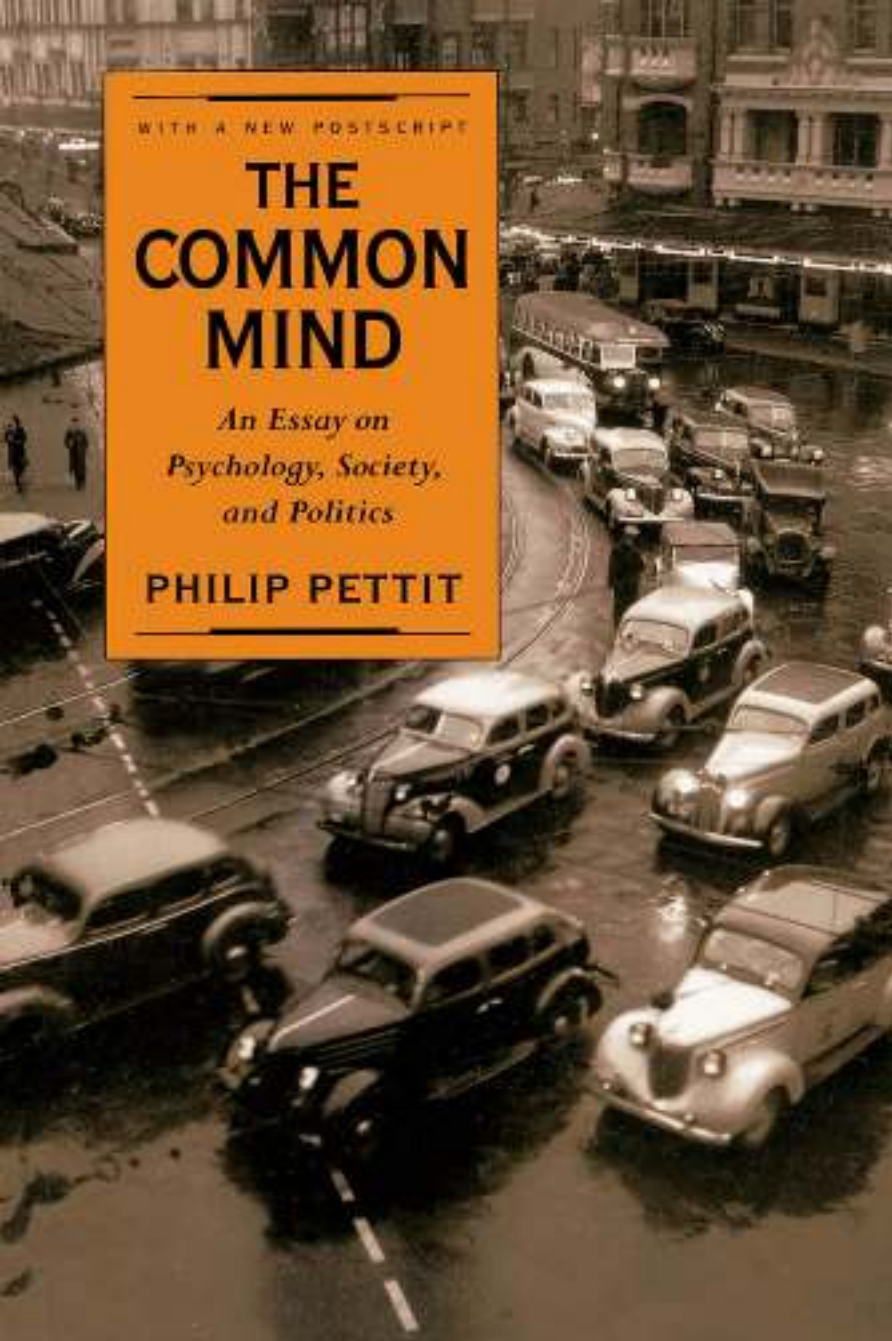


WITH A NEW POSTSCRIPT

THE COMMON MIND

*An Essay on
Psychology, Society,
and Politics*

PHILIP PETTIT



The Common Mind

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THE COMMON MIND

An Essay on Psychology,
Society, and Politics

Philip Pettit

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Preface to the Paperback Edition

The third part of *The Common Mind* makes claims about how social explanations and political evaluation should be pursued. The claims about social explanation have been well received by reviewers, and while the claims about political evaluation have been challenged, the challenge has usually been directed to the republican conception of liberty that I have elaborated and defended elsewhere; most recently, in a manuscript that I hope to publish soon on civic republicanism. Thus I cannot address those claims further in this revision of the book.

