitudes come out as more theoretical than conscious experiences, what about actions? Do we directly observe actions, or do they have a somewhat more theoretical and less directly observable nature? Here the old wounds open up again. Those students who regarded actions as not much more than physical movements would see them as directly observable. Those who considered them to be ‘purposes embodied in movement’ would demur, since a purpose is an attitude. And, of course, one must not forget actions which are generally classified as mental – actions such as thinking of a number between 1 and 10. Without even trying to sort all this out here, I shall take the easy way out by placing actions somewhere in between attitudes and experiences on the theoreticity scale.

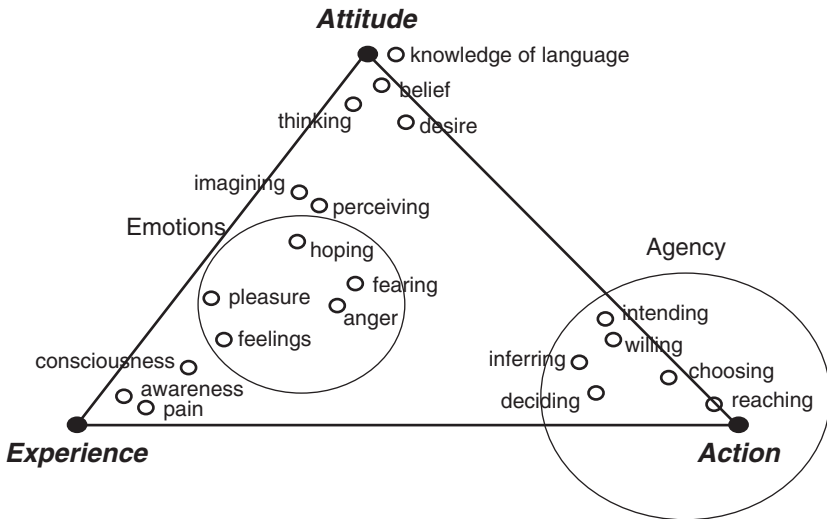


Figure 1.1

The Inventory of the Mind

Without suggesting that it is either complete or uncontroversial, figure 1.1 illustrates how the five features just discussed can be used to order the original list. It displays what we can call a proper *inventory* of the mind.

The main categories are represented as three poles equidistant from one another. Perhaps more in keeping with the landscape metaphor, we should think of them as mountains (seen from above) whose summits mark extreme points; the location of any given mental item is fixed by the degree to which it approaches these summits in one or other of the five respects. For example, experience is a peak where one would put any feature of the mind that was wholly accessible, not observable, not expressible, not directional and not theoretical. Of course, no actual feature of the mind has this stark profile. Pain tends to be cited as the paradigm case of an experience, but there are ways in which even it falls short of being what might be called a ‘pure’ experience. First, whilst pain is thought of as highly accessible to its sufferer, there is arguably room in our idea of the mind for pain that is not noticed at a given time. Secondly, we do think of pain as sometimes observable – think of the accident victim – even if in many other cases it is difficult for an observer to discern. Thirdly, it is not easy to express (describe) pain, but it is not impos-

sible to go some way towards it; one need only return to Updike's description of the teacher in pain to appreciate this. Fourthly, as was noted, there is a kind of directionality that seems to accompany a painful experience – a sort of 'would that it would go away' content. Finally, it is possible to imagine cases in which pain was appealed to more on theoretical than observational grounds. Thus, a doctor might explain why you seem always to be tired by citing the fact that you have had a pain in your leg which causes you to walk and sit awkwardly. When you protest that you felt no such pain, the doctor might well say that the pain never expressed itself – that it remained, as is often said in medical circumstances, 'sub-clinical'. Given these considerations, pain must be placed short of the summit of Experience; its dimensional profile shows it to be some little way towards both Attitude and Action.

Other features of the mental realm are assigned places on this same basis, though I don't want to insist that I have got these locations precisely right. More than a little of the philosophical literature is taken up with what are represented here as orientational questions. Once known as 'philosophical psychology', this branch of philosophy is responsible for many acute observations about the rich and subtle connections that exist among the phenomena in the mental realm. Against this background, you should see figure 1.1 as providing no more than an idea of how to order the mental realm, not as a definitive statement of that ordering. Nevertheless, before we move on, here are a few notes explaining some of the reasons for various placements.

