

## DIRECTION OF FIT\*

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“Où est la traduction?  
Le monde traduit-il nos poèmes  
ou nos poèmes traduisent-ils le monde?”  
Christian Dotremont, *Le soleil a parlé*

Although the notion of direction of fit already appears in Anscombe’s *Intention* (Anscombe 1957: 57–58), it is certainly John Searle (1975; 1983) who contributed the most to its ubiquity within contemporary philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. To the extent these two fields of inquiry may be separated from each other, this paper will not be concerned with language. However, if correct, the points to be made entail some significant consequences for the analysis of linguistic representations, as shall be briefly mentioned in the conclusion.

In his book *Intentionality* (1983), Searle relies on the notion of direction of fit to distinguish between different types of Intentional states.<sup>1</sup> In what follows, I shall only deal with the following three main types: beliefs, desires and intentions — thus leaving open the question whether there are other kinds of directions of fit than those needed to distinguish between these three types, and also the question whether the different combinations of beliefs, desires or intentions allow us to define other mental states. For reasons to be

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<sup>1</sup>Following Searle’s (1983) useful convention, I shall use “Intentionality” and “Intentional” with an upper case to refer to the property of consciousness to be “about facts” of the external world. That is, everything that is intentional in the sense applicable to actions is Intentional, but not conversely.

exposed below, I differ from Searle in considering that perception is not an Intentional state, but a mental activity.

According to Searle, beliefs differ from both desires and intentions as to who or what bears the "responsibility" of any failure of fit between the mind and the world: if a belief is not satisfied, the onus of "responsibility" lies on the subject whose mind failed to fit the world, whereas when a desire or an intention fails to be satisfied, the "responsibility" should be attributed to the world which failed to fit the subject's mind (at least from the viewpoint of this subject). Thus, whereas beliefs have a "downward" direction of fit, the direction of fit is "upward" for desires and intentions. There is a further distinction to be drawn between desires and intentions: the causal origin of the "satisfier"<sup>2</sup> of a desire is irrelevant to the satisfaction itself: if I want a glass of water, my desire will be satisfied if, and only if, I get a glass of water. By contrast, to be satisfied, an intention should cause the existence of its satisfier: for my intention to lift my arm to be satisfied, it is insufficient that somebody else lifts my arm with a rope and a pulley.

Even if this definition of the direction of fit meets our primary intuitions, it is not devoid of some obscurity. For instance, how are we to account for the difference between an unsatisfied desire and a belief that bears on a future state of affairs but proves to be wrong? In both cases, the world failed to evolve in such a way as to fit the subject's mind. To be sure, the onus of the "responsibility" does not bear on the same entities; but what precise meaning should we assign to this metaphor? Searle (1983: 8) says — sticking closely to Anscombe's formulation — that while appropriately modifying our beliefs suffices to "correct" such a situation, one cannot "fix things up by saying that it was a mistaken [...] desire". This observation tells us nothing non-metaphorical about the difference between an unsatisfied desire and an unsatisfied belief — even if it correctly describes the way rational agents behave when they discover the lack of satisfaction. In fact, no counterfactual definition of the direction of fit will allow us to discriminate between Intentional states independently of (and prior to) the attribution of a satisfaction value. Another analogy of Searle's is of no more help:

If Cinderella goes into a shoe store to buy a new pair of shoes, she takes her foot size as given and seeks shoes to fit (shoe-to-foot direction of fit). But when the prince seeks the owner of the shoe, he takes the shoe as given and seeks a foot to fit the shoe (foot-to-shoe direction of fit). (Searle 1983: 8, n.)

If I want it to rain tomorrow, I take my desire as "given" and I am looking for a future state of the world that can fit it. If I believe that it will rain tomorrow, I take the future state of the world as "given" and I expect my belief to fit it.

<sup>2</sup>Let me use this kin-word of "truth-maker" for the moment being.