But while the book builds towards a defence of those methodological claims, it does so on the basis of a metaphysics, in particular a metaphysics of mind and society, developed in the first two parts. And if I have been disappointed in any way with the encouraging reception given to the book, it is at the failure of many reviewers to discuss this metaphysics in its own right; the tendency has been to rush on to the methodological lessons. Hence I have added a postscript to this edition in which I look at that metaphysics from a new angle. The postscript elaborates the three aspects under which the book is a defence of a common mind, and I hope it will be of interest for those who have already read the book, as well as for those who come to it for the first time.

Cambridge
October 1995

P.P.

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Preface

This book has been years in the making. But that's not a misnomer, for the making of it has been great fun. It has pushed me into thinking and writing about a variety of topics that I would otherwise have left untouched. It has drawn me into a range of challenging dialogues and exchanges. And it has involved me in a number of very enjoyable and profitable collaborations on publications related to the theme of the book. Without those collaborations this book might have been completed earlier but it certainly would not have been completed in the present form.

I should begin with an acknowledgment of my indebtedness to relevant collaborators: to Eric F. Jackson, with whom I share the theory of intentionality and causal relevance presented here; to Michael Smith, who has an equal stake in the depiction of human subjects as deliberative agents; to Geoffrey Brennan, with whom I have made connected investigations into the concepts of rationality in choice and of feasibility in institutions; and to John Braithwaite, with whom I have tried to elaborate the sort of republican theory of politics, in particular of criminal justice, that is supported here. I should also mention my indebtedness to Peter Menzies, with whom I am currently working on themes connected with holism and anthropocentrism. I have drawn on other collaborative work to a lesser extent but I should not fail to record at least my debts to those with whom my joint work is cited in the text: Alan Harman, Chandan Kukathas, Huw Price, and Bob Sugden.

These collaborations come from economics, politics, and sociology, as well as from philosophy. With their help I have absorbed interdisciplinary lessons and insights that would, in other wise, have been in my way. With the encouragement of their collaboration I have tried to write a book that will engage with debates that occur within and across a variety of disciplines.

The nature of the book is easily explained. It begins with questions of psychology: questions to do with what it means to be an intentional agent and, in particular, what it means to be an agent with the capacity for thought. Having sketched an overall view of the literature on thinking agency, it then goes on to explore the difference that social life makes to the mentality of such agents.

And, having developed a picture of mind in society – of the nature of social mind—it turns, finally, to the lessons of this picture for the pursuit of social and political theory, for the explanation of what happens on the social scene, and for the evaluation of the different ways in which that scene may be structured.

The book is in three parts, and each part corresponds to a stage in the enterprise just described. The first part deals with topics in what is variously known as the philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology, or the philosophy of psychology; the second deals with questions in social ontology or metaphysics, especially in the theory of how psychological subjects relate socially to one another and to the social entities they manifest; and the third looks at issues of social explanation and political evaluation, issues of social and political theory. The first part of the book gives a picture of mind; the second, of mind and society; and the third, of mind, society, and the associated sort of theory.

The overall structure of the book is dictated by a pair of dependence claims. The first is that social ontology depends on the ways of social explanation or political evaluation, unless we have an account of how to explain and evaluate social life, unless we have a good understanding of the nature of individuals and of the differences that count in making us individuals. The second claim is that equally we cannot learn to develop such an account of social life or of social and society unless we have a picture of their psychological make-up, a picture of what it is to be psychologically equipped in the manner of human beings. Seven years ago I committed myself to writing a book on social and political theory. The first dependence proposition means that the book would also have to deal with social ontology, with the theory of mind and society. The second dependence proposition ensured that it would also have to cover philosophical psychology, the theory of mind as such.

The main propositions defended in the book are summarized in the preface offered at the beginning of each of the three main parts. These summaries are best avoided in the course of reading the full text; I hope that they will give some sense of the direction of the argument for someone who skims and that they will help at a certain stage of his development for someone who does not. The summaries may also make it possible for a reader to dip into the book at different points, with at least an overall picture of where the particular interests best fit with other pieces. It would be nice to think that the book is a seamless web, a fabric in which there are no joints, and that it has to be grasped as a whole if it is to have the desired effect on a reader. But I am no master of that sort of art or craft. The book is a simple piece of art or craft and I am sure that there will be no serious loss, or at least no serious aesthetic loss, in surveying it with a selective eye.

