Subjectivity and objectivity
Intentional inexistence and the independence of the mind

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Version: Wednesday, 4 July 2018

Introduction

Few distinctions in philosophy are as pervasive as the distinction between the *subjective* and the *objective*. Apparently, this distinction has less often been submitted to thorough examination than one would expect. Perhaps this is due to its difficult nature. It might also be due to the uneasiness with which the subjective-objective distinction is brought to harmony with the received scientific perspective on the world. Yet so deep entrenched in our conceptual scheme is this distinction that to cast light on it is a worthwhile undertaking even if that did not lead to a complete, convenient, or coherent conception. But there is no need for pessimism. A clear and viable reformulation of that venerable distinction seems possible. It would bring out its essence and at the same time it would exceed mere historical interest. This paper aims at such a reformulation. In what follows, I offer an explanation of the central idea of *independence* in terms of *non-inference* and *causal non-determination.* Also, I point to the essential intentionality of the subjective and stress the central feature of *intentional inexistence*. In the course of this I shall use the most limited means only. Thus I hope to lay bare what the subjective-objective distinction comes down to, and I hope to do so in a manner acceptable on all sides. I close with some indications as to what such a reformulation may have a bearing on.

1. A fundamental distinction

The distinction between the subjective and the objective has a very long tradition. The terms refer as far back as to Aristotle's *Categories*.[1] Boethius, in his medieval commentary on that work, used the Latin word *subiectum* as a translation of the original Greek *ὑποκείμενον* (*hypokeímenon*, the 'underlying thing').[2] Despite that long tradition our modern understanding of the terms *subjective* and *objective* originates in early modern times only. The terms came to be used as a pair of contradictories, and the distinction they marked came to be couched in talk of some sort of *dependence* or *independence* of the *mind*. Illustrative of this train of thought is the use employed by Gottlob Frege, mathematician, logician, and founder of the modern philosophy of language. In his *Foundations of Arithmetic* Frege wrote:

> If we say 'The North Sea is 10,000 square miles in extent' then neither by 'North Sea' nor by '10,000' do we refer to any state of or process in our minds: on the contrary, we assert something quite objective, which is independent of our ideas and everything of the sort. (Frege 1884, 34)

This way of putting it was by no means idiosyncratic. Rather, it brought out the underlying view dominant to the present day. Contemporary philosophers of mind and language constantly echo this view in many variations. For example, Tyler Burge writes in his *Origins of Objectivity:*

> An element in some subject-matter conceptions of objectivity is *mind independence*: an objective subject matter is a subject matter that is constitutively mind-independent. […] By contrast, minds,

1 Cf. Newton 2008.
2 Cf. Knebel 1998.

> beliefs, feelings, […] are not constitutively mind-independent, and hence not objective, in this sense (Burge 2010, 46).

Here, Burge identifies what he later describes as the "narrow root notion" of objectivity: The objective is objective insofar as it is *independent of the mind*, the subjective is subjective insofar as it is not. This is the core of the common understanding we have to make sense of.[3] So what are the mental elements independence of or dependence on which make the subjective and the objective thus and so? And what does this independence consist of? In this paper, I aim at an explication of the common ground formula employed by both Frege and Burge by addressing these two questions. Addressing the latter question will involve discussing some issues pertaining to semantics and the philosophy of science. Addressing the first question will involve issues in the philosophy of mind. However, I fear that plunging too deep into the murky waters of the philosophy of mind will very likely distract us from progressing towards our goal. Still, concerning the first question a clearer view on the options we face is essential for better understanding our main topic. Thus we must briefly pause to discuss our present options right away.

2. The cognitive and the attitudinal

Broadly speaking, there are two options open to us, the *cognitive* and the *attitudinal*. Choosing the cognitive option we describe the subjective and the objective in terms of a *perspective* or a *view*.[4] To adopt a subjective stance on something would be to view it from a particular perspective: the individual perspective of the subject. Taking an objective stance would be to refrain from viewing it from a particular perspective. It this manner, it has become popular to contrast *the view from somewhere* with *the view from nowhere*.[5] The single most important metaphor of the cognitive approach is the metaphor of the eye and what and how it sees. The theoretical associations it engenders are that of *perception* and *representation.*[6] Clearly, the age-old metaphor of the eye is alluring and powerful. It provides us with an enticing colouring seamlessly interwoven with our everyday experiences. For instance, it is helpful in explaining why we are capable of changing our views or adopting anybody else's view. When we change our views we just *move to another point* from which to look at things. And when we adopt somebody else's view we just *move to the point* from which they look at things. As a tool for theoretical analysis, however, the cognitive option comes with its own difficulties. Not the least among them is "the central problem […] whether points of view must be admitted to the account of the physical world",[7] which, apparently, they should if the physical world is objective and the objective is essentially tied to the non-particular, non-individual point of view "from nowhere". The most serious shortcoming, however, may be that in explaining the objective the cognitive approach presents us with the formidable challenge to make sense of the idea of a view necessarily not taken or a perspective necessarily not situated.

Exploring the other option open to us we are led to consider that feature of the mental that manifests itself in the attitudinal. In doing so we implicitly acknowledge the importance of the *intentional*, which Austro-German philosopher Franz Brentano took to be the very mark of the mental:[8]

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3 Cf. McGinn, 1996, 168; *pace* Baker 1995, 232ff.
4 Cf. Farkas 2005; Crane 2001, 4f.; McGinn 1983.
5 Cf. Nagel 1979.
6 Cf. e.g. McGinn 1983, *passim.*
7 Nagel 1979, 16.
8 Cf. Crane 1998.

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a [real] thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional inexistence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves. (Brentano 1874, 68)

Eventually, the point Brentano was after gave rise to the development of the theory of *propositional attitudes*. This is because we are familiar with a common feature that quite neatly exhibits what Brentano saw as the defining feature of the mental. Recall that in natural language we very frequently ascribe propositional attitudes to persons: For instance, we say that Tom *believes* that the earth is flat, or that Dick *wants* the man in the doorway to stop staring at him, or that little Harry *hopes* that Santa Claus will come visit next Christmas. Believing, wanting, hoping, fearing and so on are propositional attitudes; they are mental states or events ascribed by reference to a person experiencing the mental state or event and described by (the nominalisation of) a sentence within the range of a suitable attitude verb. Given this characterisation we must immediately disentangle two very distinct things involved, though: *Having* propositional attitudes is a natural feature of man. Their being *expressible* in natural language is a natural feature of language. But that does not make propositional attitudes linguistic, nor does the fact that we may have sophisticated theories of language make attitudes fancy gadgets of sophisticated theorising. Rather, propositional attitudes and the sub-propositional offspring they can be analysed into form part of the very elementary mental toolbox with which man confronts the world, so elementary that the idea of a language not capable of accounting for our having attitudes is hardly feasible. Still, the faculties of having attitudes and of mastering language are not on a par. The latter requires the former but the converse does not hold.

