

BELIEF AND INTENTIONALITY

Belief is widely held in contemporary analytic philosophy to be involuntary. It is claimed that we have no real control over our beliefs as we cannot decide to believe something beforehand and start believing it afterwards. When deciding to believe the sky is blue, some argue, we must already have the content of that belief in mind, which refutes the initial intention of deciding to come into the belief at some later stage. This conception, as this author argues, is mistaken, for it deprives humans of the ability for epistemic agency, contradicting the empirically evident human ability to act as innovative agents in their lifeworld. This article outlines in brief format an argument supporting the ability to engage actively in belief formation.

Franz Brentano re-introduced the term ‘intentionality’ to bear on issues of mental phenomena. It was a technical term used by Scholastic philosophers in the Middle Ages to refer to what is before the mind in thought. It is not to be confused with the word ‘intention’ commonly used in English to refer to somebody’s planned action. Intentionality in Brentano’s sense is the ‘aboutness’ or the directedness of mental states. When hearing a sound, for example, the mental state of ‘hearing’ is directed toward a presentation of that sound to the mind. Brentano argued that intentionality is a distinct marker of the mental, that ‘mental’ is indeed co-extensive with intentionality. He also advanced the thesis that intentionality is necessarily phenomenal; all intentional states involve a consciousness of the “what it is like to be in that state” type – a prevalent characterisation of phenomenal consciousness, the latter which resists physicalist reduction.

Roderick Chisholm introduced Brentano’s work into the Anglophone sphere of philosophy in the 1950’s. Unfortunately, the phenomenal characterisation of intentionality was lost in work on intentionality in the following decades [2]. Consequently, it has become standard practice to distinguish between two types of intentionality: phenomenal intentionality, pertaining to sense experience and states such as pain, pleasure, etc., and cognitive intentionality, reserved for propositional attitudes such as beliefs, hopes, and wishes. The intentionality of propositional attitudes is assumed to be fully exhausted by their propositional content, i.e., what they are about. For example, the belief “the president is in Paris” is

intentional solely by virtue of the content of the belief – the proposition “the president is in Paris” [3].

In recent years, renewed interest in a central idea of Brentano’s work, that phenomenal intentionality is the only kind of intentionality there is, has begun to find favour with some contemporary philosophers [1]. However, this author contends that lumping all mental states together as being phenomenally intentional lies at the heart of the problematic notion that belief is involuntary. It can be explained as follows: if all mental states are phenomenally intentional, then so are propositional attitudes, implying there is a specific sense of “what it is like” to have a certain belief. There is a perhaps implicit assumption that if all intentionality is phenomenal, all features of paradigmatic phenomenal states must be shared by all other types of intentional mental states. An important feature of perceptual mental states is that, while awake and conscious, such states occur spontaneously in the mind. Paradigmatic perceptual mental states such as the awareness of colours or patches of colour are phenomenal states whose occurrence in the mind we have no control over. They are also intentional in Brentano’s sense by virtue of the subject directing mental awareness toward them. But these mental phenomena and their concomitant intentionality do not constitute beliefs. Only by conflating belief states with such phenomenal mental states does the notion arise that beliefs are ipso facto involuntary. Not many contemporary philosophers are convinced that all intentionality is phenomenal. However, the widespread notion that belief is involuntary indicates that even among those who are not, many succumb, perhaps unintentionally, to transposing the involuntariness of phenomenal perceptual states onto propositional belief states.

This author argues that there is an intermediate stage between the occurrence of a phenomenal state and the appearance of a belief state. This intermediate phase constitutes active, voluntarily controlled belief formation on the part of the subject. The key premise of the argument trades on the notion of intentionality in the everyday sense of the word as the commitment someone may have to follow a certain planned course of action, in relation to Brentano’s sense of intentionality. A typographical distinction will be made here between intentionality in the everyday sense and INTENTIONALITY in Brentano’s sense. The key premise of the argument holds that, in the case of belief, INTENTIONALITY is determined exclusively by intentionality. Some examples will help to explain. Looking out the window on

a summer's day, I have a multitude of sense impressions; the blue colour of the sky, the green leaves of trees, the sounds of birds chirping, etc. It is not uncommon for philosophers to say things such as that, under these circumstances, the belief that the sky is blue "pops into my head". But there must certainly be more to it than that. One can perform a small experiment and observe when, without intentionally thinking of anything and just mentally 'observing' the stream of consciousness in the mind, whether any fragment of that stream actually appears in the form of a linguistically well-formed phrase such as, for example, "I believe that the desk is brown", or "the desk is brown", for if it does, it means that one is intentionally thinking a thought that is about the desk and its colour. What can be concluded from this simple example? Crucially, that when forming a belief, one selects from one's field of perceptual awareness, which might contain all sorts of objects such as books, a lamp, a wall, pictures, along with a multitude of colours and shapes, the desk, and its colour. It is certainly a random selection, but the important point is that it is a selection nevertheless. One has consciously and intentionally chosen to select the desk and its colour, as well as to join the colour to the desk as a property thereof. All of this amounts to intentional mental effort, with the intentionality embodied by one's decision what to select in terms of objects, properties, and relationships.

The question may be asked, what is the intention behind forming the belief "the desk is brown" if one has no intention of employing this belief in any further course of action? This issue is important in illustrating that intentionality in belief formation is not constituted by any physical action that may result. The intentional aspect is fully defined by the belief, the selection of its components, and its deliberately planned syntactical structure. The intention behind forming the belief "the desk is brown" *is* forming a belief about the desk, its colour, and the relationship between the two items. This intention subsequently gives rise to a belief of which the INTENTION, i.e. what the belief is about, is a brown desk.

Whether the INTENTIONALITY of belief is phenomenal is a different question. In one sense, a belief such as "the desk is brown" is a judgement in the traditional conception of judgment as predication of a property [4], and judgments form one of the three basic classes of phenomenally intentional mental states in Brentano's philosophy. Brentano uses judgement in a different sense [4], however, let us assume for the purpose of this argument that all beliefs are judgments in Brentano's sense. All beliefs would then be phenomenally intentional. It was

claimed earlier that if all mental states are phenomenally intentional, then belief tends to be viewed as involuntary. Will this not contradict the thesis that belief formation involves intentional mental action? Recall that the notion that belief is involuntary rests upon conflating sense phenomenal states with belief states and ascribing all features of sense phenomena to all intentional mental states. By removing this conflation, the apparent contradiction disappears, however, arguing independently against the conception that phenomenal states are identical with phenomenal beliefs will be a prerequisite.

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A. Yefremova, R Velichko, Yu. Honcharova

IMPACT OF ANXIOUS-AMBIVALENT ATTACHMENT TYPE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN ADOLESCENTS

Bowlby-Ainsworth Attachment theory has gained much scientific and social interest in the last few decades, just as much as how different attachment types defined by this theory affect psychological well-being. While directly the theory does not imply that insecure attachment styles impair psychological well-being, a number of studies confirm that neglecting children's emotional needs has harmful consequences in adolescence. The most damaging type in classical (ABC) classification is anxious-ambivalent.

An ambivalent attachment style involves a combination of the desire for emotional closeness with an attachment figure and its avoidance. Usually, it results from parents satisfying children's needs with neglect of such [2].

Separation from parents and transition to relationship with peers as a dominant source of emotional closeness form a sensitive critical period in adolescents' lives.