But, in the case at hand, this also means that, unless being an all-knowing Laplacean demon, I expect the world to evolve in such a way as to fit my belief.

In my view, one cannot characterise the direction of fit properly without distinguishing between the object of the Intentional state, defined extensionally (the "wide content"), and the way that object is presented to the mind (the "narrow content"); in other words, we have to distinguish between the (objective) truth-conditions<sup>3</sup> of the Intentional state, and its conditions of satisfaction. Although Searle dismisses the wide vs. narrow dichotomy, I think the formulation I shall advocate here is innocuous enough to escape his objections.

In Section 1, I shall show that Searle's internalist analysis of *de re* beliefs is inadequate, and that this essentially stems from the inconsistency of his theory of perception. In Section 2, I shall use O'Regan and Noë's (2001) sensory-motor theory of vision to solve the problems raised by Searle's approach. In Section 3, I shall follow Recanati (1993) in drawing the distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* beliefs in terms of the three-prong distinction between descriptive conditions, relational conditions and truth-conditions; this will allow me to define the downward direction of fit.<sup>4</sup> In Section 4, I shall argue that intentions are always *de re*, the difference between the upward direction of fit of intentions and the downward direction of fit of *de re* beliefs being reducible to a symmetrical difference within relational conditions. In Section 5, I will show that volitional states have no relational conditions, this being the difference between the upward direction of fit of desires and the downward direction of fit of *de dicto* beliefs.

### 1. Searle's internalism

Searle (1983: chapter 8; 1991: 237) is committed to an internalist view on the content of mental states. He makes no difference between the "narrow" (internally defined) content and the "wide" content (determined by objective truth-conditions): in his conception, the content of an Intentional state *S* is determined by the "fact" or state of affairs that must fit *S* or that *S* must fit for *S* to be satisfied. Several aspects of Searle's position deserve critical

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I use the terms "truth-conditions" and "truth-conditional content" to refer to the particular or to the *n*-tuple of particulars whose existence is required for the objective truth of the Intentional state.

<sup>4</sup> Recanati uses "conditions of satisfaction" where I use "descriptive conditions". This purely terminological substitution is needed to avoid the possible confusion between predicate satisfaction in Tarski's sense, and the satisfaction of Intentional states.

evaluation, but for the present purpose some quite technical points about *de re* perceptual beliefs should suffice. Take one of Burge's (1977: 351–352) classical examples: a *de re* belief where no conceptual description denoting or fitting the *res* is available to the believer.

On seeing a man coming from a distance in a swirling fog, we may plausibly be said to believe of him that he is wearing a red cap. But we do not see the man well enough to describe or image him in such a way as to individuate him fully. [...] The perceived object [...] may not be inspected in sufficient detail to distinguish it from all other objects except by reference to spatio-temporal methods. And [it] will often not be individuable by the perceiver except by context-dependent, nonconceptual methods.

Searle's (1983: esp. chapter 2) theory of perception is essential to the viability of his internalism (as noted by Dretske 2003). On the one hand, to stick to an internalist definition of the content of perceptual beliefs, Searle claims that visual perception is an Intentional state whose conditions of satisfaction are entirely determined "from inside". On the other hand, to prevent his internalist system from collapsing into solipsism, he advocates Direct Realism by putting a causal constrain on the conditions of satisfaction of visual experiences: the satisfier must cause the state it satisfies. My visual experience that *F is G* is satisfied iff there is a fact [*F is G*] that causes my experience — all seeing is *seeing that*. Hence, according to Searle (1983: 212), the content of the subject's belief in Burge's example will be the following:

(1) There is a man there causing my experience and that man is wearing a red cap.

Now, the question arises whether (1) is equivalent to (2) in Searle's theory:

(2) There is a man there wearing a red cap and causing my experience.

The very point of Burge's example is that the redness of the man's cap is irrelevant to the individuation of the object of the perceptual experience — a premise Searle (1983: 212) readily accepts:

On my account the (*de dicto*) Intentional content of the visual experience individuates the man, and that content is part of the (*de dicto*) content of the belief.