In theory attitudes are sometimes likened to representations and thus taken to invoke the association of perception, too.[9] This is by no means necessary and very likely inadequate. The main reason for this, and at the same time what connects attitudes with the phenomenon of intentionality, is that attitudes exhibit the very important feature of *intentional inexistence* or, rather, *intentional inherence*. (The connotation of "non-existence" is in part misleading, I will turn to that in due course.) This is very much the connection to Brentano and the topic at hand. As the examples illustrate someone can be in a state of mind such that it may be correct to ascribe a given propositional attitude to him even if the object 'aimed at' in the attitude does not exist or is not the way the subject pictures it to be. The earth is not flat, there is no Santa Claus, and sometimes we mistake a reflection of ourselves for something or someone else, fair enough. Still, Tom can *believe* that the earth is flat, Harry can *hope* that Santa Claus will come visit next Christmas, and Dick can *want* the man in the doorway to stop staring at him. So although attitudes need not have a 'real' object (which is one of the reasons why they are not by nature 'representational') by way of providing an inherent 'internal object' they bring out the subjective view of the individual having the attitude. Put differently, by describing the attitudes we describe the *peculiar view* Tom, Dick, and Harry have with regard to the earth, the man in the doorway and next Christmas. We describe their *subjective perspective*.

So it seems that with the attitudinal option we have an approach to subjectivity that may very well supersede the metaphor of the eye *and* incorporate it. If we look at things from this

[9] Cf., e.g., McGinn 1983 & Searle 1983.

angle the cognitively subjective is subjective if and as far as it is grounded in the attitudinally subjective. Thus the mind-*dependence* characterising the subjective ultimately amounts to dependence on propositional attitudes of the individual, i.e. dependence on what somebody believes, wants, hopes, fears and so on. Consequently, the mind-*independence* of the objective amounts to independence from what anybody believes, wants, hopes or fears and so on. Given that, we may say that the objective is objective *because* it is independent of the propositional attitudes of the individual, and the subjective is subjective *because* it is not. Apparently, the cognitive pathway led us to the attitudinal pathway, and the attitudinal pathway led us to the proper understanding of the matter

3. Exploring the vicinity

But *did* it lead us to a proper understanding of the matter? There are various neighbouring issues that immediately come to mind. To begin with, in the last decades the philosophy of language has seen a vivid discussion about propositional attitudes, more precisely: about the semantics of attitude ascriptions. How would our discussion here relate to that? Also, there has been a great deal of discussion about the issues of *intentionality* or more recently *aboutness*. How would that affect an endorsement of the attitudinal approach? Finally, until now we have talked about the subjective and the objective only. But quite often reference is made to the *intersubjective* too. Can it be accounted for or have we been caught sinning by omission?

Clearly, I cannot hope to address all these issues in the confines of the present paper. But let me just briefly indicate the very limited goal of our present discussion and how unlikely it is that a proper treatment of the issues brought up would interfere with what we are after in the present context. After all, no extensive coverage of the literature nor the history is possible or intended. What I hope to achieve in this limited space is to offer, first, an explanation of the idea of independence, around which the subjective-objective distinction is organised, in terms of *non-inference* and *non-determination,* and, secondly, to draw attention to the vital connection between the essential trait of intentionality, i.e. intentional inexistence, and that distinction. This objective may be limited in scope but it turns out this focus is useful to clarify the subjective-objective distinction and to make it applicable to various issues in a way in which it does not seem to have been used before.

With regard to the discussions mentioned there is wide agreement that "having a successful theory of propositional attitude reports is important, as they serve as a converging point for a number of different fields, including philosophy of language, natural language semantics, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and epistemology."[10] Still, it would seem very generous to assume that the philosophical discussion on attitudes of the last decades has touched more than remotely on the questions addressed here. Theorists in that debate have certainly discussed what entities are involved in the having of a propositional attitude, they have discussed whether having an attitude is being in a relation, and if so, to which relata, whether object and content of an attitude have to be distinguished, and if so, how, and in what regard if any the components of attitude reports lend themselves to semantic evaluation or inquiry in the neurosciences. However, they seem to have come nowhere near applying their claims to the subjective-objective distinction. This is especially true for central contributions like those in McKay & Nelson (2010), Matthews (2007), Baker (1995), Anderson and Owens (1990), and Richard (1990), where the term "subjectivity" is hardly ever mentioned. Surprisingly, it is also true for the central discussions surrounding the topics of intentionality and aboutness as found, e.g., in Crane (2016; 2013; 2009; 2001), Jacob (2014), Yablo (2014),

10 McKay & Nelson 2010.

Lyons (1995), Zalta (1988), and Searle (1983). Moreover, the concern in these studies is almost exclusively with one attitude and one attitude only, viz. the attitude of believing,[11] with little more than side remarks concerning the others. Finally, where the subjective-objective distinction *is* mentioned there seems to be little to no awareness of the relevance of propositional attitudes let alone of the phenomenon of intentional inexistence, as will become clear by referring to the contributions of Perry (2009), Farkas (2005), McGinn (1996; 1983), Nagel (1986; 1979), Davidson (1986b), and Parfit (1984). In sum, as far as I can see a possible interconnection between propositional attitudes and the subjective-objective distinction seems to have escaped the more recent philosophical attention. Yet this is what I shall aim at uncovering in this paper.

This leaves us with the last question of this brief detour: We said that the objective is objective because it is independent of the propositional attitudes of the individual, and the subjective is subjective because it is not. What would an endorsement of this approach mean for the intersubjective, if there was such a thing at all? That would very much depend on your reading of 'the individual'. If you gave this phrase a specific interpretation rather than a generic the intersubjective might perhaps be a third option in between the subjective (proper) and the objective. It would have to be a very special individual *(God?)* or a very special super-individual mind *(the Weltgeist?)* in order for that to work. However, if you stick with the generic reading the intersubjective will just be the subjective of more than one attitude subject. Since, ultimately, there are no real super-individual attitude subjects this reading commends itself anyway. It comes with a price we should be more than willing to pay: There is no real 'common' intentionality. Any seemingly collective intentionality must ultimately trace back to intentional states of individuals or remain a dubious metaphysical stipulation. So if attitudes will always and ultimately be the attitudes of single individuals, even where they have similar ones, no new quality is introduced when we turn to groups of individuals rather than looking at one paradigmatic example. Hence what is intersubjective is merely in its own way subjective. It is in any case not objective. Thus, in the present context the intersubjective does not require further discussion of its own.

