

Introspecting Motivational Dispositions

Lauren Ashwell, Bates College

lashwell@bates.edu

Self-knowledge – transparency views

We know our minds by looking to the world, not by using an internal scanner or “inner-eye”.

In making a self-ascription of belief, one’s eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward – upon the world. If someone asks me “Do you think there is going to be a third world war?” I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question “Will there be a third world war?” (Evans 1982, p. 225)

A statement of one’s belief about X is said to obey the Transparency Condition when the statement is made by considerations of the facts about X itself, and not by either an “inward glance” or by observation of one’s own behavior (Moran 2001, p. 101).

Byrne’s characterisation of a transparency method for belief introspection:

BEL: if p, believe that I believe that p

And for desire introspection:

DES: if ϕ ing is a desirable option, believe that you want to ϕ .
(roughly similar views: Fernandez, Moran)

Byrne recognizes that DES must be defeasible: Suppose one knows that ϕ ing is a desirable option, and considers the question of whether one wants to ϕ . One will not follow DES and conclude one wants to ϕ , if one believes (a) that one intends to ψ , (b) that ψ ing is incompatible with ϕ ing, and (c) that ψ ing is neither desirable nor better overall than ϕ ing.

What is left out: our introspective access to our *motivation*. Byrne’s lazy cyclist case seems to turn on *that* rather than a defeater involving intention.

Desires seem to involve, in some way, dispositions towards action

Schroeder (2004) calls this “The Standard Theory” of desire. Here are two clear statements of the view: “...desires are dispositions to act in certain ways under certain conditions...” (Smith 1994, 115); “...to desire that P is to be disposed to act in ways that would tend to bring it about that P in a world in which one’s beliefs, whatever they are, were true” (Stalnaker 1984, 15).

Suggestion: introspection of motivation involves detection of these behavioral dispositions

It has seemed to some that we can’t (introspectively/directly) detect dispositions; that we can only infer that they are there (Campbell, Carruthers). However, if part of the manifestation of the disposition is itself a mental state, then we can – then the manifestation itself counts as us detecting the disposition.

For the rest of the talk, I will look at how this detection may take place.

Some criteria for the view:

- I. It should allow that we are less reliable in forming beliefs about our motivation when we are not in the appropriate situation for action.
- II. It should allow that we do not have to wait to see how we act in order to detect our motivation
- III. It should allow that we do not have to actually act in order to detect our motivation – we can detect motivation even when we prevent ourselves from acting.

From I:

Suggests that the detection is triggered by similar conditions to the behavior; possible simple view: the disposition's manifestation is a complex of the mental state plus behavior.

From II:

If the manifestation of the disposition is composed of a mental state plus behavior, the mental state should be earlier in the process of manifestation.

From III:

Self-control must be able to interfere with behavior, without preventing us from detecting the motivation. For this to count as (direct) detection of the disposition in question, there must be a (partially) behavioral disposition there to frustrate, even though we do not in fact act (so it does not fully manifest).

References

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