Skepticism, belief, and alienation: philosophical reflections on intentionality and false consciousness

Ceticismo, crença e alienação: reflexões filosóficas sobre a intencionalidade e a falsa consciência

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolving concept of intentionality, tracing its philosophical development from classical concerns about the nature of belief and mental content to the modern dilemmas of existential alienation. Beginning with skepticism about intentionality — highlighted by thinkers such as Quine, Kripke, and Davidson — the discussion examines the inherent challenges of mental states that refer to nonexistent or abstract entities. These issues complicate our understanding of propositional attitudes, modal logic, and the formalization of belief. Building on these reflections, the inquiry shifts toward existential concerns, drawing from Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger to explore how these abstract philosophical challenges resonate with deeper human experiences of alienation and false consciousness on meaning.

Keywords

Intentionality. Belief. Interpretivism. False consciousness. Ideology.

RESUMO

Este artigo explora a evolução do conceito de intencionalidade, traçando seu desenvolvimento filosófico desde as preocupações clássicas sobre a natureza da crença e do conteúdo mental até os dilemas modernos da alienação existencial. Começando com o ceticismo sobre a intencionalidade — destacado por pensadores como Quine, Kripke e Davidson — a discussão examina os desafios inerentes aos estados mentais que se referem a entidades inexistentes ou abstratas. Essas questões complicam nossa compreensão das atitudes proposicionais, da lógica modal e da formalização da crença. Com base nessas reflexões, a investigação se desloca para preocupações existenciais, buscando em Sartre, Camus e Heidegger explorar como esses desafios filosóficos abstratos ressoam com experiências humanas mais profundas de alienação e falsa consciência em relação ao significado.

Palavras-chave

Intencionalidade. Crença. Interpretivismo. Falsa consciência. Ideologia.

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1 NEW SKEPTICISMS ABOUT INTENTIONALITY: CHALLENGES FROM QUINE TO KRIPKE AND BEYOND

1.1. Challenges to intentionality

- The problem of nonexistent objects in belief and mental representation.
- Quine's critique of intensional contexts and modal abstraction.
- Fodor’s extension of Quine’s skepticism

The problem of intentionality emerges as a genuine philosophical enigma, worthy of the great philosophical puzzles, when considered in conjunction with the issue of propositional attitudes and the problem of the nonexistence of the object of belief. Intentionality raises fundamental questions about how mental states can be directed toward or about something, particularly when that "something" does not exist. This challenge underscores the complexity of belief, where propositional attitudes—states like belief, desire, or fear—can refer to nonexistent entities or states of affairs, complicating how we understand reference, meaning, and truth in mental content. Franz Brentano, a pioneer in the study of intentionality, framed the issue of how mental states can be directed toward nonexistent objects in a way that remains influential today. He famously captured this problem, stating:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. (Brentano, 1973, p. 88).

This challenge of denotation is closely related to the problem of identity, especially when it comes to distinguishing between nonexistent entities and propositions. Propositional attitudes, such as belief, desire, or fear, are mental states that involve a subject's relationship to a proposition. When these attitudes are directed toward nonexistent objects — like fictional entities or erroneous beliefs — it raises the question of how our thoughts can still be *about* something whose criterion of propositional identity can only be coined using 'truth' as a parameter. This means that, for these thoughts to have a clear identity or be coherent, the criterion used to define them must rely on some notion of truth. In other words, how we understand or identify propositions (the content of these attitudes) depends on their relation to truth—even when the propositions concern things

that are not real or true. If two people are thinking about a fictional character, are their beliefs about the same nonexistent object, and what criteria determine this identity? Moreover, how can we account for the logical relations and semantic values of statements involving nonexistents, given that these entities do not have a clear reference in the actual world? Quine's skepticism toward intentionality stems, among other things, from his doubts about the coherence of belief in nonexistent entities. He articulates this skepticism by stating, "To believe is to believe something. But what that something is may be obscure; and if the thing believed in does not exist, there is no believing." (Quine, 1960, p. 221).

Quine's suspicion of intensional contexts ties directly into the problem of intentionality, particularly when it comes to the inexistence of the object of belief. The challenge is how to represent beliefs and other intentional states that are directed at objects that don't exist or are misrepresented. Quine doubted that such contexts could be captured logically in a straightforward, extensional framework, since the content of the belief doesn't correspond to anything observable or real.

This difficulty is magnified by the fact that intentional states often require concepts like possibility and necessity (modal concepts), which Quine found problematic because they add layers of abstraction to our understanding of reference and meaning. This highlights that the complexity of dealing with intentional states — which often involve modal concepts like possibility and necessity — is not just a solvable problem that adds extra steps. Instead, it requires a much higher level of quantification, conceptualization, and identification than traditional logical frameworks can accommodate. Quine thought that "Modal logic suffers from a want of clarity, and it is doubtful whether it is needed at all" (Quine, 1953, p. 45).

Quine believed that handling these higher-order requirements would undermine our ability to formalize intentionality using classical logic. In other words, the formal systems we have would break down under the weight of these complexities. Jerry Fodor builds on Quine's concerns by addressing the limitations of formal systems in capturing intensional contexts. He points out that "[…] if the apparatus of quantification fails to fit intensional contexts, then it becomes difficult to see how we can account for the relation between beliefs and their objects in any formal way" (Fodor, 1987, p. 63). Quine's concern is that resolving these problems would require introducing concepts of identity

that are indistinguishable from synthetic or empirical concepts, meaning that our definitions of objects would rely on experience or observation, which challenges the formal rigor of the solution.

Quine's challenge to intentionality lies in the tension between modal abstraction and the requirement for logical rigor, with his skepticism centering on the idea that intentional states — especially those involving nonexistent objects — resist easy formalization within classical logical or extensional terms. Quine famously argues that "[…] there is no place in an extensional system for the modalities of necessity and possibility […]" (Quine, 1960, p. 199), which exemplifies his concern that the complexities introduced by modal logic cannot be reconciled with a clear system of logic.

