

## WHAT DOES INTENTIONAL NORMATIVISM REQUIRE?

### *Abstract*

Most people who have discussed the question whether attributions of intentional attitudes or contents are normative have assumed that this question boils down to the question whether such judgements have normative force "by themselves", or as it is often put, to the question whether they are "intrinsically" or "non-hypothetically" normative. I take issue with this and argue that a judgement can be normative, in the sense of essentially involving a normative concept, even if its normative force is "extrinsic", and even if it lacks normative force altogether. The result is that most attempts to show that attributions of attitudes or contents lack normative force, even if successful, could not count as refutations of intentional normativism.

Section 1 is stage setting. I briefly explain why I focus on the normativity of the mental and not on the normativity of linguistic meaning.

In section 2, I make a distinction between a judgement's having normative force and a judgement's having normative subject-matter. Roughly, a judgement has normative force when it entails that someone has some normative status (e.g., that he/she ought to do something), and it has normative subject matter (content) when it essentially involves some normative concept. I then rely on the Frege-Geach point (against moral expressivism) to emphasize that a concept may be normative in the subject-matter sense without any of the judgements involving it having normative force. This shows that one doesn't have to argue that attributions of attitudes have normative force, in order to be able to maintain that they involve normative concepts (in the subject-matter sense). I remark that no good reason has been given to insist that intentional normativism should be construed as claiming that attributions of attitudes (or contents) have normative force (rather than normative subject-matter).

In section 3, I turn to the claim that intentional normativism should be concerned with whether attributions of attitudes are "intrinsically" and/or "categorically" normative. I argue that to insist on "intrinsic" normativity is tantamount to insisting on attributions of

attitudes' being normatively forceful, which, at this point, has already been found to be unwarranted. Likewise, there is no point in insisting on "categorical" normativity, since the categorical/hypothetical distinction (as I tentatively reconstruct it) is a distinction between two sorts of normative forcefulness.

I am thus led to submit that it is sufficient (and necessary), in order to vindicate intentional normativism, to establish that (all) intentional judgements have normative subject-matter, which is equivalent to establishing that intentional *concepts* are normative, in the sense that they (either are or) involve normative force conferring concepts. For a judgement to satisfy this condition, it is sufficient, but *not* necessary, that it entails, possibly in conjunction with auxiliary premises involving no normative concept, some "basic" normatively forceful judgement.

In the concluding section 4, I briefly discuss one example (taken from Boghossian 2005) of the kind of mistakes I think should be avoided in discussing the issue of intentional normativism, and I mention one difficulty that will have to be dealt with by anyone who would want to show that attributions of attitudes *by* showing that they have normative *force*.

#### *References*

- Boghossian, Paul A. (2005) 'Is Meaning Normative?', Nimtz and Beckermann *eds.* (2005) 205-218  
 Nimtz, Christian and Ansgar Beckermann *eds.* (2005) *Philosophy-Science-Scientific Philosophy*, Paderborn, Mentis