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## Vagueness as a mark of dispositional intentionality<sup>1</sup>

Vagueness (within rather than *at* the boundaries of a concept) is one of the "three salient things about intention" listed by Elizabeth Anscombe (1965) in her paper 'The intentionality of sensation'. In an unpublished paper John Burnheim has claimed that "physical causal dispositions" satisfy these "three marks of intentionality given by Anscombe." Subsequent discussion by C. B. Martin and K. Pfeifer (1986) and Place (1996) shows that if the various marks of intentionality proposed by Brentano, Chisholm, Anscombe, Lycan and Searle are sorted according to Kneale's (1968) distinction between intentional states and intentional locutions it turns out that all of the former (Anscombe's three marks plus Searle's/Brentano's directedness) are found in physical dispositions, while the latter (Chisholm's second and third marks) are marks of a quotation.

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### 1. *Three Strands in the Concept of Intentionality*

According to Wittgenstein all philosophical problems arise from conceptual confusion. But while philosophers have in many cases contributed more to the confusion than to its resolution, in most cases the confusion has its source in thoughts that perplex the man or woman in the street. The problem of intentionality is possibly unique in that the confusion has been created entirely by the philosophers themselves.

As this topic has been discussed over the past forty years, it is an amalgam of three distinct traditions of argument and debate:

- (1) the concept of "Intentional inexistence" which comes from the writings of the Medieval Schoolmen, but which was introduced into modern philosophical discussion by Brentano (1874/1995)
- (2) Frege's (1892/1960) concept of "indirect reference", more familiar perhaps, as Quine's (1953/1961) concept of "referential opacity", the term I shall use hereafter, and
- (3) the distinction drawn in the 17th century by the logicians of the Port Royal (Arnauld and Nicole 1662) between the "comprehension" and "extension" of a general term, in which the term "comprehension" was later replaced by Sir William Hamilton (1860) with the more familiar term "intension" spelt with-an-s after the second 'n'.

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## 2. *Brentano and Intentional Inexistence*

According to Brentano

"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 . . . direction toward an object . . ." (Brentano 1874/1995, p. 88)

What the Schoolmen meant by the term "inexistent" is debateable. It is probable that it meant that the object exists, not in external reality, but in the mind. But in the tradition that descends from Brentano it has been interpreted to mean that the so-called "intentional object" *may* or *may not exist*, as for example when I think about my forthcoming breakfast which may be sitting waiting for me on the table, as I imagine it, but equally well may not be.

## 3. *Chisholm and the Linguistification of Intentionality*

After Brentano the next milestone in the history of the problem of intentionality was the publication in 1957 of Roderick Chisholm's book *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*. Chapter II of that book is entitled "Intentional inexistence" and is an attempt to present Brentano's doctrine in a form in which it would make sense to philosophers in the linguistic or analytic tradition which had come to dominate academic philosophy in the English-speaking world by the end of the Second World War. In so doing, Chisholm presented Brentano's thesis not, as it was for Brentano himself, a thesis about the nature of psychological *phenomena*, but a thesis about our ordinary psychological language or, as we would now say, the language of folk psychology. Intentional inexistence, instead of being a thesis about the content of psychological states or mental events, becomes a thesis about the grammatical objects of psychological verbs. Thus Chisholm's first mark of intentionality reads:

"A simple declarative sentence is intentional if it uses a substantival expression - a name or a description - in such a way that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies either that there is or that there isn't anything to which the substantival expression truly applies. "Diogenes looked for an honest man" is intentional by this criterion. Neither "Diogenes looked for an honest man" nor its contradictory - "Diogenes did not look for an honest man" - implies either that there are, or that there are not, any honest men." (Chisholm 1957, p. 170)

The advantage of restating Brentano's principle in this way is that it postpones, even if it does not resolve, the difficult problem that conspicuously confronts Brentano's formulation, the problem of the ontological status of the inexistent intentional objects,

the problem, that notoriously led Alexius Meinong to postulate his *Außersein* or Outer Being as a repository for them.