Fodor's insights further illuminate how the difficulties in quantifying and formalizing such states reflect deeper structural issues in our attempts to handle intentionality within traditional logical frameworks. The author thought that "[…] intentionality is the fly in the ointment of attempts to construct a respectable naturalistic theory of mental representation […]" (Fodor, 1987, p. 67), emphasizing the inherent obstacles in creating a formal theory of mental content that includes modalities and intensional contexts. Fodor critiques the reductionist approaches that attempt to explain intentionality in purely physical terms. He argues that "[…] intentionality, the property of being about something, does not lend itself to the reductionist hopes of physicalism without remainder […]" (Fodor, 1975, p. 60), suggesting that mental states involve complexities that cannot be fully captured by physicalist or extensional theories. Although Quine is an extensionalist and Fodor is not, they converge on the idea that the nature of mental states—particularly their reference to nonexistent or abstract entities—introduces complexities that are difficult to resolve within a classical logical framework.

1.2. The opacity of intentional content

- The hidden complexity of beliefs and mental content that cannot be mechanically represented.
- Examples of extensional indistinguishability in beliefs, highlighting the limitations of extensional logic in capturing the subtleties of intentional content.

Although Saul Kripke stands in contrast to Quine on many points, he frames the problem in a comparable way, emphasizing the need to reconsider the issue of intensional

determination from a non-mentalist perspective. He shifts the focus of intentionality to external factors, such as social standards and the modal frameworks established by natural science. Kripke (*Naming and Necessity)*, while advancing possible world semantics, acknowledged the difficulty in formalizing certain aspects of intensionality, particularly when dealing with nonexistent objects. He contributes to the debate by addressing the problem of nonexistent objects in modal contexts. The author is well-known for stating that "For many objects that do not exist in the actual world, one cannot point to a precise individual that is the object of the thought" (Kripke, 1980, p. 24), highlighting the challenges involved in specifying the referents of intentional states within formal systems. Kripke's work on natural kinds further illustrates this approach, as he argued that natural kinds have their references fixed by their real-world properties: "For a natural kind term, the reference is not fixed by a description but rather by a substance that has certain properties in the actual world and in other possible worlds." (1980, p. 134).

In summary, skepticism about intentionality, particularly in the context of nonexistent objects, highlights the broader challenge of integrating modal abstraction (concepts like possibility and necessity) into classical logic. Classical logic built around clear, extensional relationships (i.e., things we can observe and verify in the real world), struggles to accommodate intentional states — such as beliefs or desires — that refer to nonexistent entities or involve abstract possibilities. This leads to a reliance on more complex types of logic (such as modal logic or intensional logic), which are capable of handling these abstract, non-extensional concepts but come at the cost of weakening their semantic, verifiable, and computational simplicity. In other words, these more complex logics are harder to interpret, verify, and compute, introducing new layers of complexity to questions like "identity." These complexities offer richer insights beyond what we could know through simple, mechanical, or extensional means, deepening our understanding of concepts like belief, identity, and reference in ways that go beyond trivial computation. As Fodor (*The Mind Doesn't Work That Way*) noted: "The idea that cognitive science should view itself as building a computational theory of the mind may be sound, but the assumption that such a theory can be constructed from a logic-like formalism is deeply flawed." (2000, p. 15). This highlights the need for richer, non-mechanical approaches to understanding mental states, particularly in relation to intentionality and abstract reasoning.

Quine, a staunch critic of modal and intensional logics, preferred to reject attempts at reconciling intentionality with extensional frameworks. He argued that the best we can do is recognize the extensional indistinguishability of beliefs with the same consequences. For instance, if two individuals have different reasons for wearing a helmet (one does so due to superstition, while the other follows scientific advice), yet both wear the helmet in potentially dangerous situations, their beliefs are indistinguishable from an extensional perspective. This is because the outcome — wearing the helmet — remains the same, regardless of the underlying motivations.

Extensional indistinguishability means that if two individuals hold beliefs that lead to the same observable outcomes and behaviors. It's impossible to determine, from an external point of view, whether one belief is more accurate than another because the internal thought processes — such as the concepts, meanings, and reasoning behind those beliefs — are not visible or accessible to us. To capture and represent these internal aspects mechanically (like in a machine), we would need to significantly increase the complexity of the computational system. The machine would need more material and computational structure to represent the "meaning" accurately. For instance, two people may both believe "the tallest building in the city is over 1,000 feet tall," but one person might base their belief on direct measurement while the other relies on hearsay. Extensionally, their beliefs are indistinguishable because they refer to the same external object (the building), but intentional distinctions, such as the degree of ignorance (one person's belief might be based on weaker evidence), remain hidden.

Other things that, for Quine, remain opaque include the degree of contingency that beliefs have within a theoretical framework, which provides holistic coherence to these beliefs. For example, the belief that "water boils at 100°C" may seem straightforward, but it depends on a host of background assumptions, such as the pressure at sea level and the accuracy of the temperature measurement. In Quine's view (T*wo Dogmas of Empiricism*), no single belief stands alone; its truth or contingency is tied to an entire network of interrelated beliefs. As he famously remarked, "Our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body" (1951, p. 41). This means that the extent to which a belief is contingent or necessary remains unclear until it is situated within the broader theoretical framework it belongs to,

highlighting how individual beliefs remain opaque when considered in isolation from that system.

There is no objective "fact" that differentiates between two beliefs that lead to the same outcome, and as a result, the processes by which these beliefs are formed cannot be fully explained through psychological or phenomenological theories.

1.3. Nonexistent objects and modal systems: rigid designators and evolving contexts

- The role of intensional logic and modal systems.
- Kripke's perspective on rigid designators and their relationship to nonexistent entities.
- Stalnaker's Contextual and Dynamic Intentionality

The thesis above suggests a skeptical view of intentionality in relation to belief, where the central idea is that there is no objective "fact" that determines the difference between the beliefs of two individuals. Therefore, the mechanisms by which they arrive at the same belief cannot be fully described by any psychological or phenomenological theory. This doesn't mean that the idea of "meaning" must remain opaque or inaccessible to us; it simply means that, if it can be accessed, it is not through mentalist or 'intensional' theories. In this view, intentionality — the idea that mental states are "about" something or possess specific propositional content — is considered a myth. This resonates with Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, where he notes, "No fact about an individual can constitute his meaning one thing rather than another" (1982, p. 55). This suggests that meaning and belief cannot be reduced to objective facts about mental states but are instead products of social practices and rule-following, challenging the traditional notion of intentionality as a stable, determinable aspect of mental life.