(a) To keep the inventory uncluttered, I have left out some of the items which figured in the original list, but it should be obvious where they would go. Thus hope, fear, anger are placed more or less centrally and they mark out a region within which one would put other emotions. This central location seems right because emotions look towards each of the peaks without being markedly closer to any one of them. Certainly, one can be, for example, angry *that such-and-such is the case* – anger is certainly something like an attitude with a content. Yet anger is often spoken of as a feeling, as something accessible in the stream of consciousness. And finally anger not only causes us to do various things, it is itself said to be *expressed* in action.

Of course, differences will emerge as soon as one moves from anger to one or other of the emotions, so you should think of the central location labelled 'emotions' as a region within which more accurate placements can be made. Perhaps a 'calmer' emotion like regret will be closer to the attitudes than anger, and further away from the other two fixed points, whilst love might be closer to experience and further away from attitude.

Note also that feelings are placed slightly closer to experience and further away from action than emotions. In some contexts, ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling’ are used interchangeably, but in others, feeling hints more at experience. Its location near the edge of the region is meant to cater for both of these possibilities.

(b) It may not be obvious why pleasure comes just within the emotion region, whilst pain is firmly outside, closer to experience. After all, don’t we speak of ‘pleasure and pain’ as a contrasting *pair*? Yes, there is this cliché, but there are also certain more pressing considerations which favour the placements in figure 1.1. In particular, we often speak of pleasure without suggesting anything about what is happening to our bodies. Thus, when we use ‘being pleased that’ or ‘taking pleasure in’, pleasure here comes closer to an emotion than to any sort of bodily sensation. When, for example, you find yourself saying that you are pleased to have gone to the dentist, it is unlikely that you are suggesting that such pleasure is felt in any particular part of your body, though of course any pain that the dentist caused certainly does show up in this way. This is not to deny that ‘pleasure’ can describe bodily sensations, nor that ‘pain’ can be used to describe a specially intense kind of sorrowful emotion. But the more typical use of both justifies my having placed them as in figure 1.1.

(c) Why is consciousness not shown in exactly the same place as awareness? Admittedly, I have at times used the two expressions interchangeably, but there is a reason – so far unremarked – that is responsible for this placement. One can use the word ‘conscious’ and its related forms of speech in two ways: either as a synonym for ‘awareness’ or ‘experience’, or as adverb qualifying the verbs of attitude and action. In this second sense, one says such things as: ‘he consciously decided to . . .’ or ‘she consciously believed that . . .’ or ‘he consciously inferred that . . .’ Here the contrast is with cases in which decisions, beliefs and actions are somehow not directly available to the subject. Thus, a conscious decision is one that has been reflected upon, taken after due deliberation, and is one to which the subject has the kind of access required for reporting the decision to others. However, it is not necessary for a belief or decision to be conscious for it to be experienced in the way that a pain is. (In any case, it is difficult to imagine what such an experiencing would be like.)

Some writers think that this distinction in the use of the word ‘consciousness’ points to the conclusion that there are really two kinds of consciousness. The one associated with pains and bodily sensations is called ‘phenomenal’

consciousness, and the other, the one that goes with the adverbial uses, is called 'access' consciousness. Not intending to take sides here, I still wanted figure 1.1 to reflect something of the dual nature of our appeals to the notion of consciousness. This was done by placing consciousness just that little bit closer to attitude and action than awareness. (The point can be put linguistically: 'aware' does not lend itself to adverbial use in the way that 'conscious' does.)

(d) Reaching – stretching out one's hand and arm – is about as central a case of bodily action as one could have, and its location in the inventory reflects this. On the other hand, inferring – as in 'noticing that the shutters were closed, he inferred that they were not home' – is a clear example of an act that does not involve the body. For this reason it is placed further from action and closer to experience.

Intending, willing, choosing and deciding are intimately connected with actions of all sorts, and, according to some accounts, they are themselves forms of mental act. I have included these, and the more typical cases of action, within a region labelled 'agency' because, though I haven't discussed it at any length yet, these are the notions which together give us our idea of an agent – the person or self who initiates actions.

(e) Finally, as has been noted, we are not always the best judge of our attitudes, nor of our actions and decisions; sometimes our states of mind are hidden from us. Sometimes this happens because the states of mind in question are as a matter of fact inaccessible to us, and sometimes because we have in some sense made them so. Examples of the first sort usually involve a sort of knowledge that we have and use, but do not, and largely cannot, remark upon. For example, when we hear the sounds of our language, we are able to interpret them – indeed it is impossible not to – because of, it has been claimed, the vast number of things we know about the sounds, grammar and meanings of that language. Yet many skilled listeners (most of us in fact) are unable to describe these crucial bits of knowledge. They guide us though they remain in some way tacit. To mark this kind of circumstance, I put knowledge of language near the attitudes but on the other side from experience. (The whole idea of tacit knowledge, especially in connection with language, has been heatedly discussed by linguists and philosophers, and we will have occasion to return to it in later chapters.)

