

Intentionality

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I can assure the reader that I do not like blushing. I blush only if I get caught in saying something I do not believe in myself. The redness is a most unwelcome sign that unequivocally tells my opponent that he or she has hit a weak point. For most of us, blushing is a non-intentional sign of weakness.

Henrik Bandak's self-experienced example of eagle behavior, where, after some people unexpectedly showed "dangerous" behavior, the eagle couple picked up the young one by one, to move them to a new and more secure nest, in turn, shows that intentional behavior is not reserved for people. But eagles are highly developed beings, where the intentional element has long since become an integral part of life. Therefore, it is much more interesting that an insect researcher tells Bandak that one can see examples of the very same behavior in the large hornet. Does this mean that even hornets can show intentional semiotic behavior?

The answer depends on what you understand by the word intentional. Terrence Deacon, in his book "Incomplete Nature", uses the word "Ententionel" instead of intentional, as in the case of ententional behavior he simply understands a behavior that "happens in order to" or "for the purpose of" something. This kind of escape maneuvers can be OK in a thick book, but here on Facebook, we should probably be brave enough to call a hammer for a hammer and an intention for an intention. When something happens "in order to" it is, according to normal usage, intentionally.

Judging from this logic, the behavior of the big hornet is clearly "intentional" - but is this intentionality not just a metaphor for an action that is well known to humans, but originates from a completely different dynamics in a hornet? Perhaps this dynamics is indeed purely biochemical (it is difficult to determine) but it is certainly not just biochemical if the behavior is assessed in the light of evolution. The hornet clearly has developed this protective behavior towards its offspring because (i.e.

with the intention that) it payed off (roughly, the hornets who did not were eradicated a long time ago) .

The hornet's 'intentionality' is a fact - not a metaphor.

Incidentally, in a deeper analysis shouldn't you ask yourself whether people's signs are always so 'intentional', as it is assumed by the many semioticians who have followed the tradition from Ferdinand de Saussure. My example of 'blushing' seems to show that human sign exchange is far from always linguistic. So on that point Peirce's semiotics seems to be on a more relevant track than Saussure's semiology.