At the same time, treating intentional inexistence as a property of the grammatical objects of psychological verbs brings into relief, in a way that Brentano's formulation does not, the fact that, although there is something odd about the grammatical objects of almost all psychological verbs, the intentional inexistence formula does not pick out what is peculiar in every case. This leads Chisholm to look for other criteria or marks of intentionality besides that of intentional inexistence, so as to encompass all possible cases.

The grammatical objects of psychological verbs are of two kinds: noun phrases, such as the phrase *an apple* in the sentence *Joe wants an apple*, and embedded sentences, usually in *oratio obliqua* or indirect reported speech, as in the case of the sentence *it's going to rain* in the sentence *Joe thinks it's going to rain*. Both these sentences satisfy Chisholm's linguistified version of Brentano's intentional inexistence criterion. *Joe wants an apple* does not imply that there exists an apple that Joe wants. Nor does *Joe thinks it's going to rain* imply that it actually does rain.

But there are other cases which this criterion does not capture. A case which evidently worried Chisholm, though his examples do not reveal this, is one in which the proposition believed is not existentially quantified. The problem in such cases is that the embedded sentence which describes the content of the belief *already* satisfies Chisholm's first mark of intentionality (it does not imply either the existence or the non-existence of the object referred to by the subject term of the embedded sentence), regardless of *whether or not* the sentence occurs as the grammatical object of a psychological verb. It is not, as in the other cases, that it ceases to imply this only when it occurs in that position. Thus whereas

*Joe is looking at a triangle*

implies the existence of the triangle Joe is looking at,

*Joe believes that he is looking at a triangle*

does not imply this. By contrast

*A triangle is a three-sided plane figure*

does not imply either that there exists or does not exist any such thing. Hence the fact that the existence of a triangle is *not* implied by

*Joe believes that a triangle is a three-sided plane figure*

is *not* due to the position that sentence occupies as the grammatical object of the verb 'believe'.

It is in response to this kind of difficulty, I presume, that Chisholm proposes his *second* mark of intentionality, which,

"let us say, of any noncompound sentence which contains a propositional clause, that it is intentional provided that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies either that the propositional clause is true or that it is false."<sup>2</sup> (Chisholm 1957, pp. 170-171)

I have omitted Chisholm's examples in this case because both his example of a case which is included by this criterion ("James believes there are tigers in India") and his example of one which is excluded ("He is not able to visit India") are equally included and excluded by his first criterion. It will be observed that in the case of what is arguably a purely "physical" disposition, the ability or inability to visit India, it is only the lack of the disposition that is excluded as intentional by both criteria, since it implies both the non-occurrence of what cannot occur and the falsity of the statement that it does so.

This second criterion enables Chisholm to include as intentional propositional attitude ascriptions where the proposition is not existentially quantified; but it does so at the expense of *excluding* those cases where the grammatical object of the psychological verb is a noun phrase rather than an embedded sentence or where it is an interrogative rather than a declarative sentence. It is true that such cases can usually be accommodated by rewriting the grammatical object in the form of a declarative sentence. But this still leaves a serious gap which is covered neither by the intentional inexistence criterion, nor by this new criterion whereby neither the truth nor the falsity of the proposition is implied by a propositional attitude ascription. This is in the case of verbs of cognitive achievement or failure such as 'know', 'remember', or 'forget'.

In cases where the grammatical object of verbs such as 'know', 'remember' or 'forget' is a noun phrase referring to a person, object or event the noun phrase must refer to an individual person, object or event that actually exists, existed or actually occurred. Where the grammatical object is a proposition, the proposition must be true.

It is presumably the need to encompass these cases that leads Chisholm to propose a third criterion of intentionality which for the first time incorporates into the concept the second of the three traditions I distinguished at the outset, Frege's (*op. cit*) concept of "indirect reference" *alias* Quine's "referential opacity". As Chisholm puts it:

"Suppose there are two names or descriptions which designate the same things and that *E* is a sentence obtained merely by separating these two names or descriptions by means of "is identical with" (or "are identical with" if the first word is plural). Suppose also that *A* is a sentence using one

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<sup>2</sup> I have omitted Chisholm's examples in the case of this second mark because both his example of a case which it includes ("James believes there are tigers in India") and his example of one which it excludes ("He is not able to visit India") are equally included and excluded by his first criterion.