Therefore, even on Searle's theory, (2) builds too much within the content of the visual experience. This conclusion follows not only from Burge's argument, but also from Searle's (1983: 59–66) tenet that phenomenological properties do not belong to the causal origin of the visual experience. Searle's rationale on this point runs as follows: if subjective phenomenological properties belonged to the content of the visual experience, it would turn impossible to assume that other people may perceive the same object;

so, phenomenology merely helps to determine the conditions of satisfaction of perceptual states.

As pointed out by Armstrong (1991: 155–156), this entails the unfortunate consequence that the content of the belief in (1) depends on the phenomenological experience of the categorical properties of the object. If so, what the belief must fit in order to be satisfied is not a fact (whatever “fact” means) in the objective world, but a private phenomenological experience.<sup>5</sup> This contradicts Searle’s conception of the relation between the mind and the external world and, in fact, endangers the gist of his theory.

It looks like we have reached an impasse. Saying in any non-trivial and non-solipsistic way that a satisfied belief must fit its satisfier entails either: (a) that (1) is a correct formalisation of the belief content, with the consequence that the conditions of satisfaction of a perceptual belief require one not to be mistaken about her own phenomenological experience; or: (b) that (2) is the correct formalisation. As we have seen, both solutions prove incompatible with Searle’s Direct Realism. An obvious alternative would be to describe phenomenological experiences in such a way that they can simultaneously appear as the left-hand term of a causal relation, as in (2), and correspond to an inner mode of presentation without entailing solipsism. This is what we shall try to do now.

## 2. Perception as interaction

Alva Noë and Kevin O’Regan (Noë 2001; O’Regan and Noë 2001; Noë 2004) offer an attractive “enactive” alternative to more traditional analyses of perception. In a nutshell, their claim is that visual perception is an activity that takes place between the subject and the world. On the one hand, this interaction depends on the sensory-motor contingencies of the subject’s perceptual device. Subjects develop a perfect mastery of these contingencies, which form their perceptual design. This is the reason, e.g., why we do not perceive eye movements, saccades or the “blind spot” (associated with an area of the retina deprived of light receptors) in our visual field. On the other hand, repeated interactions with the world provide the subjects with an implicit knowledge of the relational properties of objects with respect to patterns of their own sensory-motor behaviour. Visual consciousness is thus a sequence of sensory-motor activities, and phenomenological *qualia* of visual experience are mere *know-hows*, i.e. implicit abilities induced by the regularity of repeated perceptual interaction. For instance, seeing an apple

<sup>5</sup> Searle explicitly rejects Armstrong’s solution which consists in locating phenomenological *qualia* such as redness in the external world (Searle 1991: 184).

at your left is just making use of an implicit knowledge of yours that an eye movement to the left will bring the apple in full view.<sup>6</sup>

It is of particular importance for the present discussion that, in this theory, no visual consciousness may emerge unless the subject interacts with the world, i.e. unless she is involved in an attentional or epistemic activity. Noë and O'Regan mention supporting evidence from experiments that illustrate blindness to important and perfectly visible changes in the visual field.<sup>7</sup> Yet, perception can be involuntary, as when a spot of light is suddenly directed in your eyes. Proust (2001) usefully distinguishes between mental operations, which are "normal mental functions activated by specific stimuli, giving rise to adaptive changes in epistemic states" (p. 14), and mental actions, like paying attention, that are contingent on mental operations or other mental acts. When perception is "involuntary", the subject's interaction with the world is constituted by a series of involuntary mental operations. (In Proust's definition, a "mental action is just a particular way of combining operations in order to let control emerge from their very combination" (2001: 121). Therefore, directing one's attention to a certain state of affairs also reduces to a sequence of sensory-motor interactions.)