4. Intentional inexistence

Brentano was concerned with finding a feature being "characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena," a feature applying to all and only mental phenomena. Our business is different. We are not after delineating the realm of the mental. We are concerned with explaining the subjective-objective distinction. Thus we are free to adopt a more moderate view, insisting on nothing more than this: While intentional inexistence is only sufficient for being a mental phenomenon it is also necessary for being a propositional attitude. Hence we are committed to the view that propositional attitudes form a proper subclass of the mental. "Propositionalism,"[12] the opposed view, may be wrong in letter, but it seems to me correct in spirit: Propositional attitudes are *paradigm examples* of the mental. If they were not mental, nothing else would be either.

So, intentional inexistence is a characteristic feature of paradigm examples of the mental. It is a very special feature too in that we need not deduce it from a top-down theory of intentionality. Rather, we can read it off the forehead of what any ordinary normal-minded person would immediately understand when faced with a proper attitude report. To see this let us return to our examples: Tom believes that the earth is flat, Dick wants the man in the doorway to stop staring at him, and little Harry hopes that Santa Claus will come visit next

11 Cf. e.g. Lyons 1995, 216.

12 Cf. Crane 2013, 108 & Davidson 1970, 211.

Christmas. Actually, there is no theory involved up to now. We have just thrown in some natural examples we deem to be similar in certain respects; we have introduced a term for what goes on in Tom, Dick, and Harry when they believe, want, or hope what they do; and another term for what one does or uses when saying that they do so. Being mere stipulations the terms "propositional attitude" and "attitude report" do not give us any theory. They are mere handles useful in organising our examples. Yet it is at this stage already that the ordinary normal-minded person would immediately realise that for Tom to believe that the earth is flat the earth need not be so, let alone exist, likewise for Dick and Harry. Really, this is what intentional inexistence reduces to. The invocation of philosophical tradition is colourful but inessential. Brentano chose to hint at this fundamental feature by bowing to the scholastics of the Middle Ages and to Greek antiquity, and by using the help of some colouring metaphors. He provided the idea that in some sense earth itself is 'inherent' in Toms believing that the earth is flat. In this picture earth is 'in Tom's head,' if you will.[13] But this is metaphoric only, and the order of explanation is not in the least reversed. Instead, we have pretty much the situation Frege faced at one point:

> One cannot require that everything shall be defined, any more than one can require that a chemist shall decompose every substance. What is simple cannot be decomposed and what is logically simple cannot have a proper definition. Now something logically simple is no more given us at the outset than most of the chemical elements are; it is reached only by means of scientific work. If something has been discovered that is simple, or at least must count as simple for the time being, we shall have to coin a term for it, since language will not originally contain an expression that exactly answers. On the introduction of a name for something logically simple, a definition is not possible; there is nothing for it but to lead the reader or hearer, by means of hints, to understand the words as is intended. (Frege 1892, 168f.)

The match is not perfect, though: The fundamental feature we now call "intentional inexistence" need not be reached by means of scientific work. It is evident to the layman already, which is important not to forget. Apart from that, however, everything Frege contends applies in out case too. Brentano filled a gap in language: He coined (or re-introduced) a term for something simple language had no expression for. This did not amount to a definition, nor did it contribute to an analysis, simply because what we are faced with is a fundamental and simple fact about the way we think about the world. If we resist temptation, as we should, talk of inexistence merely serves to "lead the reader or hearer, by means of hints, to understand the words as is intended." This is exactly why so many issues surrounding the theory of intentionality seem to miss the point. Ultimately, questions like those whether the intentional object equals the real object or whether the term "inexistence" means or means not the same as "non-existence," and whether it comes with ontological implications, address nothing but a metaphor. Thus they are in principle as sensible, resolvable, and decidable as the question as to what in Achilles, if he is a lion, corresponds to the lion's claws.

5. Independence approached

Recall the common ground formula we aimed at explaining in a bit more detail: The objective is objective insofar as it is independent of the mind, the subjective is subjective insofar as it is not. We narrowed that down by saying that the objective is objective insofar as it is independent of everyone's propositional attitudes, and that the subjective is subjective insofar as it is not. Since all propositional attitudes are mental but not all what is mental is a propositional attitude this explication may seem to narrow. After all, is not one of Brentano's main examples something which is precisely not a propositional attitude: Love? Although rejecting propositionalism in outright form I would accept a weaker version here too: All and only what is intentional is attitudinal, although sometimes this is not easily seen at first glance.

[13] Cf. Lyons 1995, 34.

There would be no point in claiming that Romeo loved Julia if not by being prepared also to endorse that there was something Romeo believed, wanted, hoped, feared, wished, and so on concerning Julia. In this sense, attributing love for Julia to Romeo does not reduce to a report on Romeo's 'feelings' or 'sentiments' (let alone on a description of his nervous or neural system) where these reports would not themselves allude to propositional attitudes, for that would not adequately bring out the intentional aspect of the attribution. Attributing love for Julia to Romeo rather consists of an unspecific pointing towards a host of attitudes, many of them with a rich phenomenology, Romeo is taken to have with regard to Julia. This would explain very nicely why a shorthand description like "love" is so handy and useful. However, for reasons of space this is not the place to defend this view. For the time being I must settle for a weaker claim: *Dependence on someone's attitudes is sufficient for being subjective, independence of everyone's attitudes is necessary for being objective.* And that is characteristic of the subjective-objective distinction. But what may "independence" here be taken to mean?

Let us for convenience illustrate the peculiarity we are confronted with in more formal terms. To this end we can make use of a logical rendering made popular in Hintikka's seminal study *Knowledge and belief* but already introduced in von Wrights *Essay in Modal Logic* if not way before.[14] The resulting calculus is usually seen as an extension of classical propositional logic. As a more recent study puts it:

> To reason about knowledge, we add operator K_a to the language of classical logic, where $K_a\varphi$ denotes 'agent a knows (or believes) φ'. […] If it is necessary to reason [about] knowledge and belief simultaneously, we use operators K_a for knowledge and B_a for belief. Logics for reasoning about knowledge are sometimes called *epistemic* logics, while logics for reasoning about belief are called *doxastic* logics […] (Ditmarsch et al. 2015, 7).