It will be observed that in the case of what is arguably a purely "physical" disposition, the ability or inability to visit India, it is only the incapacity that is excluded from the category of the intentional by the two criteria; and then only because to say that an event cannot occur implies that it definitely will not. To show that this is not peculiar to "physical" disabilities, one has only to consider a case such as knowing the answer to a question, where to say that someone does not know the answer also implies that the answer will not be forthcoming.

of those names or descriptions and that *B* is like *A* except that, where *A* uses the one, *B* uses the other. Let us say that *A* is intentional if the conjunction of *A* and *E* does not imply *B*. We can now say of certain cognitive sentences - sentences using "know," "see," "perceive," and the like in one of the ways which have interested us here - that they, too, are intentional. Most of us knew in 1944 that Eisenhower was the one in command (*A*); but although he was (identical with) the man who was to succeed Truman (*E*), it is not true that we knew in 1944 that the man who was to succeed Truman was the one in command (*B*)." (Chisholm 1957, p. 171)

The adoption of referential opacity as a mark of intentionality resolves the problem of how to include verbs of cognitive achievement within the scope of the intentional. But it also covers virtually all the cases that qualify as intentional by the first two criteria.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, since *they* do not cover or can only with difficulty be reconstructed in such a way as to cover all cases, it becomes difficult to see why Chisholm does not abandon the first two marks and adopt referential opacity as the *sole* mark of intentionality. The only reason I can think of for not doing this, is that if he were to abandon his first mark he would have to give up any claim that he is still using the term 'intentionality' in the same sense as it was used by Brentano and the Scholastics before him.

#### 4. *Anscombe's 'The Intentionality of Sensation'*

The third milestone in the history of modern discussions of intentionality and the one which introduces the topic of vagueness into the discussion is an article entitled 'The intentionality of sensation: a grammatical feature' by Elizabeth Anscombe which appeared in *Analytical Philosophy, Second Series* edited by R. J. Butler and published by Blackwell in 1965. Anscombe makes no mention in her paper either of Brentano or of Chisholm. She, nevertheless introduces the concept of intentionality in a way that is virtually indistinguishable from Brentano:

"Suppose somebody says that the object of desire, or desired object, need not exist, and so there need not be any object which one desires. He is obviously switching from one use of the word 'object' to another . . . Now to prevent [this] confusion I will introduce the phrase 'intentional object' to mean 'object' in the older sense which still occurs in 'object of desire'." (Anscombe 1965, p. 159)

While this initial statement is pure Brentano, Anscombe's subsequent discussion resembles that of Chisholm in three respects:

- (1) As her subtitle "a grammatical feature" implies, she treats intentionality primarily as a feature of psychological language rather than, as Brentano did, a feature of the states we use those expressions to describe.

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<sup>3</sup> The only exceptions being the cases discussed by Davidson (1982) in which propositional attitudes are ascribed to linguistic incompetents.

- (2) Although, she mentions the spelling of intentionality with an 's' after the second 'n', she prefers, though for a different reason from Chisholm, the spelling 'intention' with two 't's.
- (3) She not only follows Chisholm in proposing three marks or criteria of intentionality; two of her "three salient things about intention" (her first and her third) can be seen as corresponding to two of Chisholm's (his third and his first).

On closer inspection however, it transpires that these resemblances to Chisholm are more superficial than they appear at first sight. For although she goes on, as he does, to talk about the grammatical objects of psychological verbs, in her initial statement of the problem already quoted and in setting out her three marks of intentionality she is talking in the way Brentano does about the "object" or "content" of a mental state, specifically the state or "act" of intending to do something.

Anscombe is unique amongst philosophers who write on intentionality in seeing a special connection between this philosophical notion and our ordinary use of the verb 'to intend to do something'. This reflects her special interest in that concept on which she had written an important monograph which had appeared eight years earlier in 1957. For other writers on intentionality, intending to do something is either just one amongst many examples of intentional mental states or just one amongst many examples of intentional psychological verbs.