It follows that we should distinguish between the light reflection on the retina caused by an object ( $e_1$ ) and the sensory-motor visual activity of the perceiving subject ( $e_2$ ). The former event  $e_1$  is causally irrelevant to the subject's visual consciousness, for  $e_1$  does not pertain to the inner life unless a sensory-motor activity takes place. Moreover, in the absence of any implicit knowledge of the sensory-motor contingencies  $s$ ,  $e_2$  would not have the value of a phenomenological experience, as shown by the "experiential blindness" of patients who have been removed an innate cataract (Noë 2004: 4–7). The conjunction of  $e_1$  with  $s$  — let us call it  $E$  — is a disposition to perceive. Accordingly, the cause of the phenomenological experience is the subject's sensory-motor interaction with the perceived object, i.e.  $e_2$ . The crucial claim of the enactive theory of perception tells us that the subject's phenomenological experience IS  $e_2$  in  $E$ . From this it follows that *the cause of a perceptual belief is the subject's interaction with the perceived object*.

<sup>6</sup>In experiments where subjects are asked to wear glasses with inverted right/left orientation, participants usually need a long training period before being able to perform normal daily-life activities (Kohler 1964; Taylor 1962). On Noë's (2004: 3–11) interpretation, the subjects are experientially blind during the training period, i.e. they are unable to turn physical sensations into visual experiences.

<sup>7</sup>For a particularly dramatic and amusing example, see Simons and Charbis (1999).

### 3. *The downward direction of fit*

If the enactive theory is correct, (2) should correctly represent the content of the perceptual belief about Burge's man approaching in the fog. The cause of my perception reduces to a sequence of events, viz. a series of sensory-motor interactions which correspond to the mode under which that man is presented to my mind. Although this move amounts to giving up Direct Realism, it does not trigger the solipsistic consequences usually associated with phenomenological theories. Phenomenological *qualia* depend on the objective features of the perceived objects, on the one hand, and on the properties of the perceptual apparatus shared by most members of the human species, on the other. This is the reason why we may assume without problems our phenomenological experiences to be shared with other people.

Now, in most cases, it is also true that  $e_2$  would have no consequence for the inner life of the subject in the absence of the external world, i.e. of  $e_1$  (for instance, we cannot see in the dark). Admittedly the implicit knowledge of sensory-motor contingencies is sometimes put at work during the mental construction of imagined events (for instance, while listening to a recorded story containing spatial information) or the recollection of past events (by looking at an empty location where the event to be remembered took place) (Spivey and Geng 2001).<sup>8</sup> But the fact that sensory-motor interaction can yield an internal experience without any object to interact with should not deter us. To begin with, such "pseudo-perceptions" presuppose a body of know-hows that emerged from genuine interactions with the external world; in these "virtual perception" cases, we make those ocular movements that would have been performed in a corresponding "non-virtual" interaction. Furthermore, why should one expect any warrant of infallibility from a theory of visual perception? What we are after here is an account from which it follows that the narrow content entails the wide content, i.e. that the satisfaction of a perceptual belief entails the fulfilment of the corresponding truth-conditions.

A straightforward definition of the downward direction of fit thus becomes available. A perceptual belief  $B$  has a downward direction of fit because its satisfaction requires:

- (a) the object of  $B$  to satisfy the description under which it is presented by the mode of presentation  $M$  [*descriptive condition*];
- (b)  $M$  to be the cause of  $B$  [*relational condition*].<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>I am very grateful to an anonymous referee for pressing me on that point.

<sup>9</sup>I borrow the distinction between the two kinds of conditions from Bach (1987) and Recanati (1993) (cf. footnote 4).

The clause (a) is intended to capture the "fit" part of the definition, and (b) the "downward" direction.