Perhaps it will help the reader further if I draw attention to the main points of novelty in the book. The principal novelty in the first part is that distinction that I draw between mere causal systems that are causally influenced and desire and intentional systems that can also think intentional systems, as I put it, that can act intentionally with a view to having beliefs and desires that satisfy certain rationality constraints. The treatment of merely intentional systems in the first chapter follows fairly familiar lines; the new departures are that it offers a

distinct account of desire and deliberation and introduces the program model of causal relevance to account for the impact of intentional states. The treatment of thinking systems on the other hand, and more generally the discussion of rule-following subjects, does not fit any standard mould; indeed it provides the basis for much that is new in later parts of the book.

The main novelty in the second part is the distinction between *logocentric* and *non-logocentric* individualism and collectivism, as I draw for *Logos*, and the question of the separate interests and minds. The first issue has to do with whether our ordinary first-order psychology is undermined by collective agencies, aggregate regularities and forces. The second has to do with whether we are individually dependent on our relations with one another for the possession of essential human faculties, in particular the capacity to think. In arguing for individualism, the chapter on the first case on covers fairly well-explored territory; if there is novelty here, it is in the organization of the material and in the setting out of the different issues involved. The chapter on the second question breaks new ground, however, in defending and developing a holistic perspective. The defence is novel in building on the account of thinking systems presented in the first part of the book, arguing that under certain plausible conditions the capacity for thought requires community with others. The development is novel in showing that the holism involved does not require a retreat to any sort of relativism that while it certainly entails an anthropogenicism, this doctrine is consistent with a realist vision of inquiry.

Finally, the main novelty in the third part of the book probably consists in the innovations I show to be seen in the positions argued here and the holistic individualism emerging from earlier discussions. On the explicit, on-site, on-the-side of social theory – I show that the approach developed earlier generates an emergent view of interaction with I can argue that the fact that human beings are interdependent – this claim is consistent with the pursuit of the strategies of social explanation – and I provide room in this way both for rational choice explanation and for explanation of a more structural or historicist stamp. On the evaluation side I show that the holistic individualism impacts in various ways on political theorising. The doctrine is methodologically significant, impacting negatively on fashionable, conventional approaches to the discipline. It is significant in the construal that it evaluates for various values – including a republicanism as distinct from a liberal conception of negative liberty. And it is significant in pointing us towards a particular strategy of feasibility analysis – and under strategy in assessing the institutional feasibility of different values and policies.

So much for the scope and structure of the book. Perhaps I should also comment on its style. Although the book aspires to find an interdisciplinary readership, I do not pretend to have found or forged a new interdisciplinary style. I am myself a philosopher and I write in the manner of my profession. I love the accumulation of distinctions, the development of out-and-dried taxonomies, the pursuit of common-or-garden arguments. I have a taste for the glitzy word. I care rather than formal theorems or elusive monads. I get excited by

substantia, problems, and not by technical puzzles or technical dogmatism. I go for declaratory prose in preference to diagrams, matrices, and tables or, for that matter, to high-flying rhetoric or evocative metaphor. In any case I am no good at the ways of formalism and figure, however helpful I may find, the writing of those who embrace such modes. So, for better or worse, the book has the aspect of a work of philosophy, in particular a work of analytical philosophy.

But philosophy can be great fun and I hope that non-philosophical readers will not be put off. Philosophy is irrelevant and advice to remain so. It is, in the proper, not real, intellectual excitement about familiar, familiar things: things like the nature of mind, the structure of social relations, the possibilities of politics, things like the topics covered in this book. Intellectual excitement is real to the extent that it can survive the project of increasing intelligibility. And few disciplines are conducted in the manner of analytical philosophy to looking at the potentially exciting aspects of human and social life, without any compromise of intelligibility. Of the other disciplines that focus on similar concerns, too many only look to technically tractable matters. And of those that target exciting concerns, too many seem content just to scold and celebrate the ill-effects of questions that do not seem to have to do with human life or human life and trouble.

