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Compare and Contrast Dretske, Fodor,
and Millikan on Teleosemantics

By "teleosemantics"¹ is meant a teleofunctional account of what determines the semantic contents of inner representations. One contrast among these three authors is that Millikan and Dretske adopt teleological accounts while Fodor rejects teleosemantics. But I can compare the teleosemantic view Fodor would have held had he not thought better of it, namely, the view he rejects in Psychosemantics (Fodor 1987) and in A Theory of Content (Fodor 1990). I will emphasize Millikan's view because it seems to be the hardest--it has, at least, managed to trip some very competent commentators--and because I have studied it the hardest.

A central problem that teleosemantics is designed to solve concerns mental misrepresentation. It is not possible to accomplish a naturalistic analysis of the representation-represented relation by a single step describing only the relation that holds between the thinker's current states and dispositions and the thinker's environment when s/he harbors a true representation. This is because there are two kinds of non-true-representations to be accounted for, those that are not true and those that are not representations. The failure to hold of a