

Debate on the mind and scientific method (continued yet again and again) on <http://forums.philosophyforums.com>.

Quotations are in red and the responses by Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan) unless otherwise noted, are in black. Note that sometimes a quote (in red) contains a previous response. This is usually found at the beginning of the quoted portion (in red) and separated from the actual quote by a horizontal line. This is usually done to provide a context for the quote before responding to it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Monroe**

As Dennett notes, intentional explanations are in fact very good explanatory/predictive models...For example, in the realm of politics it's very very effective.

Actually it's very effective in biology as well. But don't make the mistake that Dennett refers to anything that isn't merely an emergent property of all biological systems that is completely naturalistic and mechanistic at the lowest levels.

Yes, it makes sense to ascribe "intentionality" to amoebas, cats and humans because this explanation provides a reductionist explanation for the more complex behavior they all exhibit. We can even say that Deep Blue in using this or that strategy or the thermostat is "trying" to keep the house at a livable temperature without attributing a metaphysical entity to either.

It's the same with biological organisms. Just like we don't have to resort to "greedy reductionism" and try to explain all biochemical reactions using sub-atomic physics, we shouldn't use biochemical reactions to explain all higher level emergent behaviors. Does this mean that all biochemical reactions aren't ultimately atomic and subatomic processes? No, of course they appear to be, but it isn't useful always to try and understand them from their ultimate atomic constituents.

In the same way we can use "intentional" language to describe the behavior of organisms even though this behavior is ultimately merely a very, very complicated chemical reaction.