Perhaps these matters should be left, not to align myself with analytical philosophy, but rather with analytical thought. The analytical philosophy often falls short of the ideas I have presented, sliding too narrowly to topics that belong to the charmed circle of the traditional curriculum, and using only well-trodden patterns of argument in the service of the same tradition. And, on the other side, the disciplines and traditions that compete with analytical philosophy are not, by any means, eliminated, in the manner my remarks may have suggested, because the necessarily technical and the overly rhetorical. The style of research and writing in research identity—the style of analytical theory—may belong equally to practitioners of a variety of disciplines and traditions, even if I ascribe primarily with analytical philosophy. It is a no-nonsense, un-fanciful style of careful analysis and keenly-informing and, while this work will undoubtedly fall a bit of the demands of that style, my aim is to do the best I can with it. For our book is this book for the compelling mathematical proof. But will save you a room in disarray. Do not fail to read passages of my writing if every power that will bring you to you a chance to come dinner. The enterprise is pursued to a different, more pedestrian key.

Postmodernists dominate many of the communities of social scientists and they will be surprised at my not publishing an analytical treatment of the topics covered in this book (Rose 1991). Participants of the postmodernist movement will find the self-confidence with which I approach my topics amusing and anachronistic. They will be shocked at my failure to keep a distance from the discourse I pursue, at my failure to hold the presuppositions that distinguish the discourse by focus, and to keep a continual eye on the usual modes of

articulation with which it may be confronted. They will see me as a sort of tosser from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, for it is often said in their circles that the distinguishing mark of the Enlightenment project was an insensitivity to the parochial character of its own modes of thought and expression, an assumption that wherever a single best thought seeks reality in the refractive languages of different traditions, a enlightened thought can gain an unclouded view of what there is.

The postmodernist challenge is a difficult one to confront. Perhaps I should begin with acknowledging the points on which I agree with postmodernists and then explain why I do not go along with their models of intellectual discussion.

Postmodernists will generally disavow doctrine. But this is ungenerous, for there are a number of propositions that distinguish their commitments. They deny that the human subject is the self-transparent, self-directive entity imagined in the Cartesian tradition, and reoriented in recent existential thought. They hold that the subject is essentially dependent on social relations and cultural resources, in particular the resources of language and tradition, for the realization of its distinctive capacities. They hold, in particular, that reason is not a universal given, but that what is reasonable, what is theoretically or practically correct (e.g., is a function of the local culture or cultures within which people operate. This leads them to think, on the other side, that reality is not a universal given either. They deny that theoretical, regulative, and practical norms are a promised land to which different traditions may lead from different directions; they portray traditions as each having their own reality in view, with the real corresponding to what is being sought within the local habits of theoretical and practical thought.

It is idealist which is rough and ready, and a lack of a sense of balance of emphasis and application. But the striking thing is that the propositions I've set out can all be interpreted in such a way that the pages that follow constitute a defence. I argue in this book that human beings are characterized by the ability to think, that thinking requires social relations and cultural resources, and that this means that naive realism is pure fiction. True, I held that the compromise to realism involved in admitting the social character of thought need not be of relativistic proportions. I held that the lesson is, not that each tradition of discourse constructs its own reality, but that whether a discourse directs us to reality is a question that is always *sub judice* in particular, *sub judice* conversationally, under the judgment of intellectual exchange. The answer to the question is contingent on whether the claims that distinguish the discourse prove their worth in the actual negotiation between different individuals and cultures. But the rejection of realism does not cast me beyond the postmodernist pale, for relativism is also rejected by many heroes of the movement (MacIntyre 1985, chap. 18; Rorty 1989).

So much for points of agreement. The points of disagreement are equally striking. Postmodernist writing is a strange craft, not by the presentation of any sort of theory, but by the pursuit of a kind of therapy. Given their theory—a theory that often remains unvoiced—postmodernists seem to assume that any unselfconscious involvement in a discourse, for example any unselfconscious

pursuit of historical, or psychological or philosophical inquiry, is problematic. They take unconsciousness to betray an ignorance of the fact that every discourse is distinguished by particular assumptions and that those assumptions can always be challenged by rival modes of thought. Thus they abstain from such selfless vicarious mourning themselves and they devote their energies to the so-called deconstruction of that type of discursing on the part of others. The deconstruction may span many years but the general aim is to reveal to the practitioners of the discourse that they are not driven by the utterly compelling pull of the real—leaving no room for the pursuit that there are others—split in many of the judgments they make, choices that become salient in the light of alternative discursive models. The approach might take as its motto that delightful quip: anything you can do, I can do better. Postmodernists refuse to get involved, refuse to take any ground-level discourse seriously. They remain sceptical and detached, even supercilious, about the efforts of those who would cement themselves wholeheartedly to such a discourse. They devote themselves to higher-level commentary on those efforts, and they draw themselves up proudly in demonstrating the discursive naivete of those who would let their efforts wash their souls. Their speciality is the critical brow and the quizzical eye.

