

ENDEAVOR AND ITS OBJECTS*

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Abstract: In this paper I suppose that the several forms of intending are related to endeavor – or undertaking – in the same way that, according to Aristotle, the several senses of truth are linked to the truth of judgment. I argue that the basic form of endeavor is the one in which the agent tries to bring about that he himself have a certain property. I show that there is a distinction between “The doctor treats the doctor” and “The doctor treats himself”; the former can be explained in terms of the latter, but the latter in some cases cannot be explained in terms of the former. I show that the other kinds of endeavor can be reduced to the basic one.

Key-words: Endeavor. Belief. Intentionality.

ESFORÇO E SEUS OBJETOS

Resumo: Supõe-se, no artigo, que as várias formas de intencionar estão ligadas a esforçar-se – ou empreender – à maneira como, segundo Aristóteles, os vários sentidos de verdade estão ligados à verdade do juízo. Argumenta-se que a forma básica de esforço é aquela em que o agente tenta fazer com que ele próprio tenha certa propriedade. Mostra-se que há uma distinção entre “O médico trata o médico” e “O médico trata a si mesmo”; a primeira pode ser explicada em termos da última, mas essa pode não ser explicada em termos da primeira. Mostra-se que os outros tipos de esforço podem ser reduzidos a esse tipo básico.

Palavras-chave: Esforço. Crença. Intencionalidade.

INTRODUCTION

I assume that the various forms of intending are related to *endeavor* – or undertaking – much as, according to Aristotle, the various senses of truth are related to the truth of belief or judgment. I have attempted to

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distinguish and relate these various senses in my book, *Person and Object*¹. In the present paper I shall restrict myself to the *intentional objects* of endeavor.

There may seem to be three irreducibly different types of such object. First, the endeavor may be *de dicto*, in which case the object is a state of affairs or proposition: the agent undertakes to bring about a certain state of affairs (or to make true a certain proposition). Secondly, the endeavor may be *de re*, in which case the object may be nonpropositional: the agent undertakes to bring it about, with respect to a certain thing, that thing to have a certain property. And, thirdly, it may be that, in endeavoring, the agent bears a rather special relation to himself, apparently not covered by the *de re* situation: he endeavors that *he*, *himself* have a certain property. It is one thing for the next intruder to set a trap for the next intruder; it is another thing for the next intruder to set a trap for *himself*. If he doesn't realize that he is *himself* the next intruder, then he may do the former without doing the latter.

I will suggest here that the basic sense of endeavor is this third sense and that the other two senses may be thought of as derivative.

Endeavor is similar in these respects to other intentional attitudes: for example, believing, knowing, fearing, hoping, desiring.

Let us begin by considering the objects of believing.

1. RETHINKING INTENTIONAL ATTITUDES

I had suggested, in *Person and Object*, that all belief is *de dicto* belief and is thus a matter of accepting propositions (as in "The proposition that all men are mortal is accepted by him"). I attempted to show that *de re* belief (as in "Mary is believed by John to be walking") is also just a matter of accepting propositions. I had presupposed that similar considerations hold of endeavor.

The theory of believing was essentially the following:

¹ Chisholm (1976).

If I have a belief (*de re*) with respect to you, then – according to the theory – I accept (*de dicto*) a proposition that *implies something* with respect to you. Hence we should say what it is for a proposition to imply something with respect to you. A proposition may be said to *imply* a property provided the proposition is necessarily such that if it is true then something has that property. Now some of your properties are identifying properties – they are such that only one thing can have them at a time; and so, if a proposition implies that compound property which is the conjunction of one of your identifying properties with some other property, then the proposition may be said to imply, *with respect to you*, that you have that other property. This enables us to say that, if I accept (*de dicto*) such a proposition, then I believe, with respect to you, that you have the property in question. Suppose, for example, you were the tallest man and I accepted a proposition which implied the conjunction of the property of being the tallest man and, the property of being a spy (e.g., the proposition that the tallest man is a spy); then I could be said to believe with respect to you that you are a spy.

But how is this to be applied to beliefs about oneself? If I believe with respect to *me*, that I am standing, then, according to the theory, I accept a proposition that implies the conjunction of one of *my* identifying properties with the property of standing. But *what* identifying property of me is thus implied every time I express myself using the first person? The best answer one can offer is to say that the property is something like *being identical with me*. This property – if there *is* such a property – would be one that I have necessarily and that nothing else could possibly have. Hence I had argued that the word “I”, in the vocabulary of each person who uses it, has for its reference that person himself and has for its sense that person’s haecceity or individual essence. The difference between my “I”-propositions and yours was said to lie in the fact that mine imply my individual essence and not yours and that yours imply your individual essence and not mine.

