Author's Response
By Daniel C. *Dennett*

Robert Campbell has a daunting task: to convince just about everyone in cognitive science and analytic philosophy that he or she has been barking up the wrong trees for years. Perhaps he is right, but he is unlikely to convince the rest of us by taking one book from the purportedly mistaken tradition and attempting to convict it of the cardinal sins by what might be called guilt by free association. As he admits, my book is not mainly about the epistemological issues that are central to him, so he must read a lot into my decisions about what not to discuss at length, and into various phrases he plucks out of discussions of other topics. Still, the tactic might have worked, if it weren't for some misconstruals.

   First, Campbell construes my intentional stance as an anti-realist doctrine: "he needs to abandon the 'intentional stance' and make a firm commitment to realism". Since many others have also construed me thus, this is my fault not Campbell's, but I have laboured mightily to correct it, in *Darwin's Dangerous Idea,* in "Real Patterns" (Dennett 1991) and more recently in "Get Real" (Dennett 1994). The intentional stance is a perspective that one adopts in order to discover real patterns that are objectively in the world. Second, he construes me as endorsing (at least indirectly) 'knowledge-atoms' and 'encoding' of a variety he and Bickhard have purportedly discredited. I cannot tell from what is said in the review whether I would agree with their criticisms of these doctrines-quite probably I would agree with a great deal-but considering that I have been an indefatigable opponent of all brands of the 'language of thought' (Dennett 1977, 1987a) and 'High Church Computationalism' (Dennett 1987b) (otherwise known as GOFAI) for almost thirty years, I am unpersuaded by this exegesis of my own work. Certainly the objections raised here do not find their targets in my own views, nor are they compelling in their own right. Consider Campbell's claim that it is a mistake to treat DNA as an informational code (like a language in that regard). He quotes a series of rhetorical questions designed to expose this confusion: "If DNA contains denoting symbols, then why doesn't rain denote clouds? Why doesn't smoke denote fire?" Well, there are a number a reasons, but the chief one is this: DNA is part of a system which does

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indeed include a 'reader'-the elaborate system that constructs the proteins called-for (or denoted, if you like) by the codons, while clouds and smoke are not part of any such system.

My chief reason for replying to Campbell's review is to rebut a charge that he makes about memetics: "if memetics is correct, our very notions of truth and falsehood, evidence and reasons, good and bad arguments, and so on, are themselves memes, whose acceptance need have nothing to do with their epistemic virtue, or lack thereof ... memetics, like epistemic relativism or hard psychological determinism, embroils its proponents in self-referential inconsistency". As Campbell notes, I myself draw attention to the independence of meme-spreading and meme-virtue in general, but am not, as he says, fazed by it. Why not? Because the conclusion he draws from it is simply a 110/1 *sequitur*. There is indeed no guarantee that a meme that spreads is good (true, valid, right) or that a good meme will spread, but this permits one to discover the complex relationships between truth and memes, and show how, and why, true memes flourish (when they do). This topic was slighted by me, apparently, in my book; I have since turned to it as a major topic of my work.

For instance, in "Faith in the Truth" (forthcoming in the Oxford Amnesty Lectures volume on the values of science), I attempt to show that epistemic relativism (which Campbell and I both abhor) does not at all follow from the epistemic doctrines of Quine, Kuhn, Dawkins, or myself, in spite of declarations to that effect from Rorty and various other postmodernists. I think that Campbell and I are actually much closer to agreement than he supposes. But let me close with one final rhetorical question of my own. I would have thought that his disapproval of relativism and his love of "a commitment to realism" would put him squarely on my side against the self-styled multiculturalists who won't dare to criticise the disinformation campaigns of various religious cultures. He seems to disapprove of my disapproval of religious schools teaching falsehoods to young children. He quotes me as saying: "Misinforming a child is a terrible offense." Isn't it?

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