The second way we can lose track of our own states of mind revolves around the notion of the *unconscious*, as this notion is used in psychoanalytic theory. The idea here is that some of our attitudes, decisions and actions are undertaken for reasons which we somehow manage to conceal from ourselves. Why

we do this – and how – are questions that form the subject-matter of psychoanalytic theory. Unconsciousness is a bit difficult to draw on the map – and I have therefore not tried to do so – because it could pop up pretty much anywhere; one hears talk of unconscious beliefs, desires and intentions, anger, grief, etc. Looked at in this way, there is a kind of complementarity between so-called access consciousness and the unconscious: both are adverbial, though in the one case access is granted, whereas in the other it is denied. (Note the difference between things we might know tacitly and the unconscious. Tacit knowledge is simply not accessible, whereas, on one view, the unconscious involves some kind of deliberate denial of access.)

Putting it Together

The inventory of the mind in figure 1.1 was framed in quite deliberately superficial terms: care was taken to avoid philosophical doctrine, though some has no doubt crept in, no deep commitment to doctrine is necessary to comprehend it. However, an inventory falls far short of the proper guide to the mental landscape promised at the beginning of this chapter. Imagine your disappointment if someone, having promised you a guide to the countryside, produced instead a mere list of the main hills and mountains. Even if this list included descriptions of each feature, you would have been sold short.

Turning the inventory of the mental realm into something more useful requires an understanding of how experiences, attitudes and actions fit together; some idea of what they do, or, rather, what we do with them. As before, the aim is to come to this understanding with minimum philosophical preconception. So, let us work up to it slowly by considering a series of different ways in which we might describe some quite specific situation in which human beings play a central role.

Description I

There are four human beings in a room. A female is seated with a male child on her knee. A second female is seated in front of a three-legged wooden stand, and is facing the first female and male. Another adult male is standing off to one side of the two females. He moves towards the female seated at the wooden stand, and she contracts her facial muscles.

What is going on here? I don't expect it to be easy for you to answer this question, nor is the situation easy to visualize. (I base these judgments on the kind of informal experimentation with students that has already been

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used as the source of the inventory of the mental realm.) What we have here is an unvarnished account of the situation of four human beings and some events that they participate in. Yet there is a tendency to be confused by it, to find it opaque even though it purports to contain ‘nothing but the facts’. Why is this? Well, part of the reason is that what has been described involves interaction between human beings, and we expect description of such interaction to be framed in terms that have been at least lightly ‘varnished’ by the mental realm. Description I is difficult to construe precisely because it confounds this expectation. Such confounding of expectations can occur even when human activity is not directly involved. Imagine someone describing a scene in these ways:

As you look straight ahead, you see a structure made of cellulose, copper-zinc and silicon dioxide. This structure is resting on flat square-cut sheets of complex naturally occurring minerals.

As you look straight ahead you see a bright light blue in the middle of your visual field, with some dull yellow lower down, shading into orange, and then disappearing into a brown-black.

We expect a scene to be described, not by talk of chemical composition or colour patches, but by an account of the *objects* (a wooden, bronze and glass table) and *relations* (the table is sitting on a stone patio) that figure in it. So, except for very special purposes, both of the examples are confusing, even if in some sense highly accurate. (Special purposes might include: a book on the chemistry of everyday objects or a description suited to a painter, in which the flow of colours is more important than what is depicted.)

But mere confounding of expectations is not the whole story of what is wrong with Description I, for, in this latter kind of case, it is not merely that we are surprised that certain descriptive vocabulary has been left out. Rather, we think that any description of human activity given solely in ‘object and relation’ terms is bound to be distorting and downright inaccurate. Compare Description I with this one:

Description II

Lily Briscoe is an artist, seated in front of her easel, painting a picture of her friend Mrs Ramsay who is herself holding her child on her knee. Mr Banks is near Mrs Ramsay, looking on at the proceedings. He then moves across the room, taking up a position behind Lily Briscoe, so that he can have a look at her painting. As he does this, Lily Briscoe winces.