But it seems doubtful that I can *ever* be said thus to thus grasp my own individual essence or haecceity. If I were able to grasp it, shouldn't I also be able to single out its various marks? Perhaps I can single out *some* of the marks of my individual essence – if I have one. If *being identical with me* is my individual essence and *being identical with you* is yours, then, presumably, each analyzes into personhood and something else as well – one something else in my case and another in yours. But I haven't the faintest idea what this something else might be. The property, if there is one, which is intended by the expression “being identical with me” would seem to be extraordinarily empty. How, then, are we to interpret those of our beliefs that are thus directed upon ourselves?

Let us consider what it is that we express by means of the “he, himself” locution – the locution (A) “There exists an x such that x believes *himself* to be wise”, as contrasted with (B) “There exists an x such that x believes x to be wise”. The second locution could be true and the first false in the following situation. I look in the mirror, or look at my hand, and believe with respect to the person that I see that he is wise; I am then an x such that x believes x to be wise. But it may yet be at the same time that I do not believe *myself* to be wise, for I may have a very poor opinion of myself and not realize that *I* am the person I am looking at. What does locution (A) – the “he, himself” locution – tell us that (B) does not?

Let us use the term “emphatic reflexive” for the “he himself” locution such as “There exists an x such that x believes himself to be wise”, and let us use “nonemphatic reflexive” for those locutions such as “There exists an x such that x believes x to be wise” that do not imply the “he himself”, or emphatic, reflexive.

Perhaps it will be agreed that the distinction between the two types of reflexive is one that holds only in intentional or psychological contexts. Now there are two ways of interpreting the significance of this distinction. In either case, we ask “Why is it that the nonemphatic reflexive does not imply the corresponding emphatic reflexive?” But in

the one case, we would trace the failure of implication to certain peculiarities of the emphatic reflexive. We would try to exhibit the emphatic reflexive as a special case of the nonemphatic reflexive. But in the other case, we would proceed in the opposite direction: we would try to exhibit the nonemphatic reflexive as a special case of the emphatic reflexive. If we take the second approach, we will deny that the emphatic reflexive presents us with any unique logical structure. We will say that the failure of implication is due, rather, to certain familiar facts about intentionality – as exhibited in the *nonemphatic* reflexive.

Let us now consider the possibility that, in the case of nonpsychological reflexives, *all* reflexives are emphatic. In the case of motors, say, it will not matter whether we say “There is an x such that x refuels x ” or “There is an x such that x refuels itself”; there is no nonemphatic reflexive here.

Indeed, we have here a kind of criterion of the psychological. If we can say “When the doctor treats the doctor, he thereby treats himself”, then we are taking the verb “to treat” in a sense that is nonpsychological or nonintentional. “To treat” is here to be taken, wholly physicalistically, say as a matter of administering medicines and producing effects upon the patient. But if we can say, “The doctor may treat the doctor without thereby treating *himself*”, then we are taking the verb “to treat” in a psychological or intentional sense. Treating, so interpreted, involves having certain beliefs and intentions that are directed upon the patient. If the doctor then treats the doctor and doesn’t treat himself, then he is not only administering medicines and producing effects, but he also bears a certain intentional relation to himself. If we can specify what this relation is, then we may conclude that something psychological or intentional is involved when the nonemphatic reflexive holds and the emphatic reflexive fails.

And so, instead of trying to understand the he, himself locution as a special case of the ordinary *de re* locution, we shall try to understand the ordinary *de re* locution as a special case of the he, himself locution.

We must, therefore, revise our conception of believing and of other so called propositional attitudes. Instead of thinking of these attitudes as involving, in the first instance, a relation between a person and a *proposition*, we think of them as involving a relation between a person and a *property* – a property that the person attributes to himself. We presuppose that the person has the ability to conceive properties and to attribute them to himself. If I believe myself to be wise, then I directly attribute the property of wisdom to myself. If I believe *you* to be wise, then there is a certain *other* property which is such that, in directly attributing *that* property to myself, I *indirectly* attribute to you the property of being wise. Suppose, for example, that you are the only person I am talking with. And suppose I (directly) attribute to myself the following property – that of talking with exactly one person and with a person who is wise. Then I indirectly attribute to you the property of being wise. The property I attribute to myself singles you out as the thing to which I bear a certain relation; by directly attributing the one property to me, I indirectly attribute the other property to you.

Thus, in analyzing believing, we begin with the undefined locution. “ x directly attributes to y the property of being F ”. And we assume that direct attribution is necessarily such that, for every x and y , if x directly attributes a certain property to y , then x is identical with y . Given this undefined locution, we may now define the locution “ x indirectly attributes to y the property of being F ” as follows: “There is a property H and a relation R of the following sort: (i) x directly attributes H to x ; (ii) x bears R to y and only to y ; and (iii) H entails the property of bearing R to just one thing and to a thing that is F ”.