For Kripke, the reference of a term is not dependent on the different descriptions or information people have in mind, but rather on the object itself, making the referent stable regardless of varying levels of information. He states, "The reference of a name is determined by the object itself, not by descriptions associated with it" (*Naming and Necessity*, 1980, p. 48), indicating that the referent remains the same even when individuals possess different amounts of information about it. This position is further

illustrated in Kripke's work, “A Puzzle About Belief”, where he explores the question of how we handle intensional contexts in relation to belief. Kripke argues that even when individuals hold different beliefs about the same object, the referent of their belief is still the same. He writes, "If Pierre believes that 'Londres est jolie' and that 'London is not pretty,' we cannot say that Pierre believes in a contradiction. The reference, London, remains fixed, even though Pierre’s beliefs about it may differ due to his varying degrees of information" (*A Puzzle About Belief*, 1979, p. 255).

Kripke seems to agree with this elimination of informational content pertinent to intentional states, although from an anti-Quinean angle. While Quine was skeptical of using intensional contexts due to their supposed vagueness and their reliance on abstract modal concepts, Kripke maintained that once an *intensional* reference (such as a belief or a proposition) is established causally (when the link to the reference is clear), it remains stable as a set of intended possible worlds. Instead of focusing on the fine-grained distinctions within intensional content, Kripke dissolves the idea of intension into the concept of a "rigid extension”, a reference that remains stable and endures across possible worlds. According to Kripke, a rigid designator refers to the same object in every possible world in which that object exists, thus prioritizing the stability of reference over the internal complexity of intensional content. This strategy shifts the focus away from the nuances of intensional meaning and towards the enduring relationship between names and their referents, regardless of varying contexts or interpretations across possible worlds. This means that even if individuals have different levels of knowledge or hold varying descriptions that lead them to propositionally state the same belief, the referent itself does not change.

Kripke's strategy is not directly skeptical of intensional contents, but rather it is skeptical of their specificity. This means that, for Kripke, intentional nuance — the subtle variations in how individuals think about or describe an object — does not alter the fixed reference established through the initial causal link to the object. Kripke's view is that the referent remains stable, regardless of differences in the beliefs or descriptions held by different individuals. This stance contrasts sharply with Two-Dimensionalist approaches, which emphasize the role of context and inferential relations in determining the content of beliefs or reference.

Unlike Kripke's view, where reference remains fixed regardless of the descriptions or knowledge individuals have, Stalnaker argues that intentionality — the "aboutness" of beliefs — is deeply influenced by the presuppositions and assumptions that are active in a given conversation. For Stalnaker, beliefs are not static; their intentional content is shaped and reshaped by the contextual and inferential frameworks within which they are discussed. As Stalnaker puts it, "[…] the content of a belief is something that may vary across different conversational contexts […]" (*Inquiry*, 1984, p. 48). The way we refer to things and the intentional states we express are not determined solely by causal chains, but by the inferential shifts that occur as speakers adjust their assumptions about the world. In this way, intentionality becomes a dynamic process, continuously evolving based on the changing context of conversation and inquiry.

2 SOCIAL INTERPRETATION AND NORMATIVE STRUCTURES OF INTENTIONALITY

2.1. Sellar's critique of the "given" and conceptual mediaton

Sellars' argument against the existence of a pre-theoretical "given" in experience.

- The idea that all awareness is mediated by socio-normative and linguistic frameworks.
- Intentional objects as dependent on conceptual structures rather than direct reference.
- Inferentialism and Context-Sensitivity in Intentionality

Wilfrid Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* questioned the concept of intentionality by arguing that there is no pre-theoretical "given" in our experiences; what we take to be intentional objects are always already mediated by conceptual frameworks and socio-normative structures. Sellars asserted that "all awareness is a linguistic affair" (1956), underscoring that what we call intentionality is heavily dependent on social and linguistic conventions rather than direct reference to objects.

Wilfrid Sellars (*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind)* also shared skepticism about the easy formalization of intentionality, observing that "[…] conceptual frameworks themselves are normative structures that cannot be exhaustively characterized in terms of extensional or empirical entities […]" (Sellars, 1956, p. 46). He

believed that intentional states inherently involve normative rules and thus cannot be adequately captured by logical systems designed for extensional or purely empirical facts. In alignment with this, Robert Brandom (*Making It Explicit)* further emphasizes the normative dimension of intentionality, stating that "[…] to grasp or understand a concept is to have a certain practical mastery of the use of the corresponding expressions […]" (Brandom, 1994, p. 623). This underscores the view that intentionality is governed by rules that extend beyond mere formal or extensional systems, requiring a social and normative framework to be fully understood.

This perspective resonates with Brandom's inferentialism (*Making It Explicit*), which holds that the intentional content of a concept or belief is not fixed by external reference alone but is instead determined by its role in a web of inferences and justifications. Brandom emphasizes that "[…] to understand or grasp a concept is to know what follows from it and what it follows from […]" (1994, p. 135). For both Stalnaker and Brandom, intentional states are inherently context-sensitive, and their content is shaped by how they relate to other beliefs and the inferential commitments they carry. In this view, intentionality is not merely about a fixed reference to an external object but about how beliefs and thoughts are connected within a broader network of inferential reasoning and how they shift in response to changing contexts. Brandom argues that "[…] what a speaker is committed to in making an assertion is determined by the inferential relationships that govern the content of that assertion […]" (1994, p. 141), emphasizing that intentionality is bound up with these inferential structures.

This inferential structure is key to understanding how beliefs "about" the world are both directed and adjusted based on the assumptions at play in a given discourse. For both Stalnaker and Brandom, intentionality is dynamic and context-dependent, shaped by the evolving network of inferential commitments in conversation.

2.2. Intentionality without reference: Davidson's radical reinterpretation

- Davidson's extension of Quine's skepticism regarding the indeterminacy of translation**.**
- Davidson's critique of reference as a necessary foundation for meaning.
- The dismissal of the fixed relationship between mental states and objects.
- Intentional content as arising within public, social, and linguistic practices.