### 5. *Anscombe's First "Salient Thing about Intention"*

This focus on a particular example of an intentional state or intentional verb - the case of 'intending to do something' - has two unfortunate consequences. In the first place one is left in doubt as to how far the three principles she enunciates have application to other examples. Secondly, and as a consequence, their interpretation and their relation to the similar criteria proposed by Chisholm remains in doubt. These doubts arise particularly in relation to the first of her "three salient things about intention", as she calls them, in which she points out that

"not any true description of what you do describes it as the action you intended: only under certain of its descriptions will it be intentional." (Anscombe 1965, p. 159)

In her example you may intend to use a particular pen but not under the description "Smith's pen" which in fact applies to it. But if we try to generalise this as a principle applying to other mental states or psychological verbs, we find ourselves confronted by two possible interpretations. One interpretation assimilates this case to Chisholm's third mark of intentionality, referential opacity. Thus, to use an example from Anscombe's 1957 monograph, from the premises:

- (1) 'In raising and lowering the pump handle the man intended to replenish the water supply'

and

- (2) ‘replenishing the water supply = poisoning the water supply’

we cannot infer

- (3) ‘In raising and lowering the pump handle the man intended to poison the water supply’.

But there is another possible interpretation. On this interpretation intending to do something is construed as a disposition of which what the individual actually does is a manifestation. But it is only a manifestation of that disposition *qua* action of the kind the intention is an intention to perform. Under any *other* description that applies to it, it is *not* a manifestation of that intention. Thus, if raising and lowering the pump handle had the effect of poisoning the water supply, it makes ‘poisoning the water supply’ a description that is true of what the man was *doing*, but it does *not* make that description true of what he intended to do, *unless* it proceeded from, was a manifestation of, an *intention* to poison the water supply. The distinction between these two interpretations may seem a fine one. It becomes important, however, when we consider that on the referential opacity interpretation the embedded clause *to poison the water supply* is a quotation of what the agent may be supposed to have said either to himself or to a confederate when planning the action in question; whereas on the other interpretation it does no more than characterise the objective with which an action is performed and against which its success or failure will be evaluated. Now it so turns out that in his paper ‘Rational animals’ Donald Davidson (1982) has provided us with a criterion by which to decide between these two interpretations. What Davidson has shown is that locutions which are referentially opaque when they are predicated of a linguistically competent human become transparent when they [are] predicated of an animal. This is evidently because, when predicated of an animal, the names or descriptions in question cease to be what they are when ascribed to a linguistically competent adult, namely, a quotation (in *oratio obliqua* or indirect reported speech) of what the individual in question has said or might reasonably be expected to say.

However, this linguistic phenomenon whereby contexts which are opaque when ascribed to the linguistically competent become transparent when ascribed to linguistic incompetents has no counterpart in the case of the grammatical objects of the verb ‘intend’. In this case the principle whereby you cannot infer from what an agent *actually* did to what he or she intended to do applies regardless of whether the agent in question is linguistically competent. Animals can be said to do things that they do not intend in exactly the same sense as that which applies in the case of a linguistically competent human. It follows that *this* failure of substitutivity *salve veritate* is not to be explained on the supposition that what the agent is said intend is a quotation of what he or she might be expected to *say*. It is due simply to the fact that agents do not always anticipate, in a

sense of that word which does not imply the ability to put what one anticipates into words, all the consequences of what they *actually* do.

## 6. *Anscombe's Third "Salient Thing about Intention"*

Anscombe's third salient thing, the principle "descriptions under which you intend to do what you do may not come true, as when you make a slip of the tongue or pen" corresponds to Brentano's intentional inexistence and thus to Chisholm's first mark of intentionality. But, despite the talk of "descriptions under which", Anscombe's formulation is closer to Brentano than it is to Chisholm. The affinity with Brentano appears particularly in her initial statement in which she explicitly emphasises the element of pointing towards the intentional object which disappears in Chisholm's talk about a sentence which "uses a substantival expression - a name or a description - in such a way that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies either that there is or that there isn't anything to which the substantival expression truly applies." (Chisholm 1957, p. 170) In Anscombe's example the object towards which the intention is directed and which may or may not "come true" is its realisation.

