



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind by John Haugeland
Lynne Rudder Baker

Philosophy of Science, Vol. 66, No. 3. (Sep., 1999), pp. 494-495.

Stable URL:

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John Haugeland, *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind*. Cambridge, MA (1998), 390 pp., \$29.95 (cloth).

This is a book of thirteen essays, eleven of which were previously published between 1979 and 1993. Divided into four groups—Mind, Matter, Meaning, Truth—the unifying theme is understanding or “making sense of things.”

Haugeland is one of the most thoughtful philosophers in cognitive science. Although he is sympathetic with the aim of understanding the mind scientifically, he is by no means formulaic. Taking inspiration from Kant and Heidegger, he proposes a “new existentialism,” a philosophy of mind and of science that focuses on people, whose cognitive capacities are assumed to differ in kind, not just in degree, from those of other mammals and machines (so far). People are distinguished from nonpeople by existential commitment, i.e., their ability to recognize and take responsibility for the norms and skills with which they cope with things. Existential commitment is the condition for the possibility of understanding. Together, these essays add up to a deep exploration of the nature of understanding and of how people are capable of understanding.

Since I cannot do justice to the subtlety and richness of these essays in the space available, I shall remark briefly on the four most recent essays, those in the last section, “Truth.” In “Objective Perception,” Haugeland asks: In virtue of what is my perception of, say, a bicycle, as opposed to other items (such as the ambient light) in the causal history of my perception? The answer, very roughly, is that the object of one’s perception depends on whatever standards are in play if a mistake is suspected. In Haugeland’s example of chess, the objects of one’s perception are pieces, positions, and moves, because these are what the constitutive standards of the game govern. Haugeland extends this account of objective perception from games like chess to both scientific and everyday objectivity. Normative commitment is a condition both of the possibility of objective perception, and also of the possibility of the objects of that perception. Objective perception requires that we count on, and insist on, holding to constitutive standards for a domain; when such holding succeeds, the result is understanding.

The two middle essays of the last section—“Pattern and Being” and “Understanding: Dennett and Searle”—criticize, extend, and deepen the insights of Dennett and Searle. In “Pattern and Being,” Haugeland points out that Dennett is committed to two notions of pattern in “Real Patterns”: the idea that patterns are ‘by definition’ recognizable (where recognizability is inherently normative), and the idea of pattern as orderly arrangement. Haugeland shows how this flaw can be turned to a deeper understanding by showing how these two notions of pattern can join forces. There may be different kinds of patterns at different levels: the “elements” of orderly arrangement patterns may be (context-dependent) recognition patterns. The recognizability of “elements” of an orderly arrangement pattern may depend on the elements’ “participation in the arrangement (= the context) of which they are the elements” (275). To use Haugeland’s chess example again: what makes something a chess piece, a rook, say, is that it is a recognition pattern; but what makes something a chess game is that it is an orderly-arrangement pattern. But each of these patterns requires the other. In the absence of chess games, there would be no rooks; and in the absence of rooks, there would be no chess games.

Intentional phenomena, on Dennett’s view, are analogous to patterns and are what are discerned from the intentional stance. The stances, seen through Haugeland’s eyes, mark distinctions among ways of being. To adopt a stance is to take a stand, to make a commitment to particular constitutive standards. It is commitment to such standards that allows the phenomena toward which the stand is taken to be what they are, to stand over against us as objects. As Haugeland puts it in “Understanding: Dennett and Searle,” “objectivity as such is constituted” (299). Subjectivity as such is likewise constituted. For I am the subject of those intentional states that my commitment to constitutive standards makes possible. Haugeland sums up his Kantian/Heideggerian view like this: “the constitutive objective world and the free constituting subject are intelligible only as two sides of the same coin” (6).

The tour de force of the book is “Truth and Rule-Following,” which is impossible to summarize in a small space. This ambitious and difficult essay offers a basic account of truth and objectivity. Haugeland’s aim is to give an account of objective correctness (truth) as

distinct from proper functioning, on the one hand, and from consensus, on the other. To do this, he must show how there can be independent objects that are criterial for the correct exercise of constitutive and mundane skills. Constituted objects (what we find when we commit ourselves to constitutive standards) affect our mundane skills and are responsive to them, but are independent of any (mere) consensus. (A mundane skill is an ability to recognize and cope with the phenomena in a domain—in chess, for example, to tell whether a particular piece is a rook.) For any constituted domain, there are “legal moves,” moves in accordance with the constitutive standards for the domain. Call the realm of legal moves “the possible.” Including but extending beyond the realm of the possible, however, is the realm of the exercise of the mundane skills belonging to (co-constituted with) the domain. Call this realm “the conceivable.” Call the part of the conceivable that is “out of bounds” for the domain “the excluded zone.” The excluded zone is in fact almost empty; “phenomena” in it are ruled out by the constitutive standards of the domain. But if they were to occur, they would be recognizable by the mundane skills for the domain. So, the fact that they don’t occur is subject to empirical test.

The excluded zone thus allows for a new kind of mundane error that is not just a matter of consensus: objective incorrectness. Constitutive standards impose constraints on combinations of mundane findings. The locus of the excluded conceivable combinations of mundane findings is the constituted object. That is, the constituted object itself (and not any kind of consensus) is authoritative for this kind of error. Objects are external constraints, not in the sense of being external to the domain, but in the sense of being beyond the control of what is being constrained. This independence allows mundane performances to be beholden to objects for the correctness of their results. In this way, Haugeland’s theory of truth, which he suggests calling a “beholdenness theory of truth,” goes beyond mere coherence theories of truth.

Many of the essays in the first three sections—e.g., “The Nature and Plausibility of Cognitivism,” “Understanding Natural Language,” and “The Intentionality All-Stars”—are well-established in the literature and are usefully reprinted together. The essays in the last section (Truth), however, are particularly creative, and on the basis of that section alone, I would recommend this book to philosophers of science and philosophers of mind. *Lynne Rudder Baker, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.*

Jeffrey Bub, *Interpreting the Quantum World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997), 312 pp., \$52.95 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper).

The 1996 meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association saw the coming of age of a new catch-phrase: ‘naïve realism about operators’ (see Daumer et al. 1996). This phrase describes a host of sins, and raises the general question: Should the subspaces of Hilbert space represent genuine physical properties and if so, how? The ‘naïve realist’ answers ‘yes’; indeed the ‘naïve realist’ supposes that the connection between subspaces and physical properties is fixed, given once and for all time by interpretation, God, AT&T Labs, or whatever. (Few philosophers of physics would deny that in the context of a given physical situation, a correspondence can be established between subspaces (or better, spectral values) and physical properties; the question concerns the status of this correspondence.)

The foes of ‘naïve realism’ assume that interpretations can be distinguished based on whether they are ‘naïvely realist about operators’. They are correct—interpretations may differ on this issue (and notwithstanding current orthodoxy, there are good arguments on both sides). However, it is also sometimes assumed that interpretations must be ‘naïvely realist about operators’ if they are expressed in the language of Hilbert space, and take the mathematical features of Hilbert space seriously, even as a *guide* to interpretation.

Bub’s book shows that this last assumption is false. He does take Hilbert space seriously. He assumes, that is, that physical properties are represented by subspaces of a Hilbert space, and that the structural features of certain mathematical objects (e.g., the lattice of subspaces) are also structural features of the world, so that interpretations must respect the mathematical features of Hilbert space.