- Moving intentionality away from private mental processes to public, shared frameworks of interpretation.
- Davidson's Challenge to Intentionality and Conceptual Schemes

Davidson builds on Quine's skepticism about intentionality, particularly the indeterminacy of translation, which argues that there is no single way to map linguistic expressions to the world. Semantics, at best, provides an abstract framework for addressing issues of reference, but it remains underdetermined by the available evidence. It does not adhere to any specific set of phenomenological laws, nor does it definitively determine which models or interpretations should be derived from the evidence. This limitation underscores that semantics alone cannot fully account for how meaning and reference are established, leaving important gaps between abstract models and lived experiences or empirical data. However, Davidson goes further, challenging the very need for the concept of reference as a foundation for meaning. As Davidson (2001, p. 224) explains:

> […] we don't need the concept of reference; for if there is one way of assigning entities to expressions (a way of characterizing 'satisfaction') that yields acceptable results with respect to the truth conditions of sentences, there will be endless other ways that do as well.

This radical move highlights Davidson's critical stance toward intentionality — he dismisses the idea that intentional content must be rooted in a fixed, private relationship between mental states and objects. By doing so, he effectively empties the concept of its traditional substance, reducing it to a hollow framework. For Davidson, intentional content is not an intrinsic or private connection but arises within a broader, public context of linguistic and social practices, challenging the notion that mental states have an inherent, fixed reference to specific objects.

Davidson's insight here emphasizes that reference itself is not the critical component for understanding meaning or belief, but rather the structures of interpretation and inference that allow us to assign truth conditions. These structures provide the framework for determining what is intelligible and absurd, making sense of complex belief systems even when their specific references might vary or remain ambiguous. The task is not to nail down a single, fixed reference for every belief, but to operate within a

system of inferences and presuppositions that yields coherent interpretations across multiple scenarios:

> [...] It would be necessary to know exactly what information was preserved by a translation manual that met the empirical constraints: what was invariant, so to speak, from one acceptable translating manual to another. (Davidson, 2001, p. 149)

Thus, by focusing on the unifying patterns rather than rigid reference points, we can maintain a consistent and objective method of codifying beliefs and intentional content.

Davidson's conclusion dismantles the idea that intentionality relies on rigid reference, suggesting instead that meaning emerges from publicly accessible and multiple valid interpretations within a shared framework. This reorientation pushes intentionality away from being a mysterious, private mental process and positions it firmly within social norms and inferential practices, where success in interpretation depends on coherence and shared understanding rather than any intrinsic connection between thoughts and external objects.

As we have explored throughout the previous section, the problem of intentionality raises fundamental challenges about the relationship between belief, truth, and the frameworks that guide our interpretations. Davidson took this one step further, arguing that because meaning arises within a shared, public framework — involving social norms, inferential structures, and common experiences — there is no need to worry about private meaning at all. He famously concluded that "[…] there is no such thing as a language that is private in principle […]" (Davidson, 1986, p. 446), meaning that all communication, even our most personal thoughts, relies on public, sharable structures of meaning. Davidson's argument aligns closely with Wittgenstein's critique of the notion of a private language. Wittgenstein argued that meaning cannot be grounded in purely private experiences because language is inherently a rule-governed practice: "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique." (Wittgenstein, 1953, §199)

Davidson’s theory of radical interpretation further develops this idea by addressing how we interpret others’ beliefs and meanings when starting with no prior knowledge of their language or conceptual schema. Davidson posits that we must assume rationality in the speaker and identify patterns in their verbal and non-verbal behavior in

response to stimuli in their environment. Davidson argues (1991, p. 211) that: "The key to radical interpretation is to triangulate between the interpreter, the speaker, and the world.", this triangulation process allows us to link a speaker's words and actions to common objects of reference in the world, making interpretation possible even without a shared linguistic framework.

Donald Davidson's skepticism about the very notion of conceptual schemes plays a key role in his philosophy of language and intentionality. In his essay "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", Davidson (1974, p. 190) famously concludes that "[…] we cannot make sense of the notion of two conceptual schemes unless we can say in what way they are different". He argued that if there is no way to translate between two schemes, then we cannot even recognize them as distinct schemes; rather, they must be part of a shared, unified system of meaning. This critique reinforces the idea that meaning and interpretation are public and inter-subjective, anchored in the common frameworks of language and experience. Davidson's rejection of conceptual schemes contributes to the dissolution and weakening of the traditional notion of intentionality. As intentionality loses its specificity in favor of a broader, intersubjective interpretation, the content of beliefs becomes less about private mental representations and more about how those beliefs fit into publicly accessible systems of meaning.

Intentional contents are now framed in such a way that they fit into a form of representation accessible to the diagnosis of the "other," where the "other" refers specifically to the specialist—the psychologist, sociologist, or phenomenologist—who frames the question, interprets the content, and ultimately provides the answers. In this context, the specialist takes on the role of shaping how intentional states are interpreted, employing publicly accessible standards and frameworks. The specialist becomes the authoritative figure, structuring both the inquiry and the explanations of belief systems, making intentionality a matter of social diagnosis rather than private introspection.

3 TRANSCENDENTALISM AND THE LIMITS OF THE ABSURD

3.1. Semantic transcendentalism and interpretability

- The self-referential nature of interpretation in transcendental philosophy, drawing from Kant, Davidson, and Wittgenstein.

- Wittgenstein's view that the limits of language are the limits of the world, and how this shapes the interpretation of meaning.
- Davidson's extension of transcendentalism into semantics, focusing on Tarski's framework for truth conditions and the convergence of rational interpretation

For Wittgenstein, the limits of language determine the boundaries of what can be understood or expressed about the world: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 1922, 5.6). This implies that meaning is inseparable from the transcendental structure of our linguistic engagement with the world. Wittgenstein's transcendentalism has been interpreted by several commentators as a self-contained framework for understanding meaning. Stanley Cavell emphasizes that for Wittgenstein, our participation in language practices is what grounds meaning, noting that "[…] what we say or mean is determined by the forms of life we share with others […] " (Cavell, 1979, p. 206). Similarly, Hans-Johann Glock explains that Wittgenstein's transcendentalism is concerned with the limits of intelligibility, arguing that "[…] the norms of meaning are not external to the practices but are determined by the language games themselves" (Glock, 1996, p. 142). Finally, Cora Diamond highlights how Wittgenstein's focus on shared linguistic practices challenges traditional notions of objectivity, stating that "meaning emerges not from a correspondence with external facts but from our engagement with the rules governing language use" (Diamond, 1991, p. 15).