Although I am sympathetic to the distinctive postmodernist doctrines, at least under certain versions, I think that the deconstructive stance is deeply misconceived. It is a mistake to think, as postmodernists appear to think, that any wholehearted discursive commitment amounts to an announcement that the discourse in question is unproblematic, that it is free of controversial presuppositions. There is a difference between announcing that a discourse is not problematic and not announcing that it is, as there is a difference between telling someone she is not a friend and not telling her that she is. Discursive involvement or commitment does not necessarily reflect a naïveté about the matters postmodernists are aware of; it does not necessarily manifest an ignorance about the various aims and intentions which inform one's discourse. At that it may reflect a desire to get on and do something more than rehearse the postmodernist verities a series of weeks in spite of critical commentaries and try to make a contribution in the terms—albeit, the limited and limited terms—of some ground-level debate.

This desire should not be denied by the postmodernist. The eye that tries to keep itself in the picture cannot see anything else; the condition under which vision operates is that the eye looks beyond itself. A similar condition applies in the case of intellectual work. It is impossible to participate in a discourse, working with the results of problems generated by its assumptions, if one is intent on remaining aloof and aloofness is a prerequisite to disbeliever a discourse, excluding its logic and its limits, if one refuses to stick oneself in it. As the enjoyment of a play requires the suspension of disbelief, so discursive participation requires the suspension of scepticism. Indeed the point is made, and perhaps even exaggerated, by another form of postmodernism: the historicism of science. Thomas Kuhn (1970). He argues that one of the distinctive features of the successful scientific advance is the dogmatism with which practitioners

attach themselves to the new paradigm of research, a pragmatism that often flouts all the familiar criteria of reasonable assent. If my observations are granted, then the detachment postmodernists affect must be seen as an inhibitor of serious intellectual inquiry.

I have mentioned two characteristics of postmodernism: its distinctive theories and its deconstructionist methodology. This book is far removed from the postmodernist modes of discussion, not because of a downright rejection of the distinctive doctrines, but because of a refusal to follow deconstructionist, and ultimately self-defeating, patterns of debate. But it is also distanced from postmodernism in regard to a third characteristic of the movement and perhaps I should mention this too. That characteristic is a preference for a rhetoric in which the subjects are abstract ones: the discourses, practices, forms, genres, or genres, or forms, or forms, or forms. These subjects are described as interacting with one another via elements of conjunction, interpolation, concatenation, and the like, and they are represented as producing, transforming, locating, sharing, and constructing human beings and human actions. The metaphor at work is a glacier's character. The discourses present themselves like ice sheets that move across and against one another and that carry us along, now on this trajectory, now on that.

As I reject deconstructionist methodology, so I renounce this inflationary rhetoric. At times the rhetoric is harmless enough. It may make a useful point to say that a certain language can be a man's speech rather than a woman's, or that she speaks that language. But at other times the rhetoric raises serious worries. It subjects us to a world under which one of the main questions debated in this book is begged. This is the question between individualists and collectivists, or to whether our ordinary psychological sense of ourselves can survive the recognition of social regularities and forces. Despite arguing that the ability to think requires social relations and resources, despite being in this respect a socialist rather than an anarchist, I maintain that a strong evidence is against our position. I do not see why we are, through we are, an ordinary psychological self being is fundamentally, you might say, the agency recognised in that language. You are pursued by the existence of social regularities, it would not serve my purposes in making my little position self-helping individualist, as I do not see it. In a culture like the one of postmodernism, in that rhetoric takes for a constant translation to think a collective drama. For the sake before the here to your habits of speech and your habits of thought are all too likely to follow.