In order to generalise this approach to other kinds of *de re* beliefs, such as memory-based and hearsay beliefs, one must provide enactive-like theories with the acquaintance modalities in question, so as to maintain the causal relation between  $M$  and  $B$  without extra metaphysical cost. Although I cannot do anything more in this paper than expressing my confidence in such undertaking (but see Kingston and Diehl 1994, for a similar approach to auditory perception), I should like to emphasise that what is eventually at stake is the very possibility of elaborating a conception of narrow content that would be defined with the help of actual (and not counterfactual) causal relations while remaining adequate for the individuation of Intentional states from a first-person perspective (see Stalnaker 1999, esp. 169–187).

We have just seen that the satisfaction of  $B$  entails its objective truth. But the converse does not hold. Obviously, it may be objectively true that a man is approaching even if he is not wearing a red cap, and indeed, does not conform in any aspect to the mode  $M$  under which he is present to my mind. In Burge's example, the mode of presentation is also irrelevant from the viewpoint of the perceiving subject; but this need not be always the case, as widely acknowledged, at least since Kaplan's (1989) and Perry's (1979) discussions of mental indexicality. It is also clear that the possibility of attributing an intelligible belief to someone who wrongly believes that the approaching man is wearing a red cap would vanish if the objective truth of the belief were to depend on the mode of presentation. Indeed, this possibility rests on a charitable relativisation of the believer's way to apprehend the approaching individual (Davidson 2001b: 183–198, 227–241). The truth-conditional irrelevance of the relation condition (b) is perhaps less self-evident; yet, there are plenty of possible worlds where no perceiver exists and where it remains true that the man is approaching in the swirling fog (see Recanati 1993: esp. 104–105).

If there exist genuinely *de dicto* beliefs, then the objective truth of such a belief always coincides with its satisfaction. For instance, if I believe that the president of France (whoever s/he is) likes oysters, my belief is satisfied iff there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is the president of France and  $x$  likes oysters. In such a case, the descriptive and relational conditions coincide: the person I believe to like oysters must satisfy the description under which s/he is present to my mind, and that description is also the only mode under which my mind is related to that person (Recanati 1993: 104–106). Obviously, a *de dicto* belief  $B$  has a downward direction of fit, since its truth requires both descriptive and relational conditions to be met.



#### 4. Intentions

According to Davidson, action talk consists in providing events, i.e. unrepeatable particulars, with alternative descriptions.<sup>10</sup> In his view, only bodily movements can be correctly described as actions: for instance, my drinking a beer reduces to the event that consists in my bodily movement of bringing the bottle to my lips, swallowing, etc. Any alternative description should be seen as related to casual consequences of the action (for instance, I upset my girlfriend, I ruined my chances of understanding anything in the paper I was reading, etc.).<sup>11</sup> It is clear that if one accepts Davidson's (2001a) theory of action, no *de dicto* intentions may be posited: only singular propositions with events may belong to the truth-conditional content of intentions.

Davidson acknowledges that some actions may serve to prepare the ground for another ones (2001a: 59–60). For instance, in order to drink my beer, I must get up, go to the kitchen, open the fridge, etc. Each of these intermediate actions is intentionally performed, but, as Anscombe (1957: 46–47) puts it, my intention to have a beer "swallows" all the intentions it triggered: ultimately, it is my intention to have a beer that causes my going to the kitchen, my opening the fridge, etc. For Searle (1983: 83–91), these "preparatory" actions go hand in hand with what he calls "intentions-in-action" — i.e. they need not be conceived as conscious actions performed in order to realise my (prior) intention to drink a beer. Intentions-in-actions present to the subject's mind some part of the truth-conditional content of the prior intention by contributing to cause this content. According to Searle, some actions, like impulsively standing up and walking across the room, do not result from a prior intention: but even in such cases, there exists an intention-in-action that makes a truth-conditional content present to the subject's mind by causing this content.

Proust (2003; 2005) argues, against Searle, that intentions-in-action should not be analysed as Intentional states whose content belongs to the content of the prior intention. First, an agent may have a prior intention without having settled which intentions-in-action would or could be mobilised for its satisfaction:

We can be clear what it is what we intend to do while being in the dark as to the details, and therefore the pitfalls. (Davidson 2001a: 94)

<sup>10</sup> In the first two paragraphs of this section, I mainly follow Proust's (2005) masterful reconciliation of Davidson's and Searle's theories of action.