Davidson's interpretivism builds on this Wittgensteinian transcendentalism by further arguing that the correctness of any interpretation is inherently self-referential, judged within the framework of shared linguistic practices and social norms. Both philosophers shift the focus from objective standards of meaning to the internal structures of interpretation, where the possibility of understanding rests on coherence within these shared systems.

This circularity is rooted in transcendental philosophy, where the conditions for the possibility of thought and understanding are part of the process of self-reflection and interpretation. The origins of this idea can be traced back to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: "The conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience." (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1781/1998, A111).

Wittgenstein's later philosophy, particularly in the *Philosophical Investigations*, argues that meaning arises not from an external, objective source nor from internal intentional standards, but from the rules of language-games embedded in practices and forms of life. This next stage of Wittgenstein's transcendentalism holds that the standards for interpreting a statement are found within the system of rules and practices shared by the speakers.

Davidson also pushes this transcendental notion into the domain of semantics. He does this by suggesting that interpretability can be understood and systematized through Tarski's thesis, which provides a formal framework for truth conditions. In this context, Tarski's approach allows meaning to be established in a formal and systematic way: "A theory of meaning must give an account of truth conditions, for it is only through truth conditions that we can assign meanings to sentences in a systematic way." (Dummett, 1978, p. 54). Any theory of truth that is to succeed in practice must be able to meet these Tarskian standards, because such standards provide a logico-mathematical structure that filters out incoherent or non-functional theories. Over time, this filtering process exerts pressure on competing theories of truth to converge on a common ground — a shared framework of rationality that can be universally understood and applied. The recursive nature of Tarski's system (Tarski, 1944) ensures that truth is not defined internally but is established by the systematic keying of sentences to some rewarding principle (satisfaction), creating a shared framework where interpretation success is framed and consistent: since the practice of filtering theories of truth that have any chance of practical success will be conditioned by a standard at least as simple as Tarski's (where "the sentence 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white"), there will be pressure for all these theories to converge at some point in the medium or long term. This convergence reflects a transcendental condition for understanding, as the very act of making sense of others' statements presupposes a common ground of shared rationality.

3.2. The limits of the absurd: filtering belief systems

- The evolutionary and rational filters that remove beliefs not aligned with shared reality or empirical standards.
- Quine's evolutionary analogy for filtering cognitive strategies and beliefs that deviate too far from reality.

- The socio-cultural role of knowledge-constitutive interests, as highlighted by Habermas, in maintaining coherence in interpretation.

We have seen how the question of intentionality divided twentieth-century authors. Some have adopted a more skeptical stance on the very idea that there is a fact of the matter that specifies an "intentionality," as seen in the works of Quine and Kripke. Others, such as Stalnaker and Brandom, take a different approach by dissolving the idea of intentionality into pragmatic conditions of inferential authorization and conversational context. In this view, intentionality is not an inherent property of mental states but is shaped by the inferential roles those states play within broader contexts of communication and reasoning. By situating intentionality within the context of shared norms, conversational frameworks, and inferential roles, we can approach it in a way that is both objective and accessible to anyone engaged in the interpretive process. This aligns with Daniel Dennett's thesis on the intentional stance, where he argues that we attribute intentionality by interpreting the behavior of agents — whether human, animal, or artificial — based on their actions within a given context.

Dennett explains that when we adopt the intentional stance, we treat an entity as if it has beliefs, desires, and goals, and we predict its behavior by assuming that it will act in a way that makes sense given these attributed mental states. As Dennett notes, "[…] we can decode the 'intentionality' of animals by predicting their behavior based on the assumption that they are rational agents acting in their own interests" (Dennett, 1987, p. 87). By situating intentionality within the broader context of shared norms, conversational context, and inferential roles, we can approach intentionality in a way that is both objective and accessible to anyone engaged in the interpretive process.

This allows for the pinpointing of the contents — whether beliefs, desires, or other intentional states — according to objective and non-opaque standards. These standards are not contingent on the subjective or internal mental processes of individuals. As a result, they can be interpreted objectively, not only by experts in hermeneutics, sociologists, or psychologists, but by anyone who participates in these shared parameters of meaning and reasoning. This makes the assessment and understanding of intentional content a matter of public discourse, accessible to everyone within a community of communicators. It also positions sociology and psychology as popular sciences, not

restricted to academic specialists, but activated by all of us in our daily lives as we constantly engage with the problem of “interpreting the other”. In this sense, every conversation, interpretation, or act of communication involves the application of these inferential norms and practices, making us all participants in the broader scientific endeavor of understanding human meaning and intentionality.

As thinkers like Donald Davidson suggest, our ability to navigate complex webs of presuppositions reinforces our understanding of what is true and what is absurd. This demonstrates our capacity to restructure what we can specify as intentional content, depending on these webs of inference and contextual commitments. Davidson’s principle of charity highlights that "[…] in order to make sense of a speaker's beliefs, we must assume a large degree of rationality and consistency in their belief system […]" (Davidson, 1984, p. 137). This principle reflects the idea that the content of beliefs is not fixed in isolation but evolves through their relationships within broader frameworks of reasoning and communication. Intentional content, then, is shaped by how these beliefs fit within the overall coherence of our belief system, allowing us to interpret meaning in a way that adapts to both rational and contextual norms.

Successful communication is inherently guided by the need to filter out belief systems that deviate too far from inter-accessible reality — those beliefs that cannot be justified or sustained within the broader inferential structures of our shared norms and practices. Beliefs like superstitions or alien abductions, which lack coherence with the shared framework of interpretation, are naturally excluded from what we consider legitimate or rational beliefs about the world. As Quine famously remarked, "Creatures inveterately wrong in their inductions have a pathetic but praiseworthy tendency to die before reproducing their kind […]" (Quine, 1969, p. 126), emphasizing the evolutionary filtering of cognitive strategies and belief systems. In the context of interpretation, this suggests that belief systems that fail to align with empirical reality are naturally filtered out, much like flawed inductive reasoning leads to evolutionary failure.