De dicto believing – the acceptance of propositions – may be viewed as one type of indirect attribution. If the proposition that all men are mortal is accepted by me, then either I attribute to something the property of being such that all men are mortal, or I indirectly attribute to the proposition that all men are mortal the property of being true. (In the latter case, I will single out the proposition as the sole thing I am

conceiving in a certain way. The proposition that all men are mortal may be the sole thing pertaining to mortality that I am now conceiving.) It may be assumed that, whenever I do attribute a property to myself, then I *also* accept a certain proposition. Thus if I attribute wisdom to myself, I will also accept the proposition that someone is wise².

I suggest now that we view endeavor analogously.

2. THE GENERAL APPROACH TO ENDEAVOR

Endeavor must be construed as a relation between an agent and *some* other thing; this much is essential to *any* theory of endeavor. What kind of thing, then? There are various possibilities: sentences, propositions, properties, individual things. The simplest conception, I suggest, is one that construes endeavor as a relation involving an agent and a property – a property which he may be said to endeavor to have. Then the various senses of endeavor may be understood by reference to this simple conception.

Our basic locution may be spelled out as: “The property of being *F* is such that *x* directly endeavors to have it”. The letter “*F*” in this formula is schematic and may be replaced by any predicative expression; for simplicity we omit reference to a particular time.

The “he himself” locution may now be introduced as an abbreviation of our undefined locution.

D^1 *x* endeavors to bring it about that he himself is $F = Df$. The property of being *F* is such that *x* directly endeavors to have it.

² I have developed this view in detail, especially in application to believing in *The First Person: An Essay on Reference and Intentionality* (Chisholm 1980). A similar approach to so-called propositional attitudes is taken by David Lewis, in “Attitudes De Dicto and De Re” (Lewis 1979).

“How, then, does one succeed in making oneself the object of his direct endeavor?” It is important to note that this strange question has its analogue in application to *any* adequate conception of endeavor. For any such conception will imply that *some* thing or other is the object of any endeavor. And so one can always ask, with respect to such an object: “And how, then, does one succeed in making *that* thing the object of his endeavor?” The answer can only be: “One just does”. The answer may seem unsatisfactory. But for *any* theory of endeavor there is a point at which the question, “And how does one make *that* the object of one’s endeavor?”, can be answered only in this way.

3. INDIRECT ENDEAVOR

I shall now attempt to characterize what may be called *indirect endeavor*, in contrast to what I have just called *direct endeavor*. If I have a design upon you, then there is a property that I indirectly endeavor to cause you to have. And if I have a design upon me, which is not a matter of direct endeavor and thus cannot be put in the locution of the indirect reflexive, then I indirectly endeavor to cause me to have a certain property. Fearing burglars, I may set a trap for the next person who tries to open a certain window – not realizing that I will be that person. In such a case, I am an x such that x endeavors to capture x , but I am not an x such that x endeavors to capture himself. Here, then, we have an instance of the situation referred to at the outset: “The next intruder sets a trap for the next intruder but does not set a trap for himself”.

Let us, then, characterize the more general *de re* concept as endeavor which is either direct or indirect.

D^2 The property of being F is such that x indirectly endeavors to cause y to have it = Df . There is a property H and a relation R such that (a) x directly endeavors to have H ; (b) x bears R to y and only to y and (c) H is necessarily such that whatever is going to have it is such that the thing it now bears R to is going to be F .

To make the definition free from certain trivial counter-examples, we could make use of the concept of believing – saying that x believes that, if he becomes H , then the thing he now bears R to will be F .

Given D^1 , the expression in clause (a) of D^2 “ x directly endeavors to have it” – may be replaced by “ x endeavors to bring it about that he himself has it”.

We may now characterize *de re* intending as being either direct or indirect endeavor:

D^3 x intends, with respect to y , that it have the property of being $F = Df$. The property of being F is such that either (a) x is identical with y and x directly endeavors to cause y to have it or (b) x indirectly endeavors to cause y to have it.

“The tallest man intends to kill himself” now becomes: “There is an x such that x is identical with the tallest man, and the property of being a y such that y kills y is such that x directly endeavors to cause x to have it”. In this case, the tallest man’s death is the object of his *direct* endeavor.

“The tallest man intends to kill the tallest man” becomes: “There is an x such that x is identical with the tallest man, and the property of killing the tallest man is such that x intends, with respect to y , that it have it”. In this case, the tallest man’s death is the object of his *indirect* endeavor. If he does not realize that he, himself, is the tallest man, then his own death will not be the object of his *direct* endeavor.

De dicto endeavor could now be defined as follows:

D^4 p is the object of x ’s endeavor = *Df*. Either (a) the property of bringing about p is such that x endeavors to have it or (b) x intends, with respect to p , that it have the property of being true.