Here we feel more at home with the vocabulary, and feel also that previously suppressed facts have been revealed. In contrast to Description I, even a casual reading of this description makes it easier to visualize the situation. This is because it gives us information about the characters described and their actions. Artists in the midst of painting tend to look at their subject; the subjects posing for a picture tend to have a slightly self-conscious air, though perhaps this is not so of a child; an onlooker needs to move behind an artist in order to see what is being painted; wincing, as opposed to mere contraction of facial muscles, might well be something done rather than a mere tic.

All of these things are so natural and obvious that we tend to overlook them. Moreover, the improvement effected by Description II is not simply the result of its providing detail left out by Description I. What we are given is not simply some further factual information so much as a new way of understanding the same facts. This point could be put in terms of descriptive frameworks within which the situation is embedded: Description I uses a framework of objects and events – it tells us what things there are, and how they move – whereas Description II embeds that same situation in the framework of persons and actions. And with this second sort of embedding comes a kind of insight. Though the explicit language of explanation – the use of words like ‘because’ and ‘therefore’ – does not figure in Description II, we none the less come away with more of an understanding of what is going on.

Description II provides more of an understanding, but still leaves much unclear. The framework of persons and actions is rooted in our inventory of the mind; actions are after all one of the major categories of the mental realm. However, Description II doesn’t, as we might put it, *really* tell us what is going on in the situation described. Against this background of puzzlement, consider this further account:

Description III

This ray passed level with Mr Bankes’s ray straight to Mrs Ramsay sitting reading there with James at her knee. But now while she still looked, Mr Bankes had done. He had put on his spectacles. He had stepped back. He had raised his hand. He had slightly narrowed his clear blue eyes, when Lily, rousing herself, saw what he was at, and winced like a dog who sees a hand raised to strike it. She would have snatched her picture off the easel, but she said to herself, One must. She braced herself to stand the awful trial of someone looking at her picture. And if it must be seen, Mr Bankes was less alarming than another. But that any other eye should see the residue of her thirty-three years, the deposit of each day’s living mixed with something more secret than

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she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those days was an agony. At the same time it was immensely exciting.

The language of this description is not easy, but certainly better than anything I could have produced. It is a passage from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.⁵ Like the transition from the first to the second description, the move to this one makes what is essentially the same situation more intelligible, but it does so in a somewhat different way. We now know not only who did what, we have some clearer idea of *why* at least the central incident in the story took place. At the risk of labouring the obvious, we know now that Lily winced because the thought of someone looking at her work – work that up until then she had kept from others – frightened her. But we also know that she did no more than wince, she did not try to stop what was happening, because she believed that there was some importance, even value, in the judgemental gaze of someone else. And more than this, we know too of the complex attitudes that she had to her painting, described as it was as the deposit of each day's living over thirty-three years.

Notice that the passage, like Description II, does not contain any explicit explanatory claims. We are told various truths about the situation, rather as we were in the other descriptions, but the inclusion of Lily Briscoe's attitudes and feelings allows us to get, as it were, inside the head of the main protagonist; knowing these attitudes and feelings from the inside, from her point of view, makes it easy for us to elaborate on Description III in an explanatory way. We can say such things as:

She winced *because* she believed that Bankes' gestures meant that he was about to look at her painting, and having her paintings looked at frightened her.

Her not removing her painting, or covering it up, is *explained* by her belief that a real artist ought to expose her work to the judgement of others, together with the belief that Bankes was likely to be a gentle, or perhaps a not threateningly knowledgeable judge of such work.

Whether or not she was conscious of it before, she discovered a frisson of excitement in knowing that Bankes was about to look at her work, and this together with her other attitudes towards him and her work was *her reason* for allowing the incident to develop in the way it did.

The italicized words in the first two of the above suggest that the explanations given are of the same form as explanations not directly concerned with the understanding of human action. We say that a dish cracked *because* it was moved

too quickly from the freezer to the oven; that the higher incidence of leukaemia in young children is *explained* by the radiation from the nuclear reprocessing plant located nearby. But the words of the third – the idea of someone’s having a reason for doing something – does differ markedly: it simply makes no sense to say that the quick move from freezer to oven gave the dish a reason to break.