Habermas worked on a similar reflection in the context of continental philosophy, offering a complementary vision by highlighting the socio-cultural dimension of knowledge and interpretation. In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, he explains that "[…] knowledge-constitutive interests […]" correspond to "[…] the natural history of the

human species […]" and to "[…] the imperatives of the socio-cultural form of life […]" (Habermas, 1971, p. 168).

This reinforces the idea previously discussed, that interpretive frameworks must converge on shared norms to maintain coherence and intelligibility. Interpretive strategies that consistently misrepresent reality — whether through irrational beliefs or misaligned interpretations — will eventually be excluded from functional discourse, much like maladaptive traits are weeded out through natural selection. The parameters of communication are designed to maintain coherence, ensuring that the belief systems we operate within remain intelligible to others. For communication to function effectively, there must be a common standard that defines what is believable versus what is absurd.

Wittgenstein similarly emphasized the need for shared judgment as the foundation for meaningful communication. As he states, “If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments” (Wittgenstein, PI, §242).

In order to achieve this, we rely on a kind of *overarching parameter* that allows us to codify knowledge by distinguishing between what can be interpreted and what falls into the realm of the irrational. This parameter acts as a stable basis for understanding, determining what is conceivable within the limits of rationality while filtering out those beliefs that are too far removed from shared reality to be considered valid.

4 THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN RATIONALITY, ABSURDITY, AND IDEOLOGY IN EXISTENTIALISM AND INTENTIONALITY

4.1. Existentialism and the tension between rationality and absurdity in intentionality

- The risks of conceptual isolation and the role of unified frameworks in meaning-making.
- Sartre’s concept of alienation through the Other’s gaze and loss of autonomy.
- The contrast between Sartre’s view and Davidson’s public framework of meaning.
- The institutional power of external interpretations and its alienating effects on self-understanding.
- Camus and the existential struggle with absurdity and alienation in modern rational frameworks.

- Hegel's concept of alienation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
- Heidegger and the importance of lived experience (Being-in-the-world) versus imposed rational structures.
- Heidegger's concept of truth as rooted in lived experience and disclosedness.

In the process of interpreting and evaluating beliefs, a critical question arises: how do we ensure that our interpretations remain coherent and intelligible to others? At the heart of this question lies the necessity of convergence in interpretation, which allows for a shared understanding of reality within the parameters of rationality and absurdity. The previous chapters emphasize that the convergence of conceptual systems ensures communication remains coherent and adaptive, avoiding the pitfalls of conceptual isolation. It is through this convergence that intentionality, meaning, and understanding can flourish, allowing us to make sense of the world within a unified framework accessible to all participants in the interpretive process.

However, in the mid-20th century, influential thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, inspired by Heidegger, explored an alternative idea: that this artificial convergence, while creating mutually coherent interpretive systems, only provides a standardized type of experience of the world, an type of ideological harmony mediated by a philosophical awareness rooted in social pressures.

Sartre's notion of alienation, expressed in the quote "The Other holds a secret — the secret of what I am. He makes me be and thereby he possesses me, and if he possesses me, I am alienated; I have no longer the right to possess myself […]" (Sartre, 1943/1956, p. 349), contrasts sharply with Davidson's thesis that no interpretation of the other is inaccessible or private. For Davidson, all meaning is public and accessible through interpretation within a shared framework of understanding. He famously argued that meaning arises in communication, with no hidden or private aspect that cannot be accessed or understood by others.

Sartre, however, emphasizes the alienating power of the Other's gaze, which strips the individual of their autonomy and turns them into an object. In this sense, the "secret" that the Other holds about the self is the subjective experience of being reduced to something external, defined and possessed by others. Intentional contents, when framed to fit a form of representation accessible to the diagnosis of the "other" — whether that

be the psychologist, sociologist, or phenomenologist — create a dynamic where the individual's inner world is interpreted and controlled by an external authority. This shift positions the "other" as a specialist who frames the questions, interprets the content, and ultimately provides answers, exerting power over the individual's understanding of themselves. This dynamic can easily lead to a form of institutional oppression, where the individual's self-understanding is alienated and subsumed under the external interpretations imposed by experts.

Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, emphasizes the absurdity of the human condition, where the individual is caught between the desire for meaning and the silent, indifferent universe. Camus suggests that this absurdity emerges from the confrontation between our need for rational coherence and the world's refusal to provide it. As Camus writes, "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus, 1991, p. 28).

This critique echoes the problem of alienation in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the subject finds itself estranged from its own reality when caught within rigid structures of thought that fail to reflect its true, evolving self. For Hegel, alienation occurs when consciousness confronts a world that no longer feels like its own creation, but rather an external, alien system imposed upon it. As Hegelin *Phenomenology of Spirit*, writes, "The self-conscious Spirit is estranged from itself, and the substance, which is its own creation confronts it as something alien to it, and as an external world beyond its control" (Hegel, 1977, p. 451). For Hegel, alienation occurs when individuals confront a world or system that appears as something foreign, no longer a reflection of their own making but rather an external force that dictates their self-understanding.

In this sense, Sartre and Camus continue the Hegelian exploration of alienation, illustrating how rational systems, meant to provide coherence, can alienate the individual from their authentic engagement with the world, forcing them into systems of meaning they did not create and cannot fully embrace. These systems, while rational, can become suffocating frameworks that prevent true freedom and expression of subjectivity, echoing Hegel's concern that self-consciousness becomes estranged from the reality it inhabits.

For Heidegger, *Dasein* is always already situated in a specific, individual context, and to impose rationality as an external, universal standard would be to reduce its existence to an "empty formalism" of shared interpretation. Heidegger might contend that

rationality, in this sense, is an imposed framework that overlooks the unique, situated nature of *Dasein's* engagement with the world. As he writes, *"The 'they'... prescribes one's state-of-mind and determines what and how one 'sees'* […]" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927/1962, p. 165). This suggests that a universal framework of rationality risks depriving *Dasein* of its authentic mode of being by forcing it into a structure of intelligibility that may not reflect its true existential situation.

Heidegger's concept of *being-in-the-world* offers a sharp contrast to the idea of empty intentionality and a detached notion of reference and rationality. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is fundamentally defined by its engagement with the world, and this engagement is not mediated by abstract, universal frameworks of meaning, but by the meaningful relations that arise from its lived experience. The idea of forcing a coherent, rational system onto *Dasein* — as seen in the demand for shared interpretation — would, in Heidegger's view, alienate *Dasein* from its authentic *being-in-the-world*.