Basically, the new move is to add one or two unary operators to the language of propositional logic.[15] As unary operators they are syntactically on a par with "¬" or "◇," which are unary sentence forming operators on sentences too. Obviously, however, "K_a" and "B_a" display a richer interior structure: They require a subject indicating index. But while all of this is formally very satisfying there is an important respect in which we shall not follow the well-trodden path before us. Hintikka and others aimed at formulating and defending a logic for epistemic and doxastic notions. Our perspective is the formal rendering of attitude reports. From this angle more traditional approaches will quite likely appear somewhat inadequate. First, knowledge is not an attitude but a hybrid consisting of an attitude (belief), a factual component, and perhaps more (which is precisely what leads to the notorious Gettier type problems). Thus knowledge has features—and causes problems—that do not originate in its intentional aspect. Secondly, there are several attitudes with the same formal features as belief. What is important to us is not just believing but also wanting, wishing, fearing, hoping and so on and so forth. So, in the spirit of proving all things and holding fast that which is good the formal language we shall introduce is a variant better described as *attitudinal logic*. Strictly speaking, it would comprise doxastic logic as a proper part, and it would touch upon the attitudinal aspects of epistemic logic. Since that would call for major revisions in those camps we better not press this point in such a confined space, though. Hence in what follows we shall use "$[\mathbf{A}_\alpha]\ p$" as a schematic expression replaceable by an adequate form of a unary attitude operator formed with the help of an expression for an attitude subject and an indicative sentence in correct order. To facilitate reading we shall eventually drop the brackets reminding us that the suitably formed attitude operator is syntactically on a par with "¬" or "◇," which poses no threat provided we always beware and keep our logical form fair.

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14 Cf. Rescher 2002, 478.

15 Cf. Hendricks & Symons 2006, 2.

Whilst at it, there are formal reasons for rendering attitude reports in accordance with this operator reading rather than treating the attitude verb as a two-place predicate like so many philosophers feel tempted to.[16] Of course, it cannot be disputed that attitude verbs like "believe" do allow for a relational reading: "Peter believes me". So there may be a certain propensity to assume there is a relation involved in our case too. But there should not: The two-place predicate "believes" is just not what is employed in an attitude report like "Peter believes that it is raining." Were we to look into the various logical, grammatical syntactical and semantical differences involved the confusion would quickly become apparent. We must confine ourselves to but one: Attitude reports allow for genuine scope interactions, as was famously illustrated by an example of Quine's.[17] "Ralph believes that someone is a spy" can either be read *de re*, giving us (1), or *de dicto*, yielding (2):

(1) $(\exists x)$ (Ralph believes that x is a spy)
(2) Ralph believes that $(\exists x)$ (x is a spy)

Quine, as always, was absorbed scrutinising quantification. Also, he was concerned by the evident lack of truth-functionality. But there is a more general point here not to be missed which neither reduces to quantification nor to what Quine termed "*referential opacity*". As a rule, where we find scope interactions there is more than one logical operator involved. Compare either (3)/(4) or (5)/(6) where the same syntactical ambiguity is found as in (1)/(2):

(3) $(\exists x) \neg$ (x is a spy)
(4) $\neg (\exists x)$ (x is a spy)
(5) $\Diamond \neg$ (The number of planets is nine)
(6) $\neg \Diamond$ (The number of planets is nine)

It is precisely the presence of more than one logical operator that creates the possibility of one operator being within the scope of the other. This is the case throughout (3) to (6). But it is also what happens in (1) and (2). So despite appearances "Ralph believes that" is the natural language counterpart of a logical operator (and, in passing, belief *de re* most likely reduces to the belief operator's having narrow scope).[18] Being forced on us by logical syntax, this regimentation is clearly not *ad hoc*. Yet it can help to explain why having an attitude is not standing in a relation to the proposition expressed by the indicative sentence the attitude operator expression is applied to. This claim of Searle's[19] and others is underpinned by the categoric difference between operators and predicates: No-one in his right mind would assume that "$\neg$" or "$\Diamond$" are predicates. So, *a fortiori,* there is neither a property nor a relation expressed $\ulcorner p \urcorner$ has or stands in to something when we put it that $\ulcorner \neg p \urcorner$ or $\ulcorner \Diamond p \urcorner$—and not just for lack of a second relatum. Being a unary operator syntactically on a par with "$\neg$" or "$\Diamond$" the same applies to the logical counterpart of "Ralph believes that" when we put it that Ralph believes that $\ulcorner p \urcorner$.[20] We simply need to safeguard against inadequately assuming that an attitude operator's inner complexity can trump its outer logical form.[21] Of course, admitting non-extensional operators like our attitudinal ones would hardly have received Quine's blessing. The champion of extensionalism believed that whatever lay beyond "strongly

16 Notably, e.g., Jerry Fodor 1978, 542.
17 Cf. Quine 1956, 178.
18 Cf. Hintikka's discussion in his 1962, 141–144 & Burge 1977, 342f.
19 Searle 1983, 18.
20 Rescher (2002, 478) seems to miss this point.
21 It will be noted that this suggests that (Frege's) predicates of higher order are not predicates and that a Frege-style analysis of existence is a pseudo-solution (to what is not a problem in the first place). I shall be very happy to defend these implications elsewhere.

extensional functional calculi" was "conceived in sin."[22] Taken as an article of faith there is no point in disputing that. Yet one would have to admit that there is a certain logic to sinning.

Let us bypass the sophisticated misconceptions that have troubled so many and let "$\mathbf{A}_\alpha$" go proxy for unary sentence-forming operators on sentences like $\ulcorner\mathbf{B}_m\urcorner$ (e.g., "*Tom* **believes that**"), $\ulcorner\mathbf{H}_n\urcorner$ (e.g., "*Harry* **hopes that**") and $\ulcorner\mathbf{W}_o\urcorner$ (e.g., "*Dick* **wants that**"), whose manifestation in a given language (say, English) contains attitude verbs but which operators are neither logical counterparts of verbal phrases nor general terms. Also, let "p" as usual go proxy for indicative sentences like, e.g.,"the earth is flat," "the man in the doorway stops staring at him," and "Santa Claus will come visit next Christmas." This yields schematic expressions in line with the examples we have been using so far. Then we can express the fact that from the attitude you cannot infer its content nor the other way round in a more general way:

(OBJ) (i) $p \nvdash \mathbf{A}_\alpha p$
(ii) $\mathbf{A}_\alpha p \nvdash p$

To vary examples: No familiarity with early modern history is required in order to acknowledge that from the fact that Columbus (m) discovered America (p) it does not follow ($\nvdash$) that he *believed* that he had discovered America ($\mathbf{B}_m p$). Also, we need not be familiar with a tragic moment in the history of the House of Windsor in order to acknowledge that, loosely speaking, from the fact that George VI (n) *wanted* to not succeed his brother to the throne ($\mathbf{W}_n p$) it does not follow ($\nvdash$) that he did not succeed his brother to the throne (p). This is analytically contained in our understanding of the attitudes and our grasping the meaning of the attitude verbs alone.

