

**ANTIREALISM
AND THE
SELF-AScription OF ATTITUDES**

The fundamental claim of the semantic antirealism inherited from Dummett is that if a statement is true, it must be possible, at least in principle, to find out that it is true by means suited to the area of discourse s belongs to.

The case of self-ascription of attitudes such as beliefs and desires provides an interesting case for the antirealist. Two questions turn out to be crucial for the antirealist construal of statements of the form “I ϕ [that] p ”, where ϕ ranges over propositional attitude verbs and p provides the content of whatever is ϕ d by the self-ascriber. We want to know: (i) how warrants conferring truth on instances of “I ϕ [that] p ” should be construed, and (ii) whether they should be available only in principle or *hic et nunc* given what we know now, i.e. given our actual cognitive limitations.

Suppose in particular that the putative bearer of a self-ascribed attitude is the only individual who may retrieve such warrants (there’s a wealth of psychologically relevant cases where this *must* indeed be the case). Two things may happen with respect to infra-personal introspection. Either I retrieve some warrant immediately or I have some inferential work to do — logical or otherwise.

In the first case, I may judge my warrant to be immediate either because (i) the *counting* of the steps that lead to its retrieval comes to a halt at step 1 (i.e. at the very step at which the warrant is retrieved, which is the first,

hence the immediacy), or (ii) because the *experiencing* of the warrant (or perhaps the very event or fact of its obtaining) is immediate, or both.

In the second kind of case, I may check that I ϕ [that] p if and only if I've previously checked that I ψ [that] q and so on, so that the sets of ϕ s and p s might turn out to be quite large.

In the indirect case, a surveyability constraint should be imposed so that:

Surveyability constraint

I check whether I ϕ [that] p so that my checking *doesn't* tolerate marginal increases in length and complexity beyond a certain level L .

Notice that we do not need to derive the constraint from some principled strict finitist perspective (for which we should in turn find an argument). Although we should be able to write down whatever expressions refer to the elements (i.e. to the warrants) as they form a sequence, and although there must be a bijection $f: S \{1, \dots, n\}$ from the set W of these warrants to some subset of the set \mathbf{N} of natural numbers so that n is W 's cardinality, we still need more. It is clear that n must be *small enough for the ascriber's cognitive capacities*.

Now, in either case, immediate or mediate, the occurrence of the attitude and the awareness of the occurrence have been construed as necessary and sufficient conditions for the obtaining of a warrant for some instance of "I ϕ [that] p " (or at least of "I ϕ [that] p at t ").

This, it seems to me, is the kind of view defended by Peacocke and Pryor (see *Pryor 2005* and *Peacocke 2008*), albeit in quite different ways and with quite distinct agendas in mind. The leading idea is that if I introspect and

find out that some attitude is part of my mental life or list of attitudes, that's all the justification I need.

So we're clearly in a case of

Indifference to the referents of 'that' clauses feature

Either I directly check whether I ϕ [that] p without checking whether p , or if I ever have to check whether I ψ [that] q on the way, I check that without checking whether q , and so on...

The question I want to consider now is whether we may defend a construal of self-ascriptions which (i) takes into account the informal surveyability constraint and (ii) isn't indifferent to the referents of 'that' clauses.

I shall take a look at two recent views about justification and argue that they go against such a construal: Peacocke's and Pryor's.

Peacocke

Peacocke grounds his claim on the *Reference rule for "I"* which stipulates that "I" refers to a thinker and his thoughts. The argument is that if I am aware that I entertain the thought that p , the very application of the reference rule provides the adequate warrant for the corresponding self-ascription. According to Peacocke, then, it takes the identity judgment " $I =_{id}$ the thinker of 'I ϕ [that] p '" to go from awareness or consciousness to warranted self-ascription.

Peacocke's view *could* be true to (i), but it isn't true to (ii).

- *Logical point.* The self-ascription is logically immune to error through misidentification if and only if the reference rule is both known a priori and necessarily true. If that is the case, we can't explain why I may ϕ [that] p and yet reject the corresponding self-ascription.

- *Phenomenological point.* The awareness or consciousness of a given mental state, i.e. of oneself being in a particular mental state, is *already* an awareness or consciousness of oneself enjoying that state, so that such states can't be, *pace* Peacocke, subjectless or representationally independent. We experience *ourselves* as ϕ ying [that] p . We don't experience ourselves as being presented with external autonomous states *not* representing the subject in whose mind they occur.

Pryor

Pryor argues that the endorsement of the *Premise principle* — only mental states that assertively represent propositions may justify a belief that p (expressed by s), and these propositions are those which could be used as premises in an argument whose conclusion is that p (expressed by s) — is neutral with respect to the idea that *introspective or private experiences justify immediately*.

Pryor's view *could* be true to (i), but it isn't true to (ii). Suppose we're not required to be in any particular representational state in order to access or retrieve warrants for self-ascriptions. What particular kind of *non*-representational state should we enjoy in order to access or retrieve these warrants? A mere raw experience with no representational content whatsoever, in Chisholm's sense of being-appeared to me in such and a such a way may not provide a warrant for the corresponding self-ascription. If I merely sense myself or appear to myself as the one that ϕ s [that] p in that raw sense, I can't possibly claim to have a ground for the claim that I do, as a matter of fact, ϕ [that] p . Alternatively: if I just stick to the description of the intrinsic phenomenal quality of my experience, I can't conclude anything with respect to the object or content or aboutness of my attitude.

REFERENCES

- Peacocke (Christopher), 2008, *Truly Understood*, Oxford UP, Oxford.
- Pryor (Jim), 2005, "There is immediate justification", *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, E. Sosa and M. Steup, eds., Basil Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 181-202.
- Wright (Crispin), [1982] 1993, "Strict Finitism", *Realism, Meaning and Truth*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 2nd ed., pp. 107-175.