It remains for me only to express appropriate words of thanks. I could not have written the book in a more fitting interdisciplinary setting than the Research School of Social Sciences at an Australian National University. Most of the co-authors mentioned above are currently colleagues here; some remain, have been visiting fellows at the school or have been colleagues elsewhere in the university. I am grateful to the keepers of the school for their work in sustaining in their colleagues in general, who maintain the spirit and standing of the place, to Paul Jenks, who has been a fine teacher and defender during his five

years of office, and to the various reviewers who have found such gratifying things to say about us in a period of unending scrutiny. I began actively thinking about the book as an Oxonian Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge, in 1958 and I also worked on it during a sabbatical in Oxford in 1989, when I was a Visiting Fellow of Corpus Christi College, and a Visitor at Nuffield College. I am grateful to those three Colleges for their support.

There are many additional colleagues who have given of their time in discussing some of the typescripts, or some closely related papers, and I am delighted to thank them, with the usual qualification that they should not be incriminated by association with any of my errors. John Bishop, Simon Blackburn, John Bratton, Geoff Brennan, John Campbell, Greg Currie, Martin Davies, Bob Gaudin, Peter Hejlskov, Barry Hedges, Frank Jackson, Peter Menzies, Graham Odger, Christopher Peacocke, Hans Reiss, Jan Ravenscroft, Geoff Sayre McLeod, Jack Smart, Michael Smith, Dan Sperber, Kim Sterelny, Bob Sugden, Emma Thompson, Tim Williamson, Andrew Woodfield, and Stephen Wright have all been a great help. I am very happy, finally, to be able to thank my wife, Hilary, who continues with such grace to tolerate my distractions and ease to find time to do things I value the least. She will be very disappointed not to see the book in print.

Cambridge
February 1992

P.F.

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I MIND

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Preview

Intentional states are those mental states which, like percept on and belief and desire, are about things: they are about the things, as we say, that figure in the contents of the states. Such states serve to connect an agent with its world, letting it have a representation of what there is and of what capacities there are for action. They give it the bearings that it needs to move successfully in the external world. The two chapters in this first part of the book are not concerned, in different ways, with intentional states: with the intentional capacities of human subjects.

The first chapter deals with basic intentionality, with intentionality in the sense in which it need not involve thought, whereas the second considers what is required for the appearance of intentional subjects that are also able to think. One of the main departures from orthodoxy in this section of the book is the introduction, at least in the discussion of intentionality, of the distinction between non-thinking and thinking subjects. The distinction is usually ignored in treatments of intentionality and when it is introduced, it is not drawn in the terms that I use here.

The treatment of basic intentionality in the first chapter follows a fairly well-known track. The questions addressed are these: What makes a system into an intentional agent? What sorts of entities are intentional states? And how does the picture presented here fit with the pictures developed in the literature?

On the question of what makes a system an intentional agent, I take an unmythical line. To be an intentional system, to be a system that has beliefs and desires and the like, is to be exposed perceptually to a certain sort of environment and to interact with that environment in a way that makes sense, and makes sense non-accidentally, in belief-desire terms. We assume that there are regularities characteristic of beliefs and desires, regularities that dictate both the effect of certain sorts of evidence on what beliefs and desires are manifested, and the effect of certain sorts of belief-desire profiles on what responses are evinced. These regularities will typically identify what it is to be evidentially rational in the attitudes one holds and thus rationally rational in the responses one makes, though they may also point us towards obstacles to getting in the way of rational performance. A system will count as an intentional agent to the extent that its interactions with its environment or at least some of its interactions, are governed by such regularities.

For all we have said, the intentional system may be a device rigged up with the environment, whose only responses are the formation of beliefs (or, beliefs represented in displays on a screen). But most familiar systems are active and indeed deliberative agents: systems that intervene in the environment and that do so, roughly, because of the desires they register in the options, which engage with their desires. Thus, as a system, say a robot, that is poked, does it in the world. If it is an intentional system, then we will be able to see its intervention as being governed by a regularity relating its beliefs and desires to its set of behavior (display), where it is a desire—directly provable—that is, desirable in the light of other capabilities—to ascertain that beliefs and desires in the system. We will be able to see the system as displaying a rationally intelligible behavior in the light of intentionally intelligible beliefs and desires. The robot is a gardener, we may find, and it is trying to create the lawn.