<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, the logical form of some natural language action predicates contains variables referring to two causally related events, the first of which corresponds to the bodily movement in question (Davidson 2001a: 296–304).

That is, those factors that determine the physical means to reach a goal are different from the factors that lead to the decision to reach that goal (see also Dretske 1988: 131–146; Dennett 2003: 237–240). Second, this ability to background the intermediate steps allows agents to keep a goal constant across internal or external variations (which is an undeniable evolutionary advantage (Talmy 2000: 277–279)). Third, it is doubtful that every intention-in-action has a genuinely conceptual content.

Anscombe (1957: 87–88) distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge involved in intentional action: the first is implicit, practical, and gives access to its object by causing it, while the second is speculative, and gives access to the actual consequences of the action in the external world. Subsuming Anscombe's distinction under a single concept, Proust (2003; 2005) conceives intentions-in-action (or "volitions", in her terminology) as non-conceptual mental operations, i.e. as brain functions that control movements. Such operations are executive loops that initiate the execution of the prior intention in an appropriate context, in accordance with the salience of the aim to be fulfilled and with the implicit practical knowledge stored during similar situations. Intentions-in-actions also monitor and adjust the execution of a prior intention through a constant comparison of the experienced environmental changes with the effects expected on the basis of previous experiences. The conditions of satisfaction of a prior intention are causally constrained because intentions-in-action are executive loops that stay permanently in contact with this prior intention.

In the following, I will rely on Proust's approach and use the term "intention" to refer to prior intentions only. In this perspective, the upward direction of fit of intentions appears as the mirror image of the downward direction of fit of *de re* beliefs. Indeed, the satisfaction of an intention requires:

- (a) the truth-conditional content to fit the description under which the action was intended [*descriptive condition*];
- (b) the truth-conditional content to be caused by a chain of intentions-in-action that monitor the execution of the intended action [*relational condition*].

As happens with *de re* beliefs, neither condition is truth-conditionally relevant. Again, the truth-conditional irrelevance of the descriptive condition is widely acknowledged, precisely because, as we have seen at the beginning of this section, some events might receive many actional descriptions. Searle accepts the plurality of descriptions, but points out that an action causally resulting from an intention is intentional only if it satisfies the aspect under which it was the object of that intention, i.e. only if the descriptive condition is satisfied. Imagine I decide to drink a beer, but being mistaken about what was in the bottle, I actually swallow melted butter instead of beer. Still, that

event is a result of an intention of mine: even if this is not what I wanted to do, it is something I did; as pointed by Searle (1983: 82), "there are in general no actions without corresponding intentions". Of course, things become particularly dramatic when the truth-conditional content satisfies a description that contradicts the agent's volitional set: Oedipus intended to kill the stranger who upset him, not his father (Davidson 2001a: 297), yet this is something that he did. If we still feel inclined to speak about my drinking melted butter as an action of mine or of Oedipus as (although unintentionally) having killed his father, this happens because the relational conditions of the corresponding intentions are satisfied.

Such cases are to be contrasted with the so-called "deviant causal chain puzzles", where the relational condition does not obtain despite the fulfilment of the truth-conditions and the descriptive condition. It is possible to imagine a situation where, by means of a complex machinery of pulleys and ropes, I am forced to drink the beer in a way which, viewed from outside, is totally similar to my drinking it intentionally. Searle introduced his notion of intention-in-action to deal with this kind of puzzles; in his view, my drinking the beer in such a way does not correspond to the content of my intention to drink the beer, because the latter involves all the intentions-in-action that remain unsatisfied in the former. Since I have rejected earlier in this section Searle's conception of intentions-in-action, I shall say, instead, that the satisfaction of an intention requires the satisfaction of the relational condition. For my present argument, the important fact about "deviant causal chain" puzzles is that the relational condition is no more truth-conditionally relevant than the descriptive condition.