In like manner we may express the fact that from someone's having an attitude with a given content it cannot be inferred that someone else has that attitude, nor vice versa (for $\alpha \neq \beta$, of course):

(IND) (i) $\mathbf{A}_\alpha p \nvdash \mathbf{A}_\beta p$
(ii) $\mathbf{A}_\beta p \nvdash \mathbf{A}_\alpha p$

This is plain from noting that ancient history is illustrative but not essential in order to realise that from the fact that *Cleopatra* (m) feared that she be brought to Rome and paraded in the streets as part of Octavian's triumph ($\mathbf{F}_m p$) it does not follow ($\nvdash$) that *Octavian* (n) feared that Cleopatra be brought to Rome and paraded in the streets as part of his triumph ($\mathbf{F}_n p$). Nor do we need to refer to Virgil's *Aeneid* in order to bolster the claim that from the fact that *Odysseus* (n) hoped the Trojans would pull the wooden horse into their city ($\mathbf{H}_n p$) it does not follow ($\nvdash$) that *Laocoön* (m) hoped it ($\mathbf{H}_m p$). Here, as before, all that is required is properly understanding the attitudes and properly grasping the meaning of the attitude verbs.

6. Objectivity, subjectivity, and individuality

Let us dwell for a moment on (OBJ) and (IND). What do these criteria describe? (OBJ) makes visible, as a matter of mere understanding, that there is non-inference between attitudes in general and that what they are about. I take this to be the most intelligible and most fundamental fact about the having of attitudes to conceive of. This is very much what the mind-independence of the objective amounts to. Assume that $\ulcorner p\urcorner$ is a description of the world, regardless whether true or false, then what (OBJ) tells us that the world as portrayed by $\ulcorner p\urcorner$ is (inferentially) independent of any attitudes anybody may have towards it, whether he hopes, fears, wants, believes or so on that it is what it is. This encompasses our understanding of the objectivity of the world.

[22] Cf. Marcus 1961, 303.

Of course, due to (OBJ)'s generality ⌜p⌝ might also be an attitude report itself. This conforms nicely with the view that our having attitudes is an objective feature of the world too. For example, (OBJ) correctly predicts that from (7) we must not infer (8) nor vice versa:

(7) p I believe that James I died in 1625
(8) $\mathbf{B}_m\, p$ I believe that I believe that James I died in 1625

Recall Radford's famous example of French-Canadian Jean talked into participating in a quiz on English history.[23] Jean assumes to be completely at a loss but actually does remarkably well. The example is sometimes employed (unsuccessfully, I think) to show that one can know without believing.[24] However, we may use it to illustrate a valid point instead: One may fail to believe that one believes what one believes; and one may believe one believes what one fails to believe. Given (OBJ) this just appears to be a special case of a more general truth. Another windfall gain of this observation is the fact that subjectivity can neither simply be grounded in, nor be reduced to, nor be equated with either privileged access or consciousness: Since one may fail to believe one believes what one believes (and believe one believes what one fails to believe) where that is subjective one obviously neither had privileged access to it nor was conscious of it. So something may be subjective without being accessed in a privileged way or without being conscious. But this I must leave for another occasion.

(OBJ) makes a claim of non-inference. In that, (OBJ) gives us a partial explication of the mind-independence the objective is usually taken to consist of. (IND) on the other hand, makes a similar claim with regard to what is traditionally called "other minds". It makes visible, again as a matter of mere understanding, that there is non-inference between the attitudes of the individual and those of his peers. This is an important insight too. It may be taken to give us the core understanding of what *individuality* consists of: What makes us special is precisely that we have unique and different attitudes towards the world and each other. Biology is not of the essence. One might even toy with a clarifying extension of "Locke's revolutionary theory"[25] of personal identity and work out to the idea that we have one and the same person if and only if we have essentially the same core set of attitudes. But that is also a matter for another occasion.

(OBJ) characterises the objective by giving at least a necessary condition. The other side of the coin is the subjective. What do our considerations tell us about it? We know that dependence on someone's attitudes is sufficient for being subjective. How does this relate to (OBJ)? Well, dependence on someone's attitudes will be given if (OBJ) is not fulfilled. Let us use a clear example for illustration. Maybe we wonder whether the claim that

(9) p Ricky Gervais is funny

expresses a subjective state of affairs or not. Is somebody who believes that Ricky Gervais is funny in a subjective state of mind? Does he believe something subjective? Does he have a subjective belief? In order to assess what we express by any of these locutions we need to ask whether Ricky Gervais's being funny is dependent on anybody's attitudes. If we find that Ricky Gervais's being funny makes perfect sense even if nobody believed that Ricky Gervais is funny, that would be a reason to assume that the claim expresses an objective state of affairs (and accordingly for the other locutions). But since the opposite is the case we have a sufficient condition for the claim's expressing a subjective state of affairs (again accordingly for the other locutions). Put differently, we simply would not understand what it would mean to claim that Ricky Gervais was funny if nobody ever thought so. Note, importantly, that this

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[23] Cf. Radford 1966, 2ff.

[24] Cf. the surrounding discussion in, e.g., Hintikka 1962, Radford 1966 & 1990, Lehrer 1968, Hilpinen 1970, and Cohen 1989.

[25] Buzgalis 2017; Locke 1690, II.xxvii.10.

is about intelligibility. It is not about truth. Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that everybody is either funny or boring. Since everything we said applies to the claim that Ricky Gervais is boring too, we would, under this assumption, have two subjective claims one and only one of which would be true.

As (OBJ) presents it, the distinction between the subjective and the objective is about the way we fundamentally think about the world. It is not about the correctness of this way of thinking. Sometimes we seem to implicitly add a presupposition to this effect with regard to the objective at least. Strictly speaking, though, the subjective-objective distinction is about our conceptual scheme and not about the extent to which this scheme adequately depicts the reality we are placed in. Unbeknownst to us the world might be a very different place. God help us it might even be an illusion. That would not change a bit that we think of the world with the help of this distinction, organising our view on it by taking some things to dependent on our minds and others not. Thus the subjective-distinction is not to be discovered in the world. Rather, it is imposed on it as a dichotomy encoded in the way we conceive of it. And given (OBJ) it would not be correct to conflate the subjective-objective divide with the divide between appearance and reality. This would tempt us into equating the objective to the real and the subjective to the unreal, fancy, imaginative. Such confusion may be the source of the many idle discussions where the one is favoured over the other. Usually, it is the objective that is held dear and the subjective that is rather stigmatised.[26] But there are exceptions. One might contend that the extreme worship of the subjective inherent in some philosophical doctrines of idealism is a case in point. Where either the objective or the subjective is thought of a conducive to truth and the other element is thought of as conducive to error, objectivism and subjectivism are regarded as exclusive and monolithic all-purpose theories. However, they should no more be so regarded than realism and anti-realism should. One can be an anti-realist with regard to witches and a realist with regard to numbers, and maybe that is a good idea. Equally, one can be a subjectivist concerning tastes and an objectivist concerning gravitation, and that seems quite reasonable too. For all I value truth, with regard to the subjective-objective distinction it is not essential. To none of the following claims is it a precondition of their soundness that anybody have any attitude at all: That the city of Paris is on the river Seine, that it is on the river Rhône, that two is even, that two is odd, that I am here now, that I am not here now, and so on and so forth. None of these claims gives voice to anything mind-dependent. Yet only some of them are true.