Clarifying the notion of explanation as it applies to everyday objects and events, to human actions, and as it is used in more systematic scientific contexts, will be business for later chapters. Moreover, even as this brief discussion suggests, it is important business. Efforts to integrate the mental into the realm of science depend for cogency, or lack of it, on this issue. (For this reason, it is an issue that we will return to more than once.) Here my ambitions have been much more circumscribed: the aim has been simply that of displaying certain further facts about the mental realm. The move from Description I to II, and then to III, shows us what is done with the items in the inventory in figure 1.1. What we see is that the vocabulary of the mental realm enables us to reconceive certain situations. At a basic level this vocabulary makes it possible for us to see certain movements and events as human actions. But, when fully deployed, it lends itself to more than mere redescription. When, as in the passage from *To the Lighthouse*, all the elements of the mind are knitted together, they enlighten, explain, make intelligible the action previously described.

Noting the way in which the elements of mind are used in the description and explanation of human behaviour finally allows us to progress beyond the inventory stage. We must no longer view the mental realm as captured by a list of different, though related, phenomena, since we have seen how these phenomena can be descriptively combined to give a special sort of insight into events that feature human beings. That I have introduced this idea using a literary example should not be surprising since literature depends almost wholly on this activity. Novels contain stories about things that people (or similar characters) do, and for the most part they contain descriptions of these doings which allow the reader to understand at least some of them. (This is not to say that the ultimate purpose of novels is to tell an explanatory story about some bits of human behaviour; novels can have as many different purposes as conversations.) Moreover, literary examples are often richly realistic, and this is in contrast to the rather shallow sort of case that one comes across in philosophical discussions.

The explanatory interanimation of items in the mental realm has been called many different things in the philosophical literature, but perhaps ‘belief-desire psychology’, ‘common-sense psychology’ and ‘folk psychology’ are the three most common labels. However, none of them is particularly apt.

The use of the term 'psychology' is intended to point towards the explanatory role of descriptions like the one taken from *To the Lighthouse*, and there is no doubt that we use the term in something like this way. None the less, contemporary psychology aims to be a more or less scientific discipline, and thus might well have explanatory aspirations that do not overlap with those evident in the Woolf passage. Until we have got clear about the notion of explanation, we must therefore be careful; we must not let the use of the word 'psychology' foist on us an unrealistic picture of what is going on when we write and talk about ourselves.

The name 'belief-desire psychology' has its origin in the fact that, though virtually all our explanatory narratives at some point make essential use of the attitudes in general, belief and desire play a central role. To see some event as a human action seems to require us to see it as *intended* in some way, and intentions are generally intelligible only against a background of *beliefs* and *desires*. Lily Briscoe could have prevented Bankes from seeing her painting, but she quite intentionally stopped herself from doing this because she believed that artists should be exposed to criticism and, in spite of some misgivings, desired Bankes to be that critic. All this is true and important, but nevertheless it can be distorting. The idea of 'belief-desire psychology' as working in this way suggests a picture of the attitudes as levers, the pulling and pushing on which somehow causes actions to pop into existence.

As we saw, there is no doubt that we can distil explanations from descriptive narratives: the passage from *To the Lighthouse* encourages, even if it doesn't employ, the use of words like 'because' and 'explains'. However, as we also saw, it is by no means clear what is involved in this distillation. In particular, we have yet to say anything about the explanatory value of the notion of a reason. Looked at carefully, the passage does not say that a belief and desire caused Lily to sit tight. Rather, it suggests that things she knew, believed, saw and felt came together to be her reason for acting in the way she did. Until we know more about how all the items in the mental realm can come together in this way, we must be careful about attributing causal powers to this or that specific item. Unfortunately, the label 'belief-desire psychology' can encourage us to throw such caution to the wind.

Talk of 'common-sense psychology' suggests that the kind of descriptive-explanatory narrative we have been discussing is pretty much common property, that more or less anyone can both provide and understand it. Up to a point, of course, this is true. A creature who lacked the ability to see actions in events, and who failed to understand why actions take place, is simply not human, or at least not completely human. However, the fact that our human-

ity consists partly in this ability shouldn't lead us to think that it is shared equally, or that there could be no innovative development. To the extent that these expectations are implied by the label 'common-sense', that label is misleading.

To see just how off-beam the label is – but not just for this purpose – consider the following story (which is in all essentials absolutely true). Some thirty years ago, a marriage took place between two people who had known each other since early childhood (and who were known to me through a mutual friend). Their two families lived near one another, took holidays together, and both families were pleased when, in their early twenties, the couple announced their engagement. There was no familial pressure for this to happen, though there was little surprise. After all, the two had been inseparable during their teens, and had travelled together during university vacations. What did surprise both families and friends was what happened next: the marriage lasted a single day.