So much for the crucial question as to what makes a system an intentional agent. The next question addressed is what sorts of states intentional states are. Unsurprisingly, I reject the traditional Cartesian view that they are entities composed of a special non-representational stuff. I argue that beliefs and desires and the like are higher-order naturalistic states. Consider the clarity of an eraser, the state associated with the eraser's capacity to bend under pressure and regain its shape afterwards. This is not an ordinary naturalistic state like the molecular make-up of the eraser itself, a higher-order state which can be identified in this way: an eraser is so configured naturally if it has such a molecular structure that, if bent, it becomes flatly pressed. I say in parallel that to be in the state of believing that p is to be in a state identified as follows: the system is so configured naturally if the neural basis on electronic profile that it behaves in the belief-like way: the robot behaves in a way that means of believing that p is to be in the state that takes p as true.

This line of argument raises a well-known difficulty. We think of beliefs and desires as causally relevant to what an agent does and it is not clear how higher-order naturalistic states can enjoy causal relevance. When the eraser bends, it seems that all the required causal work is done by the state that underlies the elasticity—by the molecular structure of the eraser—and that the clarity itself is inert. And by parallel it may appear to work in nature: beliefs and desires are causally inert as well. They are not causally relevant to actions, since any actions will be fully accounted for in terms of their basic, electronic or neural states.

In response to this problem, I introduce the program model of causal relevance, which I have developed in joint work with Fitzpatrick Jackson. The model's scope, not just in the first chapter, but also in later discussions of social causality and explanation. It is true that the clarity of the eraser does not produce the bending in the same way that the molecular structure does: it does the collaborating of a team with the molecular structure, either

as an earlier input or as a collateral, simultaneous element. Yet the elasticity is causally relevant, by our ordinary intuitions in these matters. So how does it attain such relevance? The answer suggested by the program model is that it is causally relevant so far as its realisation ensures that there will be some molecular structure in place—maybe this, maybe that—which is suited to produce the bending effect. The elasticity does not produce the bending in the same way as the molecular structure. It arranges non-causally for the presence of such a production state; it ensures or otherwise raises the probability that there is such a state in place. And it is in that sense that it too is causally relevant to the bending.

The elasticity example points us towards other cases where programming obtains, and obtains in a more interesting fashion. The fact that the water in a closed flask is boiling programs for the cracking of the flask, though the cracking is actually produced by this or that vibrating molecule breaking a bond in the surface. The fact that the peg is square, the hole round, programs for the obstruction of the peg, though the obstruction is actually produced by this or that overlapping part. I argue that many states are causally relevant through arranging in this way for a factor that produces the effect in a more basic sense; indeed I later generalise the model, in Chapter 3, so that most states are seen to have causal relevance in this fashion.

The program model enables us to understand the causal relevance of intentional states like beliefs and desires. Suppose that my desire that *p* and my belief that I can raise it the case that *p* by *X*-ing are causally relevant to my *X*-ing. The action will be produced in a more basic sense, at least on the non-Cartesian picture of intentional states, by my neural profile at the time. But still we will be able to think of the belief-desire complex as programming for the action. The presence of that complex more or less ensures, given that I am a properly constituted human subject, that there will be some neural profile realised within me—maybe this, maybe that—which will produce a suitable action.

Having discoursed on intentional agents and intentional states, the final question that I address in the first chapter is how the picture presented here fits within the constellation of pictures on offer in the philosophy of mind. I do not summarise that discussion here, since it will only be of interest to specialists. For the record it may be worth mentioning that my position amounts to a form of functionalism about intentional states, in particular a broad or externalist form of functionalism that allows contextual factors to figure in the constitution of such states. There are problems raised in the literature for such a position, usually problems relating to an alleged indeterminacy of content related to the claim that on the functionalist account it is not contentally indeterminate as to what exactly are the contents of an agent's intentional states, what exactly are the propositions believed and the states of affairs desired. I take a relaxed view of this family of problems, on the grounds that they disappear in the perspective of the second chapter; they are resolvable in the case of thinking subjects.

The second chapter begins with the distinction between non-thinking and

thinking intentional subjects. Every intentional subject will instantiate intentional states and every intentional subject will do things on the basis of the states it realises; it will draw inferences, for example, and perform actions. The actions it performs will be intentional in a distinct sense from that in which the states are intentional; they will be performed, roughly, under the control of the agent's desires. Now the distinction between the thinking and non-thinking subject, as I understand it, is date marked by the range of things that the subject is capable of doing intentionally. The subject will be a thinking subject if and only if, among the things that it can do intentionally, it can do things that are designed to promote the prospect of its meeting various constraints of rationality: to promote the prospect of its having beliefs that are indeed true, for example, or the prospect of its performing actions that are indeed desirable. The thinking subject can deliberate and ratiocinate, deliberating in the light of this or that consideration as to what it is right to believe or best to do. The non-thinking subject cannot. It may display a coherent pattern of beliefs and desires, it may generally respond to things in a rational way, but if we let it do any thinking, it will be a relative anachronism.

