

Finality Revived: Powers and Intentionality

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1. Introduction

An exercise in partial demystification.

- i. Analyse the debate over 'physical intentionality' by examining the canonical features of intentionality.
- ii. Show them all to point to an the underlying phenomenon of *finality* – universal action for an end.
- iii. Explain finality in terms of *specific indifference*.
- iv. Argue that the difference between mental and physical finality lies in *abstraction*.

2. Directedness

Thoughts directed at objects

Powers directed at manifestations

A feature of finality understood as specific indifference:

- (i) a specific *range* of possible manifestations of a power, and hence a specific range of possible kinds of behaviour by the object having that power
- (ii) *indifference* with respect to the manifestations, and hence kinds of behaviour, within that range.

3. Inexistence: failures of exportation and truth

Thoughts not entailing truth/existence of object

Power not entailing existence of manifestation

'Intentional inexistence' – confused with non-existence. *Esse intentionale/esse reale*

Inexistence as permissible falsity/non-existence is not a mark of the mental *or* of powers:

Mental:

- (i) Failure of exportation and permissible falsity can be found where there is no intentionality of any sort.

(ii) Neither apply in intentional contexts created by factives: (a) direct objectual knowledge; (b) propositional knowledge.

Powers:

No failure of exportation/missible falsity in case of powers with guaranteed manifestations: mortality; radioactive half-life.

4. **Intensionality** with an 's'

Failure of substitution central to intentionality: but no physical analogue.

- (1) Andrew believes that George Eliot wrote *Middlemarch*
- (2) George Eliot is Mary Ann Evans
- (3) Andrew believes that George Eliot wrote *Middlemarch*

Molnar:

- (4) Acid has the power to turn this piece of litmus paper red
- (5) Red is the colour of post boxes
- (6) Acid has the power to turn this piece of litmus paper the colour of post boxes.

Martin and Pfeifer:

- (7) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only pink object O at location L
- (8) The only pink object O at location L is the only object M of mass f at L
- (9) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only object M of mass f at location L.
- (7*) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only pink object O at location L at any time t_i between times $t_1 \dots t_n$
- (8*) The only pink object O at location L at any time t_i between times $t_1 \dots t_n$ is the only object M of mass f at L at any time t_i between times $t_1 \dots t_n$
- (9*) Acid A was able to turn litmus paper P into the only object M of mass f at location L at any time t_i between times $t_1 \dots t_n$.
- (10) Poison P was able to turn red squirrels into sick red squirrels
- (11) Sick red squirrels are native British squirrels

(12) Poison P was able to turn red squirrels into native British squirrels.

(7)-(9) and (10)-(12) are like Buridan's raw meat sophism:

(13) Yesterday you bought raw meat

(14) What you bought is what you ate

(15) You ate raw meat.

So no physical analogue of intensionality with an 's', but it only points to the *real* distinction between the mental intentionality and physical powers: *abstraction* as the mental version of specific indifference.

5. Abstraction

Distinguish from (i) vagueness and (ii) abstract objects of thought.

Abstraction involves a kind of *incompleteness*, but it needn't be incompleteness of descriptive content.

Abstraction has no physical analogue in powers:

(i) nothing to do with indeterminism

(ii) The comparison 'S can think of X in this way rather than that'/'Physical power P can have manifestation M in this way rather than that' completely misses the essential distinction – the *aspectuality* and *freedom* of abstraction, which has no physical correlate.

The indifference of the mental applies to content; the indifference of physical powers applies only to circumstances of manifestation.

Humans *must* abstract: this is both a strength and a weakness.

6. Final causes

(i) Final causes are not efficient causes, nor could they be (vicious regress). They are the *precondition* of efficient causation. There is no 'finiculus' producing finality.

(ii) Final causes are *real* causes. Maybe a higher-order property? Something like a scholastic 'principle'.

(iii) Final causes are part of the formal cause – the essence.

7. Conclusion

Q: Is there physical intentionality?

A: Non proprie dictu, sed secundum quid.