4. OTHER INTENTIONAL ATTITUDES

Other so-called propositional attitudes may be interpreted similarly. Their primary sense involves a relation between the subject and a certain property; their propositional senses may then be introduced as being derivative. Thus, if the primary sense of believing is attributing a property to oneself, then the primary sense of desiring is desiring a property in oneself. To be sure, “desiring a property in oneself” sounds awkward in English. But this is the fault only of English. There is no problem or unclarity either in “He believes himself to be F ” or in “He desires himself to be F ”. Of course, we can leave out the “himself” in the case of desire. And so, too, for undertaking: “He endeavors to cause himself to be F ” can be put as “He undertakes being F ”.

Consider now the concept we express by means of the locution, “He is pleased that so-and-so”. If I am pleased that I have the opportunity to write, I am pleased with being such that I am able to write. This means that there is a certain property – being able to write – such that I take direct pleasure in having that property. “He is pleased to be F ”, when taken in this sense, tells us the property of being F is such that he takes direct pleasure in having it.

My pleasure, like my beliefs and endeavors, may also be directed upon things other than myself. Thus you can be the indirect object of my pleasure. If, for example, I am pleased that you have recovered, then I take direct pleasure in having a property P of the following sort: P is necessarily such that, for a certain relation R , for every x , x has P if and only if x bears R to just one thing and to a thing that has just recovered.

“If I am pleased that my neighbor has recovered from his illness, is the object of my pleasure simply the fact that I am such that I have a neighbor who has recovered? Surely not. The object of my pleasure is *his* having recovered.” We must observe the distinction between direct and indirect pleasure. The object of my *direct* pleasure, in this case, is *my* having a neighbor who has recovered. But saying this is consistent with

saying that my neighbor is such that *his* having recovered is the object of my *indirect* pleasure.

We may also treat commanding, requesting, recommending and the like in the way in which we have treated endeavor and belief.

APPENDIX: THE OBJECTS OF CONSIDERATION

What we have said about attribution and endeavor may be extended to the other intentional attitudes and, indeed, to thought itself. Let us consider the latter briefly.

The expression “entertaining” is sometimes taken to refer to the generic sense of thinking. Entertainment is then recognized as being an intentional attitude taking the same *objects* as believing, but not involving the doxastic commitment that is essential, to believing. H. H. Price has described it this way: “The entertaining of propositions is the most familiar of all intellectual phenomena. It enters into every form of thinking and into many of our conative and emotional attitudes as well. Indeed, one might be inclined to say that it is the basic intellectual phenomenon; so fundamental that it admits of no explanation or analysis, but on the contrary all other forms of thinking have to be explained in terms of it”³. Price here assumes that believing is essentially propositional.

But if the primary form of believing is the direct attribution of a property to oneself, then the primary form of “entertainment” is analogous. It is that phenomenon which is *considering* oneself as having a certain property – or, alternatively put, thinking of oneself as having a certain property. If I am trying to make a decision as to which direction to traveling, I consider myself as traveling in one direction and then consider myself as traveling in another. I will be the *object* of such considering and the property I consider myself as having will be the *content*.

³ Price (1969, p. 192).

The basic locution for considering would be: “ x directly considers y as having the property of being F ”. And, as before, we would stipulate that necessarily, for every x and y , if x considers y as having a certain property, then x is identical with y .

What is it, then, for me to make *you* the object of my considering for me to consider or think of you as having a certain property? Here, too, we may appeal to those relations which are such that I can identify you as being the one to whom I stand in those relations. If I think of myself as being such that the one I bear those relations to is F , then I can be said to think of you as having the property of being F . But there are special problems in the case of considering.

These may be illustrated by two further facts: First, even though I may know that I bear the relations in question only to you, I can also think of some *other* person as being the one to whom I bear those relations (while talking with you I could think of myself as talking with someone else instead). Or I could think of you as *not* being such that you are the one to whom I stand in those relations (I could be talking just with you and yet contemplate your being such that I am not talking with you). Suppose, now, that you are the one I bear a certain relation R to and that Jones is the one I bear a certain relation S to. And suppose, further, that I think of myself as being such that the one I bear R to is the same as the one I bear S to. One may ask whether, in such a case, I think of you as being the one I bear S to, or whether I think of Jones as being the one I bear R to. (It may not be helpful to say “I think of you as being the same person as Jones”.) Perhaps the following will suggest how such cases are to be treated: If the property I directly consider myself as having is “epistemically closer” to you than it is to Jones, then the indirect object of my supposition is you and not Jones. (The requisite sense of this use of “epistemically closer” may be suggested by the following. Suppose that a property I attribute to myself implies a number of logically independent identifying relations I bear just to you and also a number of such relations I bear just to Jones, and suppose I *know* that I have that

property. If the number of independent identifying relations that thus point to you is greater than the number of those that point to Jones, then the property is *epistemically closer* to you than it is to Jones.)

These considerations also have their analogues in the case of *wishing*.

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