By now, we have circumscribed the subjective and the objective in some detail. Thus we are in a position to explain what the subjective-objective divide ultimately amounts to. It must have become sufficiently clear that in my view it is (OBJ) that makes the difference. It captures very much of the independence the common ground formula hinted at and at the same time gives us an easily applicable criterion: Only what renders (OBJ) true is objective, whatever renders it false is subjective. Loosely speaking, (OBJ) *makes* the subjective-objective divide. It *marks* the subjective-objective distinction.

But now remember our discussion of the central feature of intentionality, which we, like Brentano, took to be the feature of intentional inexistence. We argued that ultimately it boiled down to the ordinary normal-minded person's realising that for Tom to believe that the earth is flat the earth need not be so. It is very much in accordance with this line of thought, first, to add the converse and, secondly, to generalise it. Thus the ordinary normal-minded person would be no less aware that for the earth being flat Tom need not believe so, nor anybody else, and the same for all other attitudes as well. So it emerges that (OBJ) is no less the watershed between the objective and the subjective than it is an expression of the essential feature of the

[26] Cf. Rorty 1979, 320 & 339; Davidson 1986b.

attitudinal. We may close the circle and stress finally that what distinguishes the objective from the subjective is just this: intentional inexistence.

7. Independence and determinism

If non-inference were all that was needed for a proper explication of mind-independence our survey would have been completed. But a closer look at our conceptual scheme reveals that there is more to the independence of the mental. It also touches on the important issue of *determinism* and thus ultimately relates to the issues of *causation, strict causal determination,* or *causal dependence*. Obviously, this is not the place to discuss determinism in detail but some brief remarks are in order.

In its most popular form determinism is held in one of two versions. The first version is plain and simple *Laplace determinism.* Commonly attributed to French mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace it is the classical doctrine that any given state of the world (apart, perhaps, from the first one) follows logically from "the conjunction of the laws of nature into a single proposition" and "the state of the world in some remote past."[27] As Peter van Inwagen symbolises it:

(Det) $\Box((P_0 \,\&\, L) \rightarrow P)$

For logical reasons students of deterministic theories sometimes prefer a different rendering. According to logician and linguist Richard Montague determinism should be defined thus:

> A theory with this property is such that, if we restrict our attention to those histories which are possible in the light of the theory, a given state will uniquely determine all *later* states; I call the property *futuristic determinism*. […] We may also consider a notion of *historical determinism*, according to which a given state uniquely determines all *earlier* states; […] A theory is (simply) *deterministic* if it is both futuristically and historically deterministic, that is, if the determination of states proceeds in both temporal directions. (Montague 1974, 20f.)

Put differently, a theory T "is deterministic just in case for any pair of models of T, if they agree at one time then they agree at all times."[28] Montague's conception draws on set theory and a semantics for quantified modal logic. Meant as a logical improvement on the classical conception it aims at capturing the substance of it. But clearly is not a mere synonym of Inwagen's rendering of Laplace. It is even doubtful whether it has the same extension as any classical formulation of determinism—and not just because it reserves the qualifier "deterministic" to theories rather than to the thing theorised about. What matters more in the present context, however, is that both Laplace determinism and Montague determinism are assumed to fulfil the minimum condition for causality proper, which is *counterfactual dependence.* This idea of reverting to the counterfactual is already present in David Hume's thoughts on causation as laid down in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding:*

> We may define a cause to be an object followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second. Or, in other words, where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed. (Hume 1748, 7.29)

What Hume took to be merely "other words" are, of course, not merely other words. Hume defined causation twice over: In the first sentence he defined it by temporal succession; in the last sentence he defined it by counterfactual dependence. It is this last sentence that another great thinker, David Lewis, made use of as an elucidation of his notion of *causal dependence:*

> *e* depends causally on *c* […] consists in the truth of two counterfactuals: [if *c* were to occur then *e* would occur; and if *c* were not to occur then *e* would not occur] (Lewis 1973, 563).

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27 Inwagen 2000, 158; cf. Laplace 1814, 2.

28 Earman 1986, 20f.

This yields a more modest determinist claim: Any given state of the world (apart, perhaps, from the first one) is causally dependent on some other (previous) state of the world. Note that in order for these accounts to qualify as substantially deterministic a strong notion of causality must be made use of, invoking necessity at some stage. It is doubtful whether weaker accounts of causality, e.g., temporal or probabilistic ones, could give us any 'determinism' of philosophical interest in the first place. It would be unclear, e.g., whether such 'determinisms' really could challenge the assumption of a free will. But this is precisely what classic determinism is taken to do: "Free will remains a mystery," Inwagen says.[29] Now, concerning the classic and strong understanding of determinism, like, e.g., that of Lewis, discussions ensued whether causal dependence is both necessary and sufficient for causation or but a sufficient condition only. But these discussions typically involved cases where it was assumed that there are multiple causes, causal overdetermination, preempted possible causes, or the like. Thus reservations can be dispensed with where all of these complications are explicitly excluded. However theoretical such cases may be, under this methodological assumption causal dependence would have to be regarded as both necessary and sufficient for causation, and we will operate on the basis of this assumption.

What now is the problem mind-independence poses for the determinist? To see this more clearly let us turn to a specific instance of (OBJ) where ⌜p⌝ describes a certain observable state of affairs and ⌜$\mathbf{B}_m$⌝ describes someone's belief that that state of affairs obtains:

(10) p There is a red rose
(11) $\mathbf{B}_m\, p$ Gertrude **believes that** there is a red rose

Presumably, (10) does not entail anybody's having any attitude whatsoever. Also, it would not seem that anybody's having any attitude entails (10). Therefore, what (10) describes would count as an objective state of affairs. On the other hand, what (11) describes is a mental event. But even if qualifying as *mental* it would have to be taken as an *event*, as some state of the world. Consequently, according to moderate determinism, it must depend causally on some other (previous) state of the world. And is it not plausible to assume that what (11) describes depends causally on what (10) describes? But then we would have the awkward situation that what (11) describes is independent of what it causally depends upon.

To dispel the air of paradox let us borrow a moderate foundationalist setting from discussions about epistemic justification.[30] This setting, designed to make the case as strong as possible for the advocate of determinism, I shall call the *Alston room.* It is to be thought of as a white room in broad daylight inhabited by a subject dressed all in white with plain and normal vision; placed within the subject's visual field there is a white vase on a white table with a single **RED** rose in it. Background conditions are suitably fixed such that circumstances of perception are optimal and none of the above mentioned causal complications (i.e. multiple causes, causal overdetermination, preempted possible causes, etc.) need be taken into account. Now, discussions on foundationalism have established the point that if the subject (i.e. Gertrude) under these conditions acquires the belief that there is a red rose she is directly justified in having this belief. This is just a consequence of acquiring the belief under these circumstances. The question relevant for us in the present context is rather different. We must ask: *Does* Gertrude inevitably acquire that belief? Is her (acquiring this) belief *caused* by, *strictly causally determined* by, or *causally dependent* on some feature in the Alston room?