As far as anyone could tell – though no one felt able to ask them directly – the separation was completely without rancour, though it was certainly final; no attempt to patch things up took place, the house they bought together, and all of their shared possessions, were divided without lawyers, and the couple are now married to others, living in the same city, but seeing nothing of one another.

Everyone who knew them, and even those who only heard about what had happened, had a 'theory'. That is, everyone suggested a narrative which might make this strange event intelligible. A first thought, one that occurred to almost everyone, was that sex was the key. However, a moment's thought showed this to be implausible. The shared holidays almost certainly included sexual relations, and, even if not, what could have happened to rule out the possibility of staying together – even for a matter of a few months or weeks – whilst trying to deal with any sexual problems? A second line of thought could be summed up this way: they came to realize all of sudden that they should never have got married in the first place; that being childhood sweethearts had swept them along a path they should never have taken. Whilst there is something to be said for this view, it too does not stand up to close scrutiny. The first day and night of a marriage is bound to seem strange, is bound to provoke fears and questions. But why would otherwise sensible people let these fears lead immediately to separation? A third theory centred on the likelihood that one or both had met someone else, and had gone through with the marriage out of some misguided sense of loyalty. (It was even imagined that the wedding night might have been taken up with a tentative and painful mutual confes-

sion of infidelity.) Yet subsequent events did not really confirm this view: each married someone else, but only much later, and in each case it was someone met for the first time after the disastrous wedding ceremony.

None of the theories seemed quite right (and the matter remains a mystery). Yet a great deal of creative effort went into formulating them, and some people were clearly better at it than others. Also, some were better than others when it came to judging whether a given theory was plausible. As the word is normally taken, it would therefore have been simply wrong to characterize what went on in these discussions as ‘commonsensical’, if this implies that more or less anyone is as good as anyone else at contributing.

Of course, someone might defend the label ‘common-sense psychology’ by pointing out that the words and concepts used in formulating theories about the failed marriage were not technical: after all, these discussions were not like those in particle physics. In appealing to notions that we share, it might be said that there is a *common framework* to these theories, even though it would have been wrong to describe the particular theories as themselves commonsensical.

There is certainly something right about this move, but it makes an important concession – one which we must not forget when we return to this topic later – and even with this concession, there is still a deep problem with the label. A common framework for theorizing about human behaviour is not by itself a psychology of any sort. (Imagine someone thinking that the common framework of botany – an accepted classification of plants and their parts – was itself an explanatory theory of plant life.) But even aside from this, something important is overlooked.

The explanations offered for the failure of the marriage were never of the sort involved in the physical sciences, and many of them – as in the examples above – were set in something like the common framework of attitude and experience. But there were some explanations that made use of notions whose relation to that framework is both controversial and very far from being common property. I have in mind here explanations relying on a whole range of concepts drawn from the psychoanalytic tradition. Those who knew the couple better than I did, and who accepted some strands of that tradition, were inclined to pepper their explanations with talk of, amongst others, unconscious desires, repression and projection. I shall not pause here to give specific examples of these explanations, nor to offer a view on their adequacy, but their very possibility shows the hopelessness of the label ‘common-sense psychology’. The framework within which we offer explanations of various human actions may be set by the basic inventory of the mental realm pictured in figure 1.1, but this framework can be, and has been, extended in all sorts of ways, amongst which the broadly psychoanalytic approach is perhaps the best known.

(Note: as with everything to do with psychoanalysis, it is controversial whether we should see it as an extension of the ‘common framework’ or as a completely independent explanatory framework. My hope here was simply to suggest that the extension view is not implausible – after all, one does speak of unconscious desires, beliefs and intentions – and that if we accept it, we have even less reason to take seriously talk of common-sense psychology.)

The space devoted to fretting about the right name for our explanatory/narrative practices might seem excessive. However, inaccurate names can send us off in wrong directions – something particularly true in the philosophy of mind – so we must be careful. Besides, my discussion of names has been in part an excuse for clarifying the nature of the thing we have yet to baptize. The third candidate name happens to be the one most frequently used, and this is ironic, since it was coined to express a critical, even negative, view of the enterprise.⁶ ‘Folk medicine’, ‘folk physics’, ‘folk chemistry’ all suggest the primitiveness of views ripe for replacement by proper explanatory schemes, and it is in this spirit that many writers use the label ‘folk psychology’. In so far as the ‘psychology of the folk’ implies both scientific pretensions and unskilled deployment, this label suffers from the same defects as those of ‘common-sense psychology’. But it is the suggestion of primitiveness that requires a brief comment.

