

## Self-Location and Prospective Control

The conjunction of the *simple view of belief* (as a relation between a subject and a proposition) and the *simple view of propositions* (as individuated by their truth-conditions) is traditionally thought to face the problem of *self-locating belief*, i.e. that it fails to explain famous cases in which subjects believe and desire the same propositions but are not disposed to act similarly (Perry 1993). One such case is that of identical twins, Lingens and Schlingens, who share all the same beliefs and desires. Suddenly a bear attacks Lingens. Both twins believe Lingens is being attacked. Both desire to save Lingens. And yet Lingens might curl up in a ball, while Schlingens might run for help.

Popular responses to the problem involve rejecting the simple view of belief by introducing a new term into the belief relation, or rejecting the simple view of propositions by adopting a more fine-grained view of content. I reject a shared assumption motivating these responses, i.e. that once one has established that subjects who self-locate differently share the same beliefs and desires, one has exhausted the list of their potentially relevant attitudes. I offer a novel alternative view in which differences in self-location are traced back to differences in another attitude that is neither desire nor belief. Self-locating “belief” is actually, I claim, a psychologically more complicated phenomenon than has usually been supposed. It combines belief and another attitude, which therefore needs to be added to the basic list. This novel *attitudinal approach* has at least two advantages: not only does it allow us to keep the independently attractive simple views of belief and propositions, but also requires only an addition to standard propositional attitude psychology that can be independently motivated.

My argument proceeds in three parts.

In **part I**, I present the background view of the attitudes I'm assuming, the *pragmatic* theory. Two important aspects of the theory for my purposes are the following: first, because the attitudes are mutually dependent, agents disposed to act differently might be characterized as having, e.g. the same beliefs, so long as their other attitudes diverge in a way that explains these differences; second, it is *moderately instrumentalist*, and allows for the possibility of giving more or less complex descriptions of the mental depending on the explanatory task at hand.

In **part II**, I present in detail the new attitude my view of self-location involves. I call it *prospective control* – roughly, the attitude we have towards the possibilities which feel within our power to bring about. After anticipating and addressing the objection that the contents of such an attitude cannot be simple, I give some arguments, independent of puzzles about self-location, for taking this attitude into account.

First, I argue it has a distinctive phenomenology. Through a series of examples, I suggest there is an important difference between how it feels to envisage a possibility as one you can opt to actualize, and entertaining it as either simply doxastically open or desirable. Though it satisfies the criteria for being an attitude, prospective control can also be usefully counted among many *agentive feelings* which have recently received attention (Bayne 2008).

Second, I argue prospective control is hard to reduce to pre-existing attitudes. I provide a counter-example to the objection that S prospectively controls p iff S believes that S herself can q. I then argue *a fortiori* that, in any case, positing prospective control is at least as legitimate as positing such uncontroversial attitudes as desire, intention, or perception: a

strict criterion for individuating attitudes (the impossibility of paraphrasing them in terms of others) is equally hard to satisfy in each case.

Third, I argue prospective control plays a distinctive role in the explanation of action. I put forward cases involving agents responding efficiently to possibilities their environments afford. Such cases suggest one might act on one's controls, either in the absence of, or in opposition to, relevant beliefs or desires.

In **part III**, I show how prospective control helps solve the puzzle of self-location.

I propose cases of self-locating belief are explained by an interaction between prospective control and belief. A basic idea of my view is that the difference in the behavioral dispositions of subjects with identical beliefs and desires is due to a difference in what courses of action they feel to be practically available to them, given their respective situations in the world. For example, Lingens controls the simple proposition that Lingens minimize the harm done to Lingens by curling into a ball, while Schlingens controls the proposition that Schlingens minimize the harm done to Lingens by running for help. In general, to take yourself to be in a certain situation in the world just is, I argue, to feel certain possibilities to be within your practical reach and not others.

I defend this view against an important objection: whereas on competing views it is easy to tell from the content of a subject's belief or from the nature of her belief state precisely which individual she thinks she is, it might seem impossible to read self-locating information off of the set of propositions a subject prospectively controls. Many propositions in that set will exclusively be about individuals who are not the subject, but individuals she senses herself to have some indirect influence over. This threatens my claim that combining what a subject controls and what she believes is enough to determine how she self-locates.

I answer this objection by introducing the notion of what a subject *basically* prospectively controls: roughly, some possibility a subject feels she can bring about without having to bring about some other possibility first. I then outline a procedure making it possible to read off with some precision the self-locating information in a subject's possession based on what she *basically* prospectively controls. I show my theory can therefore deal with the famous cases in the literature: not only the bear attack-case, but also the amnesiac (Perry 1993), and Lewis' two gods (Lewis 1979).

Bayne (2008) 'The Phenomenology of Agency' *Philosophy Compass* 3

Lewis (1979). 'Attitudes De Dicto and De Se' *The Philosophical Review* 88

Perry, J. (1993) *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and Other Essays* CSLI