

Title: Naturalising Intentionality. Inquiries into Realism & Relativism

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Language: English

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Series: Acta Philosophica Gothoburgensia, no 22.

ISSN 0283-2380

ISBN 978-91-7346-588-5

Ph.D. dissertation at Göteborg University, 2007.

Cognitive scientists, linguists and philosophers have expressed hope that mental and linguistic content (aboutness) will eventually be explained in broadly natural scientific terms. This dissertation investigates certain problems pertaining to attempts to naturalise mental aboutness and related semantic concepts like reference and truth. The first chapter introduces some traditional conceptions of aboutness, and traces methodological and metaphysical presuppositions behind these proposals. Chapter two investigates aspects of the notion of naturalisation. It argues that we have no compelling reasons to assume global naturalism, yet that there are good reasons to seek a natural explanation of semantic notions like reference and truth. Two prominent attempts to naturalise semantic properties are briefly introduced: Millikan's evolutionary perspective and Fodor's information-theoretic view. Chapter three deals with an important objection put forth by Putnam against metaphysical realism, that is, against the theory that there is a mind-independent world which is the explanatory target for the natural sciences. I argue that Putnam's objection can be met by a certain version of naturalism. This chapter also begins a discussion of relativism about truth, which is continued in chapter four. Chapters four and five mainly deal with some recent problems in the philosophy of language associated with the question of where the line between pragmatic and semantic contribution to communicative content is to be drawn. Chapter five brings out some consequences of applying a particular naturalistic notion of linguistic convention when distinguishing between semantic and pragmatic linguistic content.

Keywords: Anti-realism, context, faultless disagreement, inner perception, intentionality, internal realism, knowledge by acquaintance, metaphysical realism, naturalism, relativism, pragmatic-semantic distinction.