Given how little we once knew, folk medicine was the best we could manage, but the advance of modern medicine has both supplanted its primitive forbear and, in some cases, revealed why this or that piece of folk medicinal practice has some efficacy. (This is of course the official story; though many do, there is no need to question it here.) The suggestion in the label ‘folk psychology’ is that the same thing could happen to our narrative/explanatory practices. Put most starkly, the label implies that one day we might well come to hold that human beings do not have beliefs, desires, intentions, nor feel pains, have visual experiences or moods. Beliefs and these other things will turn out to have been merely part of an intelligible, though mistaken, first attempt to understand human beings.

It might surprise you to find that this possibility is taken seriously; that there are some working in philosophy and psychology who accept it, and see no genuine paradox in the claim that they *believe* there are no beliefs. In due course, we will come to consider the background to this sort of ‘eliminativist’ view, but here the point is simple: we should be very suspicious of any argument for eliminativism which takes off from the label ‘folk psychology’. Our current narrative/explanatory practices – the stories we tell as part of making intelligible what people do – are creative, revisable in the light of evidence, and are by no means accessible to everyone. They do not differ in these respects

from the explanatory efforts of modern medicine. True enough, the background framework within which these theories fall is in a broad sense available to the folk. But this is no less true of medicine. Modern medicine and folk medicine differ considerably, but both share a framework determined by notions of, among others, disease, cure and health.

None of the labels currently used is without drawbacks, but I do not want to spend the whole of this book speaking of ‘our ‘narrative/explanatory/intelligibility conferring practices’. In any case, the caveats so far registered give us a certain freedom in the choice of name. So, perhaps perversely, I shall mostly use ‘folk psychology’, whilst thinking of what it names as not necessarily theoretical in the manner of the science of psychology, nor as something simply given to the folk.

Persons

Narratives that knit together experiences, attitudes and actions confer a special kind of intelligibility on the world. And the key to the unity of these narratives is the notion of a person or self. As has already been noted several times, every item in the mental realm belongs to, or is owned by, some person. Pains have sufferers, beliefs have subjects and actions have agents. Nor is this simply a matter of fact: pains, beliefs and actions do not just happen to belong to persons; it simply makes no sense to think of these mental phenomena without thinking of them as someone’s.

Of course, it does not follow from the constitutive nature of the relationship between persons and mental phenomena that the person who experiences, who adopts attitudes and who acts is one and the same kind of thing. Not yet having considered what a person is, it could be that sufferers of experiences differ systematically from subjects who adopt attitudes, whilst both differ from agents of actions. Yet this bare possibility is never one that we take seriously.

The idea that there is one kind of thing which has experiences, attitudinizes and acts is a constitutive presupposition of the coherence of our folk psychological narratives. Just as an exercise, imagine trying to make sense of a narrative in which sufferer, subject and agent are given different names. Told that A did what he did because of what B felt and C believed and desired, we are likely to react in one of two ways. Either we think we are being told that A’s own feelings, beliefs and desires happen to have been moulded by the feelings of B and the beliefs and desires of C; or we think that, for some unmentioned reason the story includes three different names of the same person. Only in one of these ways could we make head or tail of the use of ‘because’ in the original claim.

(Note: there are two questions which could be put to this claim and which might suggest that it is overstated. They are:

- (a) What about the notorious cases of multiple personalities?
- (b) What about the idea that, e.g. perceptual beliefs, do not strictly belong to a person, but belong instead to some subsystem (a visual system) within a person?

A quick answer to these questions is that they both still seem to presuppose – though in a more complicated way – the very claim they are meant to challenge. Thus, when we read about some case of multiple personality, it seems always to be a single person whose misfortune it is to have a special kind of multiplicity. And similarly, talk of beliefs being those of some subsystem seems no less strongly to imply a single owner of this, and other, such systems. However, having so far said nothing substantial about the notion of a person, these answers are too quick to settle matters.)

What has been said so far might make it seem as if the unity of personhood in the context of folk psychological narratives is merely a ‘formal’ unity. By this I mean a unity that simply requires the narrator to make clear, in order to shed light on an action, that the actor, experiencer and believer are one and the same person. However, this kind of unity is no different from that required in the explanation of events that do not involve persons. If I set out to explain why a billiard ball moved in the way it did, I had better make sure that this same ball is the subject of the causal factors responsible for the final motion.