For Heidegger, *Dasein* does not simply inhabit a world of abstract references but lives in a world where meaning is derived from its practical, lived experiences and interactions. As he writes, *"The world of Dasein is a with-world. Being-in is being-with others"* (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927/1962, p. 155). Imposing an empty, formal system of intentionality deprives *Dasein* of the richness of its world, reducing its experience to a mechanical and detached rational structure that is alien to its authentic way of being. This imposed structure, like a Kafkaesque bureaucracy, obscures and alienates the subject from their own meaningful world by presenting reference and rationality as external constructs rather than integral aspects of their own *Being-in-the-world*.

The idea of forcing a coherent, rational system onto *Dasein* — as seen in the demand for shared interpretation — would, in Heidegger's view, alienate *Dasein* from its authentic *being-in-the-world:*

> But that which is ready-to-hand in our everyday dealings has, in its everydayness, been so and so interpreted. It is understood in terms of a totality of involvements which is revealed in our concernful dealings with the world and not by a system of rules or definitions. (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927/1962, p. 107)

For Heidegger, truth is not primarily about correct statements or propositions but is rooted in *Dasein's* lived experience and engagement with the world. He writes, "The

most primordial phenomenon of truth is first disclosed by the phenomenon of disclosedness. Propositional truth, as well as truth of judgment, is derivative" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962, p. 263).

This suggests that when truth is confined to propositional frameworks, it risks losing its original, deeper meaning that is connected to *Dasein's* authentic understanding of its world. In Heidegger's view, the reduction of truth to a formal system alienates it from the existential realities that give it significance, stranding it in an abstract structure disconnected from lived experience.

4.2. The problem of ideology and false consciousness

- The role of philosophy in mediating between the scientific image (objective knowledge) and the manifest image (lived experience), as seen in the works of Sellars, Hegel, and Marx.
- The role of philosophical consciousness (religion, art, philosophy) in shaping a culture's system of meaning: Bildung as the path to self-consciousness and true knowledge in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
- The influence of German Idealism on the development of individual and collective consciousness through cultural, intellectual, and spiritual progress.
- Wilfrid Sellars' challenge of harmonizing the scientific (objective) and manifest (subjective) images of reality.
- Philosophy as the mediator between formal scientific knowledge and lived human experience.
- Criticisms of Hegel's Absolute Spirit as a potential totalizing system that subsumes individual freedom.
- Sartre's critique of ideology in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: ideology as a system that embeds individuals within false consciousness and practical totality.
- Marx and Engels, Gramsci, Marcuse and Foucault on how dominant cultural systems impose distorted views of reality.

Although theories (or anti-theories) of intentionality may not explicitly explore questions of genuine and false consciousness, there exists a traditional line of thought that

associates the achievements of a culture—expressed through its philosophical consciousness (religion, art, etc.) — with a type of harmony that would transform human knowledge into a system of "meaning." We see these ideas flourishing in the tradition of German Idealism, particularly in the works of thinkers like Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling, whose theories of Bildung emphasize the development of individual and collective consciousness through cultural, intellectual, and spiritual progress.

For Hegel, in particular, *Bildung* represents the cultivation of self-consciousness through engagement with the various domains of human activity — religion, art, and philosophy—leading ultimately to the realization of Absolute Spirit[2]. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that these cultural achievements contribute to the unfolding of human knowledge and self-awareness, culminating in a harmonious system of meaning where individual consciousness recognizes itself in the universal:

> *Bildung* is the path of the natural consciousness, pressing forward to true knowledge through a variety of shapes of consciousness, until it reaches the stage of knowing the Absolute as its own being. (Hegel, 1977, p. 51)

This process is traditionally seen as the building of a type of awareness where scientific formalisms and concepts are absorbed into a broader theory of meaning, elevating the epistemic achievements of an era – for example, by their best scientific paradigms – to the status of *semantic parameters*. Over time, society's understanding of meaning and truth evolves by integrating scientific advancements and formalisms into a larger framework that defines meaning. In essence, scientific paradigms and discoveries, which represent the "epistemic achievements" of an era, are not merely seen as technical knowledge but are elevated to the level of fundamental guiding principles for how meaning, truth, and absurdity are defined in that society. In doing so, these formalisms become parameters by which we distinguish between meaning and absurdity. Under such a system, believing in alien abductions, for example, becomes more than merely false —

2Similarly, in Schelling's work the harmony between individual and universal knowledge is seen in the interplay between nature and spirit, where human creativity (expressed in art, for example) contributes to the realization of philosophical and spiritual truth: "Art is the organ of philosophy. It is through art that the identity of the conscious and the unconscious is made real and brought to completion." (Schelling, 1978, p. 231)

it is classified as absurd, as it falls outside the boundaries defined by these collective rational frameworks.

This reflection finds its way into analytical philosophy thanks to Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars insightfully outlines the challenge of reconciling the scientific image — the formal, objective view of the world — and the manifest image — the subjective, lived experience of individuals. As he states:

> The scientific image presents itself as a rival to the manifest image, and philosophy's task is to find a way to bring these two images into harmony, or at least into a form of peaceful coexistence." (*Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man*, p. 20)

Sellars suggest that philosophy's role is to mediate between these two images, preventing one from subsuming the other, and thus maintaining a balance between objective and subjective interpretations of reality. In doing so, the author fits into an ancient philosophical tradition that sees philosophy as a kind of ultimate conciliator between what we need to formally conceive and its meaning. This conciliation ensures that the scientific image does not entirely overwrite the richness of the manifest image, where individuals experience meaning in personal, social, and normative contexts.