## 7. *Vagueness - Anscombe's Second "Salient Thing about Intention"*

But it is Anscombe's second "salient thing about intention" which is of special interest to us here. It reads:

"the descriptions under which you intend what you do can be vague, indeterminate. (You mean to put the book down on the table all right, and you do so, but you do not mean to put it down anywhere in particular on the table - though you do put it down somewhere in particular.)" (Anscombe 1965, p. 159)

As in the case of her other two "salient things" it is the discrepancy between the "intentional object", the action intended, and what actually transpires that she emphasises, something very different from Chisholm's second mark of the intentional, the optional falsity of an embedded proposition, which it replaces.

## 8. *Kneale's Intentionality and Intensionality Distinction*

In a symposium entitled 'Intentionality [spelt with a 't' after the second 'n'] and Intensionality' [spelt with an 's' after the second 'n'] the late Bill Kneale tried to restore some clarity to the confusion that had grown up as a consequence of Chisholm's linguistification of Brentano's "intentional inexistence" and his amalgamation of Brentano's concept with Frege's "indirect reference"/Quine's "referential opacity".



Kneale's proposal was that we should use the term "intensional" [spelt with an 's' after the second 'n'] which, as we have seen, was Hamilton's (1860) substitute for the "comprehension" of the Port Royal logicians when talking *de dicto* about anomalous linguistic expressions such as the grammatical objects of psychological verbs, while reserving "intentional" [spelt with a 't' after the second 'n'] for use when talking *de re*, as Brentano does, about a feature of mental phenomena.

A number of philosophers, notably John Searle (1983) and Jerry Fodor (?) have adopted this usage. But the majority, at least within the analytic tradition, have continued to treat intentionality as a linguistic feature while retaining Chisholm's spelling with a 't' after the second 'n'. Consequently, so far from clarifying the issue, the net effect of Bill Kneale's intervention has been to add to the confusion by bringing into the discussion of intentionality a third strand, the tradition that descends *via* Hamilton's intension/extension from the comprehension/extension distinction of the Port Royal logicians.

## 9. *Burnheim and the Intentionality of Physical Dispositions*

As far as I have been able to ascertain, it was in the same year, 1968, when Bill Kneale's Joint Session paper was delivered that John Burnheim presented his paper 'Intentionality and materialism' to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Sydney.

This paper was never published. However, thanks to David Armstrong, I do have a photocopy in my possession. Although there is much else in the paper, the important claim that it makes is that physical dispositions satisfy all "three marks of intentionality given by Anscombe". Burnheim himself illustrates this thesis with some rather complicated scientific examples which show that he interprets Anscombe in a way that is much closer to Chisholm than, in my view, it should be. It can be illustrated much more simply and convincingly in relation to Ryle's (1949) favourite example of a "physical" disposition, the brittleness of a pane of glass. Thus,

- (1) just as "not any true description of what you do describes it as the action you intended"; so not any true description of what happened when the stone struck the window and broke it describes it as a manifestation of its brittleness (for example, the description 'what happened when the stone struck the pane' doesn't).
- (2) Like the intention to do something, the brittleness is vague and indeterminate with respect to the precise form and occasion of its manifestation, whereas the manifestation itself, the breaking, happens in a particular way on a particular occasion.
- (3) Like the intention to do something, the brittleness of the pane need never actually manifest itself in an actual breaking. It may just melt away in a final conflagration or simply never break.

The conclusion I personally draw from this evidence is that Anscombe's "three salient things about intention" apply, in so far as they do, not because they are marks of the mental, but because they are marks of the dispositional, of the relation between a disposition, whether mental or physical, and its manifestations. Burnheim however, is so wedded to the notion that intentionality, whatever it is, is the mark of the mental that he draws the conclusion that what this shows is that the three marks of intentionality proposed by Anscombe, because they do not distinguish mental dispositions from physical ones, are not in fact marks of intentionality at all.