It seems clear that the determinist must answer this question in the affirmative. As eminent a philosopher as Donald Davidson indeed does: "The relation between a sensation and a belief […] is causal. Sensations cause some beliefs and in this sense are the basis or

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29 Cf., e.g., the title of Inwagen 2000.
30 Cf. Alston 1989.

ground of those beliefs."[31] Surely, some problems will emerge once we press the determinist to identify the proper causal element. Also, with several contenders in the field the causal theory of perception tacitly presupposed is hardly uncontroversial.[32] But for the sake of argument let us suppose these obstacles can be removed. Let us just say that the determinist seems compelled to assume that the belief in question is causally dependent upon some feature in the Alston room. Quite generally, he seems committed to assuming that if there are mental states or events at all they will form intermediate parts of the causal chain of being tracing back to some original non-mental causal antecedent. But then mind-dependence would ultimately turn out to be an illusion, and we would instantly be thrown back to our original problem relating to the subjective and the objective. As Thomas Nagel put it:

> The problem is one of opposition between subjective and objective points of view. There is a tendency to seek an objective account of everything before admitting its reality. But often what appears to a more subjective point of view cannot be accounted for in this way. So either the objective conception of the world is incomplete, or the subjective involves illusions that should be rejected. (Nagel 1979, 196)

The determinist thinks of the causal closedness of the physical precisely as of the essential manifestation of the completeness of the objective conception of the world. It is precisely the recalcitrancy of the mental to fit into this pattern that hangs as a sword of Damocles over the determinist's head. Recall Davidsons concession that "there are no strict laws at all on the basis of which we can predict and explain mental phenomena."[33] To ensure that this does not lead to the feared incompleteness of the objective conception of the world Davidson was prepared to bite the bullet. The mental, he said, is *anomalous* since mental phenomena cannot be given purely physical explanations; it is *monistic* since every mental event is physical (i.e. identical with a physical event) and by this token part of the causal chain of being.

However, this seems to be fighting a rearguard action. For even assuming a causal account of perception and the perceptual apparatus, it is still too long a way from sensation to belief. In Alston's room there is neither necessity, nor law-likeness, nor substantial regularity to Gertrude's believing that there is a red rose. Gertrude may believe that there is a red rose when there is none; she may fail to believe that there is a red rose when there in fact is. After all, there is always the possibility of inattentiveness (or failure of 'awareness'). Could we rule this possibility out? Can we reformulate the determinist's claim and say that the physical setting causes the corresponding perceptual belief in the subject if and only if the subject placed in the Alston room is attentive? It seems that this would make things even worse. If we tried to rule out inattentiveness we would end up in a dilemma: (i) Either we would define inattentiveness in such a way that failing to induce the perceptual belief would count as an unfailing mark of inattentiveness. That would make the requirement of attentiveness a question-begging riposte. It would amount to immunising the determinist's claim by adding an ad-hoc hypothesis that guarantees the result hoped for in a completely trivial way. (ii) Or we would refrain from so defining inattentiveness. That would leave us with the logical possibility that Gertrude fails to believe that there is a red rose when in fact there is one and she is not being inattentive at all. Hence there would be neither necessity, nor law-likeness, nor substantial regularity in Gertrude's belief that there is a red rose and there being a red rose. This is because the mere logical possibility of detachedness between Gertrude's belief and there being a red rose is sufficient for both (12) and (13) being incorrect:

(12) If there were a red rose Gertrude would believe that there is
(13) If there were not a red rose Gertrude would not believe that there is

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31 Davidson 1986a, 311. Cf. Davidson 1986b, 45; and Pitcher 1971, 73.
32 Cf. Grice 1961 & Fish 2010.
33 Davidson 1970, 223.

Yet by this very token the determinist's minimum requirement for causation is violated, which is precisely that the corresponding counterfactual conditionals hold. So we cannot assume that there being a red rose causes or strictly causally determines Gertrude's believing that there is, or that the latter is causally dependent on the former. Even a setting so much to his favour did not provide grist on the determinist's mill. Once we no longer focus on this artificial setting we face the fact that the determinist fought a losing battle all along. At every moment of an observer's conscious experience there are countless causal interactions between the causal setting he is placed in and his perceptual apparatus. But most certainly there are not countless corresponding perceptual beliefs or other attitudes he comes to acquire. With no independent evidence at hand it would just beg the question to assume otherwise.

8. Attitudes reconsidered

It is time now to reclaim the ground conceded to the determinist. Remember that with regard to the question of causal dependence the attitude of believing cannot be special. It is just one of several propositional attitudes, one of many intentional mental states. So it is no peculiar feature of the attitude of believing that even in the most favourable case possible we cannot conclude that belief is causally dependent on the circumstances under which it is acquired. This is a feature of mind-independence all attitudes will display *qua attitude*. Clearly, we would not have obtained a different result had we considered other attitudes than belief instead:

(10)	p	There is a red rose
(14)	$\mathbf{W}_m\, p$	Gertrude **wants that** there is a red rose
(15)	$\mathbf{H}_m\, p$	Gertrude **hopes that** there is a red rose
(16)	$\mathbf{F}_m\, p$	Gertrude **fears that** there is a red rose

It was precisely the attempt to make the determinist's case as strong as possible that led us to choose believing, being the only attitude that would make his case only seem plausible. Since the result of the investigation was negative we now must broaden the view and take all attitudes into account. Given the larger picture it is hard to see how we could have been tempted into accommodating the determinist's claim in the first place. Which one of the above listed attitudes is the one the determinist would have us assume to be caused by the setting in the Alston room? All of them? Some of them? None? And if so, most importantly, why? There is an embarrassment of riches involved the determinist can only escape by making an arbitrary decision. This embarrassment again points to the one-sided diet of examples the determinist picture lived on. But remember: Even on that diet we found no plausibility to the determinist's contention that attitudes are caused. There is much more plausibility to the contrary suggestion that they emerge in uncaused spontaneity within the attitude subject. Given their uncaused nature this will probably be due to a genuine and original faculty of the subject's mind. And there is a likely candidate: the faculty of having intentional states; a faculty we have to recognise anyhow. Let me add a quick note of caution, though. That attitudes emerge in uncaused spontaneity is not tantamount to their being incapable of having effects. We are not forestalling any stance concerning the issue of *mental causation*, at least not with regard to the giving end (as opposed to the receiving end). Actually, there is much to be said in favour of an account along the lines Roderick Chisholm once sketched:

> If what I have been trying to say is true, then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing–or no one–causes us to cause those events to happen (Chisholm 1966, 23).