As an illustration of the contrast between *de re* beliefs and intentions, let me compare my intention to get an ice-cream and my (simultaneous) belief that I will get an ice-cream. Davidson (2001a: 94–96) vividly criticises the idea that the former entails the latter on the ground that (in most cases)

[...] there can be no finite list of things we think might prevent us from doing what we intend, or of circumstances that might cause us to stay our hand. (Davidson 2001a: 94)

The relational condition of an intention requires the mind to be related to the truth-conditional content by a chain of intentions-in-action which need not be fully specifiable at the moment the intention is formed. By contrast, the downward direction of fit requires my belief that I will get an ice cream to be caused, through some acquaintance medium, by the mode *M* under which the event *e* that constitutes the truth-conditional content is present to my mind. Since this truth-conditional content is located in the future with respect to the moment I formed my belief, the best candidate for playing the role of a mode of presentation is an actual event that either could cause *e* or is an effect of a potential cause of *e*. As it turns, my intention to get an

ice-cream does the job perfectly. But in order to form a rational belief that I will get an ice-cream I should, at least, have an unshakable confidence in the infallibility of my capacity to make my decisions come true and, at most, be entirely clear about the intentions-in-action involved. As an anonymous referee pointed out, this latter requirement is extremely strong: if it turns out that I have to get an ice-cream in a situation that makes impossible the sequence of intentions-in-action involved in the relational condition of my belief, this formulation imposes belief revision — my former belief should be replaced by another one with alternative relational conditions. However one formulates the relational conditions of my belief that I will get an ice-cream, the important point is that entertaining the intention to get an ice-cream does not require (but is compatible with) entertaining such a belief; indeed, I may entertain an intention without being acquainted with its object through a causal relation that would make my intention depend on my acquaintance mode.

### 5. *Desires*

The most striking difference between desires and intentions is that whereas it proves irrational to simultaneously entertain intentions with mutually contradictory conditions of satisfaction, we commonly entertain conflicting desires (Searle 2001: 248–267, for an extended discussion).

[Oedipus] can consistently both want to marry Jocasta and want not to marry Jocasta, under the same description. [...] For example, he might want to marry her — because, say, he finds her beautiful and intelligent, and simultaneously not want to marry her — because, say, she snores and cracks her knuckles. (Searle 2001: 250)

As Searle points out in his discussion, this difference stems from the fact that desires are not supposed to cause their satisfaction. And this is so, in turn, because the same event may seem desirable under one aspect and undesirable under another one (also Davidson 2001a: 96–99).

A natural way to reformulate these intuitions in our terms is to say that desires have no relational condition. Moreover, given that the conditions of satisfaction of desires crucially depend on aspectual features, I feel strongly inclined to side with Searle (1983: 215–216) in endorsing the exclusive *de dicto* character of desires. In order to give sense to the notion of a *de re* Intentional state, one needs to postulate a relation between the mind and the *res*. But, as we have just seen, desires do not require any specific relation between the satisfier and the mind: the only thing that matters for the satisfaction of a desire is the existence of a particular that exactly fits the description present to the subject's mind. As Anscombe (1957: 71) puts it: "To

say 'I *merely* want this' without any characterisation is to deprive the word of sense [...]' (see also the discussion in Anscombe 1957: 69–71; Searle 2001). Think of an intention or a belief the subject knows to be unsatisfied: we would deem that subject irrational if she persevered at entertaining the very same intention or belief. But this surely does not hold for all desires. Imagine I see a woman approaching whom I think to be Mary. I form the desire to be kissed by Mary. As the woman comes closer, she happens to be Mary's grandmother, Jane. Now, if Jane kisses me, nothing in her kissing me affects my craving for a kiss of her granddaughter's. But if I actually was believing that Mary would kiss me, or intending to make the first move (and to kiss Mary on that particular occasion), my becoming aware that the truth-conditional content does not satisfy the descriptive condition of the belief or of the intention at hand would preclude me from persevering at entertaining that belief or intention.