#### 10. *Martin and Pfeifer's 'Intentionality and the Non-Psychological'*

In 1968 when Burnheim read his paper at Sydney, C. B. Martin held a chair in Philosophy in that University and, although he denies this, he must have heard Burnheim's paper. Without that assumption the similarities between the Burnheim paper and the paper entitled 'Intentionality and the non-psychological' which Martin and a younger colleague from Calgary, Karl Pfeifer published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* in 1987 would be an extraordinary coincidence. Nevertheless there are significant differences. For whereas Burnheim confines his discussion to the three marks of intentionality distinguished by Anscombe, Martin and Pfeifer make the much larger claim

"that the most typical characterizations of intentionality . . . all fail to distinguish intentional mental states from non-intentional dispositional physical states." (Martin and Pfeifer 1987, p. 531)

As this statement implies, Martin and Pfeifer assume, as Burnheim does, that the intentional and the mental are coextensive and that consequently what they have shown, if their claim is substantiated, is that none of the "typical characterisations of intentionality" are what they purport to be. In support of their claim they list and give both mental and non-mental examples of five marks of intentionality which they have culled, from the writings of such philosophers as Chisholm (*op.cit.*), Anscombe (*op.cit.*), Lycan (1969) and Searle (*op. cit.*). Of these the first three are copied directly from Chisholm's three marks of intentionality as stated in his 1957 book. The other two are (4) the directedness of an intentional state towards its object and (5) Anscombe's vagueness. Now we have seen that directedness towards an object is very much part both of Brentano's original formulation of intentional inexistence and of Anscombe's initial description of intentionality. It drops out of Chisholm's version of Brentano's principle as a consequence of his linguistification of it. It is reintroduced as a separate principle in its own right by Searle (*op. cit.*) who is the immediate source of its occurrence on Martin and Pfeifer's list.

## 11. *Place's 'Intentionality as the mark of the dispositional'*

Finally I come to my own contribution to this debate, a paper entitled 'Intentionality as the mark of the dispositional', which was published in *Dialectica* in 1996. This paper is a critique of Martin and Pfeifer's paper. It begins by arguing that since 'intentionality', however spelt, is, despite Anscombe's attempt to assimilate it to our ordinary use of the concept of 'intending to do something', a technical term of philosophy. It means whatever the criteria proposed by philosophers make it mean. Consequently, if it is the case, as Burnheim and Martin and Pfeifer claim, that any disposition, whether "physical" or mental satisfies these criteria, it follows that intentionality as defined by those criteria is the mark not, as Brentano thought, of the mental, but of the dispositional.

But *does* that claim hold up? We have already seen, that if the thesis is restricted, as it is by Burnheim, to Anscombe's "three salient things about intention", it seems to hold up very well. But what of Martin and Pfeifer, given particularly that they opt for Chisholm's much more linguistic formulation? I was dissatisfied with the evidence they present in support of their claim that physical dispositions satisfy all the marks of intentionality they list. This was partly because they use different examples to illustrate the application of both mental and physical dispositions to each mark. But it was also because some of the physical dispositions they describe, particularly that used to illustrate the application of referential-opacity to such dispositions, are based on very contrived science-fiction type examples. These may suffice to defeat the claim that the criterion in question fails to *rule out* application to a physical disposition; but they give no support to the thesis I was concerned to maintain, that these marks serve to pick out features that are distinctive of dispositions in general.

I therefore, decided to see what would happen if each mark in the Martin and Pfeifer list were tested against the *same* pair of examples, one a sentence ascribing a mental disposition, where I took the example *Joe wants an apple* or *Joe wants to eat an apple*, the other a sentence ascribing a physical disposition, where I took Ryle's example *The pane of glass is brittle* or *The pane of glass is liable to break*.