What has been left out is the important presumption of folk psychological narrative that the required unity of persons can be appreciated from the ‘inside’ as well as from the ‘outside’. Not only can we view Lily Briscoe as at the same time the person who resisted removing her painting, who believed her art should be open to the gaze of others and who felt frightened at the approach of Banks, we can view Lily Briscoe as somehow taking herself – a single self – to have these feelings and beliefs, and as acting on them. The narrator’s and audience’s point of view – what is called the third-person perspective – is what I labelled the ‘outside’. Lily Briscoe’s own point of view – the first-person perspective – is the ‘inside’. What distinguishes folk psychological explanation from the explanation of such things as the motion of billiard balls is not merely the fact that the former deals with mental phenomena, nor the fact that a unity of personhood is required. The crucial extra element is that of the first-person perspective.

Woolf’s narrative conjured up this perspective: we were made to imagine what Lily Briscoe felt and thought from her own point of view. Of course, it

need not have been done this way; we could have been told, as it were from Woolf's point of view, what Lily Briscoe felt and thought. (Many novels adopt this perspective: almost miraculously, the author is able to tell you what a protagonist feels or believes, even though the author is not actually involved in the action.) But even in this case, the third-person narrative would only work – it would only make what Lily Briscoe did intelligible – if we also regarded her as at least capable of adopting a first-person perspective on her actions.

You can get some idea of what is meant here by thinking about the notion of 'having a reason for' that plays such an important part in our narratives. Even when seen from the outside, feelings and thoughts only come together to give reasons for action when we see them as belonging to a single person. This is the unity thesis. But they couldn't be that person's reason for action unless the unity of personhood – something we might recognize from the outside – is somehow available to the agent herself.

Think again about attempts to explain the failed marriage. I have suggested that the couple's being married for a single day, given the background circumstances, is deeply puzzling. But you may feel – as many friends of the couple did – that the mystery only exists because of our reticence. If we could have just asked the bride or bridegroom why they broke up, there would no longer be a puzzle. Now, this might not be true: even a frank discussion with the couple might still leave the event unexplained. However, independently of whether, in this case, it is true, the fact that we tend to think it illustrates in a concrete way the importance of the first-person point of view. Our attempt to explain what happened seems to presuppose that there are first-personal points of view; we seem to count things done as done for reasons only in so far as there are agents who see themselves as having those reasons.

This idea might be called the 'self-consciousness' thesis, and as I have described it, it is *additional* to the idea of a 'formal' unity of personhood in our narratives. But it is by no means obvious that the unity and the self-consciousness theses are quite so separable. In a very often cited passage, John Locke (1632–1704) wrote:

[a person] is a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.⁷

And the suggestion seems clear here that some kind of self-consciousness ('can consider itself as itself') is inextricably connected with what I have called narrative unity ('the same thinking thing in different times and places'). However, any further discussion of the issues this passage raises, would exceed my brief.

My aim in this chapter was to describe the role of persons in our folk psychological practices, not to set to work on the project of coming up with a substantive account of personhood.

(Note: throughout this chapter I have insisted that all three of the main categories of the mental realm can be seen as things we *do*. This is of course obvious in the case of acting, but remember that we don't merely have pain, and the belief that right will triumph, we *experience* pain and *believe* right will triumph. There is thus a sense in which our idea of the self or the person is essentially a notion of an agent, and this is reflected nicely in Locke's claim, in which a person is said to be something with a capacity for a certain kind of activity.)

Notes and References

- 1 From *The Centaur*, by John Updike (London: André Deutsch, 1962), pp. 3–4.
- 2 From *Through the Looking-Glass*, by Lewis Carroll (London: Macmillan, 1874), p. 140.
- 3 I have a lot of sympathy for the view that the substitution of whole sentence complements is more than merely awkward, it is downright distorting. But I won't pause here to engage in an extended argument about this.
- 4 From 'Observation and the Will' (*Journal of Philosophy*, 60, 1963, pp. 367–92) by Brian O'Shaughnessy.
- 5 New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955, pp. 80–1. First published in 1927.
- 6 Its earliest use is lost in the mists of time, but Dan Dennett once told me that he *believes* his use was the first, and that he certainly meant it to convey a kind of disdain for the explanatory adequacy of the practice.
- 7 *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Everyman edn. (London: Dent, 1951), p. 280.