This difference is better brought out if we think of *de dicto* beliefs. Take my belief that the president of France (whoever s/he is) likes oysters. If I learn that the president of France does not like oysters, or that it is a *sine qua non* condition for being the president of France that the person should not like oysters, I cannot entertain my belief any longer: indeed, its descriptive condition has no other function than that of relating me to an individual (Recanati 1993). But even if I know that this is not actually the case, I might still desire the president of France to like oysters.<sup>12</sup> It follows that the descriptive conditions of desires are often of no use to store information about the external world.

#### 6. Conclusion: linguistic representations of Intentional states

I have reformulated the notion of direction of fit by distinguishing between three types of conditions: (a) descriptive conditions, (b) relational conditions, and (c) truth-conditions. While (c) corresponds to the wide, objective content, the conjunction of (a) and (b) determines the subjective, narrow content. For each case, we have constructed our definition in such a way that it preserves the entailment from (a)&(b) to (c).

The reformulation offered here, I contend, fares better than previous, metaphorical formulations of the notion of direction of fit, in that it provides precise criteria for the individuation of the different types of mental states. For a *de re* Intentional state, the direction of fit depends on the direction of the causal constraint involved in the relational condition of the state. As we have

<sup>12</sup> Such a desire is not to be confused with a wish: the main difference between desires and wishes is that only the former require their truth-conditional content to be physically possible (Dominicy 2001; Dominicy and Franken 2002).

seen, a *de re* belief and an intention may have identical descriptive conditions and identical truth-conditions; but the relational condition of the former involves a causal relation going from the acquaintance relation  $M$  to the belief, while the relational condition of the latter requires the intention to be related to the truth-conditional content by a chain of intentions-in-action monitoring the realisation of the descriptive condition. For a *de dicto* Intentional state, the direction of fit depends on the existence or inexistence of a relational condition. *De dicto* beliefs have a relational condition which coincides with both the descriptive condition and the truth-conditions; desires, by contrast, only have a descriptive condition which is identical with the truth-conditions.

It is worth noting that this reformulation paves the way for an attractive description of the psychological processes through which an audience recovers the speaker's attitude-type in conversation. In many cases, utterances seem ambiguous between different speech acts. For instance, (3) may express either the speaker's belief that she will be fired or her intention to leave her job:

(3) I won't be working here for long.

Likewise, (4) may express either the speaker's desire to drink or her belief that there is water nearby.

(4) Water.

It is not very controversial to claim that every speech act type comes along with an expression or a representation of an Intentional state type (in a way loose enough to allow insincere representations or expressions). I suppose that everyone is ready to accept the idea that asserting that  $p$  amounts, *inter alia*, to representing or to expressing a belief that  $p$ , that ordering that  $p$  amounts, *inter alia*, to representing or to expressing a desire that  $p$ , and that promising that  $p$  amounts, *inter alia*, to representing or to expressing an intention that  $p$  (Searle 1975; 1983: chapter 6; Bach and Harnish 1979).

If the direction of fit of the mental state expressed by the utterance is identified in accordance with the analysis offered here, this process could be considered as belonging to the heuristics whereby we resolve ambiguities like those in (3) and (4). In (3), knowing or determining the nature of the relation that holds between the speaker and the truth-conditional content (*viz.* the state of affairs where the speaker is not working at the place in question) will help the interpreter to rule out either the hypothesis that the utterance is an assertion or the hypothesis that it is a promise. Similarly, if the audience can reconstruct the truth-conditional content of (4) in a way either (a) as to allow it to be discrepant with the way the speaker envisages it, or (b) as to suffice to relate the speaker to it, then (4) is an assertion; if the truth-conditions the

audience attributes to the utterance are such that they rule out any relational condition, then (4) is an order or, at least, the expression of a desire.

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