Perhaps the best way of clarifying this contrast is to see that while the thinking subject may have a desire to be rational—for example, a desire to have beliefs that are more likely to be true than false—the non-thinking subject will have no such desire in its make-up. It may be designed generally to adjust, say, in the light of new evidence, so as to have true beliefs; it may in that sense be a truth-seeking system. But it will not have a desire to have true beliefs that will lead to action on the basis of this or that changing belief, say, the belief that by taking time, by investigating further, or by listening to others, it can increase the expectation of having true beliefs. It will not have a desire for truth, or more generally a desire for rationality, in the common-sense-garden sense of these. It counts as a desire only, by contrast with the thinking subject, if it is a blind belief, not a conscious one.

This contrast is subtle in a general way because it distinguishes the intentional character of human beings, since it is obvious that even if robots and (or) human animals are intentional subjects, they contrast with human beings in lacking the capacity for thought. The contrast has slipped from view in recent philosophy of mind, because of the focus on topics generated by artificial intelligence and cognitive science. These disciplines are not particularly concerned with human beings, only more generally with representational or intentional systems, and without the perspective that they require there is little interest in the things that distinguish human beings among intentional systems.

The second chapter is devoted to thinking as a picture of what it is like for an intentional system to be not just intentional, but capable of thought, to be a subject like one of us. I identify two crucial requirements that must be fulfilled by any thinking system and most of the chapter is given to how these are met in the human case. I describe the first requirement as that of intention: since it, the second, is that of rule following.

The requirement of intentional ascent, briefly, is the requirement that the subject be able to have not just beliefs with certain contents, but beliefs about the contents, actual and potential, of other beliefs. The subject must be able to have beliefs about the proposition that p , as well as being able to have the belief that p ; for example, it must be able to have beliefs to the effect that it is likely that p , given that q ; that it is impossible that p and q ; that q ; and the like. Unless it is able to have such beliefs, the subject will be unable to articulate itself in the project of promoting the proposal that its beliefs are true. How do human beings come to have such beliefs about content- or proposition-terms? It turns out that the problem is quite a tricky one, as the dominant analytic models for the work of content- or proposition-terms cannot be exemplified by truth-makers. In the way in which content-terms may be exemplified by instances, for instance, it is not clear how access to false propositions as well as true ones. I argue that the best way to make naturalistic sense of the ability is by recourse to a model under which propositions are presented by signs or signs as potential objects of belief. The use of language would make appropriate signs available but I emphasise that the signs whereby propositions are presented need not be intended communicatively and need not even be produced by the subjects themselves.

The other crucial requirement for thought is that the person be able not only to have beliefs about propositions, but to treat propositions and the elements out of which they are constructed as rules of thought. The claim is that the subject must be able to recognise that a proposition dictates in each of an indefinitely large number of possible ways the world may be, that it should be believed or not believed under that circumstance; and that, recognising this, the subject must be able to make efforts to see that its own belief-forming responses honour the dictate of the proposition. In short, the subject must be able to treat the proposition as a rule, identifying a constraint that it represents for belief-forming practice and setting itself intentionally to form beliefs in accordance with the constraint. If the proposition is "It is raining or that not", then the subject must be able to grasp the condition that makes appropriate at the relevant time and place to hold a belief with that content and must be able, furthermore, to try to abide by that condition.

This problem of rule-following is at the centre of a contemporary philosophical debate, though it is not always related to the possibility of thought, and I defend here a line of response that I have already presented elsewhere (Pettit 1990a, 1990b). We follow the rule associated with a proposition through following more basic rules associated with elements of propositions. Thus I follow the rule for belief dictated by the proposition "That is a box" by following the rule associated with the property of being a box; this more basic rule makes it appropriate to group some things together as boxes, other things not. In order to present my line on rule-following, let us begin then by considering how the rule associated with the concept of a box might be presented to me, as something that dictates responses in a specific range of cases such as something that I can identify and try to respect in those cases.

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