

The Genesis of Representation

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Abstract

The content of linguistic representation shared within the concepts of a human world has naturally and contingently evolved. Content, what it is that is an environment presents to an organism and causes it to act, emerged with life itself. Such content can only be described in the concepts of an observer within an observer's theory of cognition for an organism in its environment. For primitive organisms in which action is reflexive the level of environmental content which is represented in a cognitive theory is an observer's choice. But for those organisms, whether octopus, bird, dolphin, ape or human, in which representations are realised in informational structures which combine modes of perception to model space and time, what is represented is some substance within the world that has some affordance for that organism and neural science has now given us some insight into how this may be realised. Such modelling is itself a simulation but the fact that this may be simulated in a digital computer does not imply that these cognitive processes are computations. The world described by an observer is the human objective world framed in human concepts, some of which have been inherited from our hominoid ancestors. For each organism its cognitive structure models its world in the terms of its concepts and this world is real for it. However, this world cannot be described; it can only be shown.