Chisholm eventually changed his mind, and the account he abandoned came to be looked askance at. *Agent causation*, as it is nowadays termed, ended up as an idiosyncratic minority

view in the theory of action. But, really, this was because of worries concerning the assumption that nothing causes the agent to act in the way he acts. It was not aimed at the assumption that an agent's action may have effects. So, the conception of agent causation is most likely seen as dubious with regard to the receiving end, and not with regard to the giving end, and this is why it gets support from our present considerations. Seen from this perspective, our findings may quite likely help to get an underestimated theory afloat again. But this I must leave for discussion elsewhere.

Be that as it may, this is the short and the long of it: Attitudes relate to the world but do not originate in it. They are about the world but not produced by it. Perhaps distracted by the metaphor of the eye and the cognitive pathway we may sometimes overlook the attitudinal core of the mental. We may even fail to fully acknowledge the intentionality of the mental. This may explain in part why theorists sometimes seem to neglect the most notable feature of intentional states, the feature of intentional inexistence. Had the determinist appreciated the significance of intentional inexistence he could hardly have been tempted to assume that an attitude could be caused by what it is about. Clearly, what it is about may very well be non-existent or quite different from what the subject supposes. But then the determinist's claim would hardly get off the ground. Also, had the determinist fully appreciated the significance of intentional inexistence he might have been much more cautious with regard to the assumption that someone's attitudes may cause those of others. So we may perhaps overlook essential parts of the picture at least at some point. But we are not doomed to fail. Fully appreciating the spontaneity as well as the originality of attitudes we may now add to our previous characterisation of the subjective-objective distinction:

(OBJ^c)	(i)	p	$\nvdash_{causal}$	$\mathbf{A}_\alpha p$
	(ii)	$\mathbf{A}_\alpha p$	$\nvdash_{causal}$	p
(IND^c)	(i)	$\mathbf{A}_\alpha p$	$\nvdash_{causal}$	$\mathbf{A}_\beta p$
	(ii)	$\mathbf{A}_\beta p$	$\nvdash_{causal}$	$\mathbf{A}_\alpha p$

This rather formal way of putting it is quite a mouthful. Luckily, it can be summarised in a brief and handy fashion: *One's attitudes are both inferentially and causally independent both of the world they are about and of the attitudes of others.* What is subjective is subjective because it is dependent on someone's attitudes. What is objective is objective because it is not dependent on anyone's attitudes. It is true that this may not be all that could be said about the subjective, the objective, and their distinction. But it seems that whatever is said could not mark a true and sound insight into the matter if it did not ultimately build on the understanding reached above, or did not at least conform to it.

Conclusion

Ricky Gervais is funny. To say so is to say something subjective. This is because we would not understand what it meant to say so save by (implicitly) making assumptions concerning the attitudes of some, many, or all. Also, to say that Ricky Gervais is funny concerns what we would call *matters of taste*. So we may safely conclude that matters of taste are subjective, and that gives us the first field of application for our new way to frame the subjective-objective distinction. However, the subjective-objective distinction would not have the importance it has if all it contributed to was a better understanding of matters of taste. One of the camps where philosophical clashes between subjectivism and objectivism have been particularly fierce is *moral theory*. It would be interesting to see if our results have a bearing on it too.

Discussions in moral theory are often heated. Perhaps this is because very often the stakes are very high. Another reason could be that there is no real consensus with regard to where to draw the line between the subjective and the objective. So it is no surprise that there are

disagreements over the nature of objective values, the appeal to (objective) moral facts, the (objective) truth-value of moral judgements and the (objective) validity of (objective) universal principles. In all these discussions subjectivism emerges as the big contender. But it very rarely becomes clear which side emerges victorious. This sobering result points to the fact that in all likelihood the nature of these discussions is often misconceived. They are probably most frequently seen as disagreements over epistemology, ontology, or semantic theory. For instance, John Mackie in his now classic *Ethics* took issue with moral objectivism by advancing (what he saw as) ontological objections on behalf of his favoured kind of moral subjectivism.[34] So Mackie took the issue to be decidable in ontology. The approach chosen here is different. We ask rather what attitudinal consequences the one or the other view would commits us to. Consider any moral judgement in conjunction with any attitude report on it, e.g.,

(17) p Lying is reprehensible
(18) $(\exists x)\ \mathbf{B}_x\ (p)$ Someone **believes that** Lying is reprehensible

It will be conceded on all sides that the question whether what (17) says is objective hinges on its mind-independence. As I have argued above, it is only mind-independent if it does not depend on anyone's attitudes. So it needs to be inferentially and causally independent of what is reported with (18) or any other attitude report on it, for that matter. But would it not be so strange as to border on unintelligibility to assume that lying was reprehensible yet literally nobody ever thought so? Only if prepared to defend this very peculiar position could the moral objectivist pride himself with having rebutted the subjectivist's objection. Still, that would only have helped to establish the objectivity of (17). It would not have established its truth. Explained in these terms, the moral objectivist seems to face much more of an uphill struggle than he is usually taken to. Our present task, however, is not to engage in that debate but only to show that our results have a bearing on it.

Also, very frequently moral discussions eventually get stuck in a stalemate where opponents rank one moral rule over the other. Picture a dispute on whether it is worse to lie or to fail a friend:

(19) Lying is worse than failing a friend
(20) Failing a friend is worse than lying

Tom defends (19) over (20), Dick has it the other way round. If others join the the argument merely adding their subjective view the dispute may gain fervour but it will not approach resolution. What is called for is a fact of the matter that, pointed out to the opponents, would resolve the issue. Is there any such objective fact conceivable? If there were the worrisome problem of moral disagreement would be solved for good. We just would have to find that fact and have everybody acknowledge it. But of course, the problem of moral disagreement is so irresolvable because as a matter of principle no such fact can be provided. What makes Tom and Dick rank the one rule over the other is precisely the set of attitudes they have with regard to the behaviour in question. And likewise for everybody else. But again, our task is not to engage in this debate but to show that our results are relevant for it.

Space prevents me from exploring the many and interesting consequences the present reformulation of the subjective-objective divide has in many other camps, e.g. in the philosophy of the social sciences and in economic theory. I trust, however, that it has become sufficiently clear that the seemingly small step of clarifying mind-independence in terms of independence from propositional attitudes is not so small in the end. If what I have been trying to say is correct intentional inexistence is the fulcrum of any proper account of independence of the mind. Thus every approach towards the subjective-objective distinction

[34] Cf. Mackie 1977, 18.

will fail to capture the substance of the matter unless it takes this central feature of intentionality into account. That this is more easily accounted for within a dualist framework than it is in whatever form of monism one might favour may add to the uneasiness in some circles. But, finally, our task is primarily descriptive, whatever the merits of revision may be.

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