

The Actional Turn

Could we speak of an 'actional turn' in our thinking today? The phrase indicates a reorientation of our thinking, according to which an entire vocabulary (what we could call 'the actional vocabulary') is taken as giving us the key to the understanding of our lives as conscious and rational living beings, as researchers of nature and of everything that is human, as moral or merely practical agents, and ultimately as persons.

Such a turn, I believe, is taking place in our days.

Thinking is simulated action.

Reality is the product and also the starting point of our actions. Objects and processes are objects and processes only insofar as our cognitive and practical actions render them as objects and processes.

The actional vocabulary includes concepts as: action, person, responsibility, intention, meaning, understanding, rule, norm, value, belief, thinking, perceiving, decision, reason, purpose, consistency, necessary condition, role, story, routine (or algorithm), practice, virtue, technique, instrument, symbol and of course all the concepts falling under the previous headers. It is this vocabulary that opens our way to understanding.

There are other equally important vocabularies. One of them, to which I would not attach any tag, contains concepts as: behavior, custom, habit, state of mind, disposition, inclination, needs, impulses, sensations, qualia, feelings, representation, model, structure and others.

The other is used in the regular talk about nature, including such headers as object, phenomenon, state, process, cause, effect, pattern, regularity, kinds (and species), universe and so on,...

Others are the special vocabularies of particular sciences (forces, sub-particles fields, strings, space, time, organ, molecule, chemical reaction, neural excitation, phonemes, social phenomena, probability, statistic rates, linear equations etc.).

In deploying such vocabularies we are doing completely different things.

The 'actional turn' shifts our focus to the first vocabulary. The idea is not that of attempting to reduce the other vocabularies to the first one. This is just a shift. The 'actional turn' says that in order to understand what is important to us we should do what we do when we use the first vocabulary.

Values are important. Responsibility should be treated responsibly. We have to act with respect to our actions. To understand is to act. To live is to act. To reflect upon your life is to perform cognitive acts, taking a responsibility for what you think. All these sentences express rules concerning the *meanings* of my words. We do not need to translate them into another vocabulary in order to understand them.

I take this to be the actional turn. Important thinkers from all the philosophical (scientific and cultural) traditions seem to have taken it. At least, this is what I find reasonable to believe. I also believe that this is the way in which our thinking should go. Of course, since I believe this, I assume the responsibility to defend my belief from any arguments against it.