## 12. *Referential Opacity as a Problem for the Intentionality of Physical Dispositions*

When this is done, it turns out there is no problem in applying *three* of Martin and Pfeifer's five marks to this example of a "physical" disposition: (i) Chisholm's first mark i.e. Brentano's intentional inexistence, (ii) Searle's (and, but for Chisholm, Brentano's) directedness towards an object and (iii) Anscombe's vagueness. Problems arise only with respect to Chisholm's second and third marks of intentionality, the optional falsity of an embedded proposition and the failure of substitutivity of extensionally equivalent expressions (referential opacity).

In the case of the optional falsity of an embedded proposition the problem is the awkwardness, not to say absurdity, of having to render "liable to break" as "liable for the proposition 'the pane breaks' to be true". But it is worth noting that the same absurdity

arises in relation to the example of a mental disposition where *Joe wants an apple* has to be rendered *Joe wants the statement 'Joe eats an apple' to be true*.

In the referential opacity case the mental disposition example presents no problem. But there is just no way that an example involving a "physical" disposition can be constructed. The example cited earlier based on Anscombe's principle that "not any true description of what you do describe it as the action you intended" in which not any true description of the pane's breaking describes it as a manifestation of its brittleness (for example, the description 'what happened when the stone struck it' doesn't do so) is not a genuine example of the failure of substitutivity in two extensionally equivalent expressions. For while 'the pane broke' and 'what happened when the stone struck the pane' may refer to the same event, they do not refer to *that* event, when they occur as descriptions of the "intentional object" of a disposition. The breaking that is mentioned in speaking of the pane's liability to break is not the same event as that which occurs when it actually does so. It is not *this* event that is the one caused by the pane's being struck by the stone. That this is so is shown above all by the fact that whereas the actual breaking is determinate both with respect to its form and with respect to the occasion on which it occurs, the breaking involved in the pane's liability to break is vague and indeterminate in both these respects. This is quite unlike the referential opacity case where the names *Tully* and *Cicero* still refer to the same individual when they occur inside an opaque context, even though when they do so, no inference from what is believed about an individual when described in one way can be made to what is believed about that individual when described in another way.

Martin and Pfeifer seek to circumvent this difficulty by postulating a case where the expression "the only pink object O at L" refers to the same object as the expression "the only object M of mass f at L". They then suggest that, given that equation, we have a failure of substitutivity *salve veritate* in that

"it does not follow from the truth of

(3a) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only pink object O at location L.

that

(3b) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only object M of mass f at location L."

(Martin and Pfeifer 1987, p. 533)

I am not questioning the claim that this inference does not follow. What I am questioning is the claim that that is due to the kind of failure of substitutivity which Frege describes as "indirect reference" and Quine calls "referential opacity". The point is that when used to characterise the range of possible manifestations of a disposition, however narrowly that range of manifestations is circumscribed, an expression such as "the only pink object O at L" does not refer to the same state of affairs as it does when used to describe the result of an actual manifestation of the disposition. There is no failure of substitutivity

between extensionally equivalent expressions here, for the simple reason that expressions that are extensionally equivalent when used to characterise an actual existing state of affairs, cease to be extensionally equivalent when used to characterise what are necessarily two quite different dispositions.

Does this failure to produce examples of referential opacity in this case physical dispositions give us what the whole tradition from Brentano down to Martin and Pfeifer has been looking for, namely, a mark of intentionality that will reliably distinguish the mental from the non-mental? My answer is that it does and it doesn't.

As is apparent from both Frege's and Quine's initial expositions of the concept, and as is also shown by the phenomenon to which Donald Davidson (*op. cit.*) has drawn attention whereby contexts which are opaque when they occur in ascriptions of mental states to linguistically competent humans become transparent when attributed to creatures that cannot speak, what the failure of substitutivity criterion picks out are phrases and embedded sentences which *quote* what an agent either has said or *would be expected to say*. In other words, when we characterise someone's mental state by ascribing a propositional attitude we are characterising that person's cognitive dispositions using *oratio obliqua* or indirect reported speech to quote what that person would or could say, on the assumption, not always realised in practice, that there will be a consistent and rational relation between what people say and what they otherwise do.