Hegel's philosophy, while striving toward unity, has been critiqued for fostering structures of thought that, in their pursuit of synthesis, can mask individuality and impose ideological frameworks. Rather than liberating individuals, these systems can embed them within fixed structures of meaning that obscure their freedom. As Hegel states in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the culmination of the Absolute Spirit:

> The self-knowing Spirit, knowing itself in the shape of absolute mind, has as its reality the whole of Spirit in the depth of its pure self-consciousness. All that is confined within its 'ideality' knows that it is nothing else but the self." (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807/1977, p. 808)

While Hegel envisions this as the endpoint of freedom and knowledge, where the individual recognizes themselves in the universal, critics argue that such a system can be totalizing. The self is absorbed into the Absolute, and what is seen as the final stage of knowledge risks becoming a fixed ideological framework. This is because, in the quest for unity, individual freedom may be subordinated to a collective vision of meaning. Sartre critiques this in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, where he argues that ideology organizes human relations by embedding individuals within a practical totality:

> Ideology is not a form of knowledge; it is the other way around: ideology constitutes the structure of action and organizes human relations by inserting individuals into a practical totality and by conferring on them a false consciousness of their place in the system." (*Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960, p. 22)

This critique of ideology echoes and expands upon the concept of false consciousness as developed by thinkers like Marx, Engels, who argued that dominant cultural and social systems impose distorted views of reality. Gramsci (1971), in his analysis of cultural hegemony, further elaborated how individuals unknowingly consent to their own subordination through cultural institutions, while thinkers like Marcuse (1964) criticized modern capitalist societies for perpetuating this false consciousness through consumerism and mass media, reinforcing the status quo by masking deeper alienation. This also echoes Michel Foucault's critique of institutional power, where knowledge and authority structures — particularly in psychiatry and social sciences — serve to control and regulate individuals. Foucault argued that "Power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege' of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions" (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). The specialist's role in framing intentional contents can be seen as part of this strategic exercise of power, creating systems that can oppress the individual by dictating how their thoughts and experiences are to be understood and classified.

This article does not need to go in that direction, that is, towards the representation of the structures of domination consistent with each false consciousness and, therefore, we will not delve into that topic or the pertinent quotes, sticking to an old and famous one: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force." (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 64)

5 CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of intentionality, from its logical foundations to its existential ramifications, reveals a persistent tension in philosophy: the challenge of reconciling abstract mental content with the lived experience of individuals. Through the works of Quine, Kripke, Sellars, Brandom and Stalnaker, we see how traditional approaches to intentionality struggle with the complexities of nonexistent objects, propositional

attitudes, and modal logic. These challenges expose the limitations of classical logical frameworks in accounting for the full scope of intentional states.

An important aspect of this struggle lies in human imagination, which seeks to frame the content of nonexistent objects, fictional entities, and abstract possibilities. In doing so, imagination attempts to construct stable modal parameters that differentiate between superstition and rational speculation. This boundary-setting shapes the limits of what a community of knowledge considers plausible or conceivable. The community's collective reasoning establishes the parameters that distinguish legitimate speculation from irrational belief, helping to define the contours of the imaginary within shared intellectual frameworks.

Rather than being an inherent property of mental states, intentional content becomes something constructed and understood within shared linguistic and social frameworks. This transformation places the focus on how meaning arises through the interaction of agents within a community of knowledge, where inferential roles, language-games, and contextual norms shape our understanding of mental states. Meaning is not derived from external or objective sources alone, but from the shared practices and "language-games" that form our communal life. This self-referential structure of meaning reflects transcendental philosophy's roots in Kant, where the conditions for the possibility of experience also define the boundaries of what can be thought and known. This outlines a transcendental philosophy that first dissolves intentional content into intersubjective meaning and then allows intentional content access to that which best rationalizes the behavior of the intentional agent.

Davidson extends this transcendental approach into semantics, utilizing Tarski’s framework for truth conditions, which creates a systematic, logico-mathematical structure that filters out incoherent or non-functional theories of meaning. This filtering process places pressure on competing theories to converge on a shared framework of rationality, establishing a universal ground for successful interpretation. This view, which aligns with Daniel Dennett's intentional stance, positions intentionality as something we attribute to agents — human, animal, or artificial — based on their behavior in context.

The last part of the article then moves on to a critique of the assumptions hidden beneath this view of intentionality. As we move toward existential and social interpretations, thinkers like Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger illuminate how these abstract

issues reflect deeper human concerns about alienation and authenticity. We saw that Rational systems, when detached from existential realities, alienate individuals from their own lived experiences, reducing meaning to mechanical, detached structures that fail to capture the true depth of human formation and meaning-making. The very convergence that ensures coherence in communication risks alienating the individual from their own lived reality, leaving the distinction between rationality and absurdity unresolved. The formal convergence of rational systems designed to ensure understanding creates a paradox where the very distinction between meaning and absurdity becomes indistinguishable. This is especially true when institutional pressures impose a collective form of intentionality, pushing personal meaning to the margins. The collective and institutional pressures to standardize their behavior to the point of having a recognizable 'intentionality' risk depriving individuals of their authentic connection to meaning, leaving them alienated within a standardized, impersonal structure of interpretation. Imposing an empty formalism of rationality on *Dasein*, as seen in demands for shared interpretation, strips away the richness of Being-in-the-world.

Sellars' concept of harmony between the scientific and manifest images offers a way to reconsider this process, suggesting that philosophical systems must allow for both the objective and subjective dimensions of human experience. The challenge remains to reconcile these competing images without reducing one to the other, ensuring that neither scientific rationality nor universal philosophical systems subsume the richness of Meaning and Intentionality. This image represents an ancient desire for unification or synthesis, already present in Hegel's theories of Absolute Knowledge and the Absolute Spirit. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he outlines the development of human consciousness through a dialectical process, culminating in the Absolute Spirit — a state in which individual subjectivity, society, and knowledge are fully unified. This Absolute Spirit represents the complete synthesis of all contradictions and a totality where individual consciousness merges with the universal.

But we have seen how this has already been criticized, in a movement inherited from cultural studies, as a kind of false consciousness, apparently imbued with a sense of the absolute, but in fact only ideologically blind. We have seen that, traditionally, philosophy is seen as the instance that will harmonize a scientific image and an immanent image (Sellars), constituting the bases of a super-consciousness (something like an

absolute spirit) that delimits the limits of meaning and absurdity based on the totality of the best available knowledge. While this convergence may create consistency and mutual understanding, Sartre and Camus argue that it comes at a cost. It results in a "standardized type of experience" of the world, where individual subjectivity and authenticity are suppressed in favor of a universal, socially accepted way of seeing and interpreting reality. In this case, philosophy itself acquires an ideological role, transforming empty formalisms into dogmatic frameworks of meaning. Instead of improving our awareness, it imposes a false consciousness.

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