That this way of characterising the cognitive dispositions of human adults is fundamental to our folk psychological explanations of human behaviour is plain. But what is equally clear is that the use of this device to account for the behaviour of linguistic incompetents and, above all, for the psychological foundation of language itself entails, as the behaviourists have consistently maintained, a scientifically unacceptable anthropomorphism and, in the case of language, an unacceptable *petitio principii*.

### 13. *The Four Marks of Dispositional Intentionality*

But if that is the story as far as referential opacity is concerned, what of Martin and Pfeifer's other four marks of intentionality. The answer, I suggest in my paper, is to classify these marks according to Kneale's distinction between intentionality (spelt-with-a-'t'-after the second 'n' or T-intenTionality, as I call it in the paper) which is a property of mental and, as it turns out, other *dispositional states* and intensionality (spelt with an 's' after the second 'n' or S-intenSionality, as I call it) which is a feature of certain linguistic expressions, notably the grammatical objects of psychological verbs. If we do this, despite the fact that Martin and Pfeifer have consistently presented all five marks as features of linguistic expressions and to that extent as marks of S-rather than T-intenTionality, it appears that three of them, Brentano's intentional inexistence, Searle's directedness towards an object and Anscombe's vagueness are more naturally represented as features of dispositional states and thus as marks of T-intenTionality. In this they are joined by another mark of T-intenTionality which I don't mention in the 1996 paper, but which, as I have indicated above, emerges from Anscombe's first "salient thing about intention",

once we drop the idea that this is another way of stating the principle of the non-substitutivity of extensionally equivalent expressions within opaque contexts. Generalising Anscombe's

1. "not any true description of what you do describes it as the action you intended"

so as to cover any case, yields the principle:

1u. Not any true description of an event which manifests a disposition describes it as such.

If we now generalise Anscombe's other two salient things in the same way, from

2. "the descriptions under which you intend what you do can be vague, indeterminate"

we get

2u. The descriptions which characterize the possible manifestations of a disposition are vague, indeterminate, in a way any actual manifestation is not.

and from

3. "descriptions under which you intend to do what you do may not come true"

we get

3u. Descriptions which characterize the possible manifestations of a disposition may not apply to any actual event.

Although, as we have seen, Searle's principle of directedness is already present in Anscombe's general account of intentionality, it is not made explicit in any of her "three salient things about intention". There is consequently some point in formulating Searle's principle in the same format so as to yield a fourth principle of dispositional T-intentionality:

4u. Descriptions which characterize a disposition do so in terms of the range of possible manifestations towards the actualization of which the disposition is directed.

Between them, these four principles, (1) manifestations need not be so described, (2) disposition-descriptions are vague, (3) dispositions need never be manifested and (4) dispositions are directed towards a range of possible futures, provide as good a characterisation of the nature of a disposition as one could wish for. Unlike Chisholm's

three marks of intentionality and in so far as they rely on Chisholm's three, Martin and Pfeifer's five marks, they are extensionally and, I would argue, intensionally equivalent.

That leaves us with just one proposed mark of intentionality unaccounted for, Chisholm's and Martin and Pfeifer's second mark, the optional falsity of an embedded proposition which is the grammatical object of a transitive verb. Like the principle of referential opacity, this can only be interpreted as a linguistic feature and hence as a mark of S-intensionality. But since, as we have seen, it excludes sentences containing verbs of cognitive achievement and can only be adapted to include sentences in which the grammatical object is a phrase or an interrogative rather than a declarative sentence by a lot of unnatural rewriting, and since the only cases it covers that are not covered by the referential opacity principle, are Davidson's cases of transparency within propositional attitudes ascribed to linguistic incompetents, nothing is lost by discarding it altogether. If we do that, we arrive at the conclusion that S-intensionality *alias* indirect reference *alias* referential opacity is the mark of a quotation, and that T-intentionality is the mark of a disposition.

But if T-intentionality is the mark of a disposition and vagueness is a mark of T-intentionality, we are led, I suggest, to the conclusion that the vagueness we encounter in language is simply a reflection of the fact that the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence is a dispositional property of that particular linguistic unit, given the conventions of the language of which it forms part.

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