

Neil Roughley, *Wanting and Intending. Elements of a Philosophy of Practical Mind*

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This book is a comprehensive and thorough exploration of the concepts of wanting and intending, their co-relations and conceptual and empirical interdependencies. The book is divided into ten chapters. The breadth of investigation (the book has *in summa* almost 400 pages) and Roughley’s academic scrupulousness in dealing with many theoretical details and the vast amount of references, appears to be rather typical for a book written for an academic degree (it is a revised *Habilitationsschrift*). Nonetheless, its philosophical aspirations go beyond an extended dissertation.

The book has two parts, one dealing with the concept of wanting (chaps. 1–5) and one with the concept of intention (chaps. 6–10). In a large simplification, its main theoretical contribution to action theory is as follows. The first part is an attempt to give a complex answer to “Aristotle’s question as to what it is in the soul that originates movement” (23). Roughley’s broad response is rather standard for the tradition of action theory. He points to desires and wanting, but—and here is the interesting point—without the use of the Davidsonian talk of pro-attitudes. Instead, he introduces the concept of *wanting** which aims to generically embrace various ‘optative attitudes’ expressed in ‘wants’, ‘desires’, ‘interests’ or ‘concerns’ (56). Based on the assumption of “the essential structural analogy between mental states and linguistic utterances” (xx), the definition of wanting Roughley offers is explicated in terms of being the bearer of a mental state (a representation in ‘the generic optative mode’) capable of conscious articulation in the form “Let it be the case that *p*” (81). It is worth to note that such an account of wanting is purified from doxastic and motivational ingredients (“factoring out believing and fuelling”, 54). The virtues of this proposal are then compared with two rival theories. The first is the Platonic-Aristotelian idea that desire involves aiming at the good (a tradition revived in the twentieth century by inter alia G.E.M. Anscombe and Tim Scanlon). The second one, ‘the mere entailment view’, is the claim that the ascription of a desire to an

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agent is just a way of characterizing her action as intentional (adding desire or want to an agent's φ -ing does no explanatory job). Roughley's minimalistic construal, interestingly based on an interpretation of Moore's Paradox (82–88), meets the challenges posed by those accounts, while remaining in close proximity to typical responses to the question of the origin of action.

The second part of the book is devoted to the concept of intention. Roughley's basic ambition here is to offer an approach that can compete with the well-established functionalist and nonreductive approach to intention that emerged from the 'standard theory' proposed by Donald Davidson and which gained its most influential shape in Michael Bratman's 'planning theory' in *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* (1987). Although sympathetic to Bratman's account, Roughley aims to convince us that the mental mechanisms responsible for intending are not 'downstream' from intention formation as functionalists hold, but 'upstream'. To intend an agent must possess other psychological competences, especially the capability of practical deliberation. According to Roughley, this makes his approach a distant relative of the Aristotelian *bouleutikê orexis*, deliberative desire (cf. *EN* 1113 a 10). The reductive definition he submits has the following disjunctive form:

X intends to perform action φ iff:

- 1 X wants* to φ ,
- 2 X doesn't see his φ -ing as a matter for at least minimal deliberation and
- 3.1 If X has minimally deliberated on whether to φ , he has, in the course of his most recent minimal deliberation on the issue, decided to φ , or
- 3.2 If X hasn't engaged in any such minimal deliberation, his want* to φ has been consciously tokened and is motivationally unrivalled (289).

The form of the definition is a resultant of one of the most interesting ideas in the book, the distinction between decisional and nondecisional intentions. Typically, decisions entail intentions (it is a 'conceptual truth', 259). Unlike in this traditional view, nondecisional intentions are understood as formed without consciously occurrent wants*—i.e. via gradual crystallisation, habits, spontaneous responses, reason judgments or are simply generated by the specification of intentions already possessed (264–266). The Aristotelian timbre of the definition resides in the fact that both types of intention generation require *deliberation*. In deliberating, agents respond to their 'optative uncertainty' inaugurated by the question of the form 'what shall I do?' or 'what I am to do?' (233). Roughley gives a detailed account of how these two types of intention bear the traces of deliberation. One may also find the Aristotelian spirit in the idea that intending depends on normative properties of our life form (334), especially the anchoring of responsibility for action (279, 294). This idea appears as a climax of the book.

The scope of—mostly positive—arguments and investigations of the work belongs to the core of contemporary philosophy of action. Roughley labels it as 'elements of a philosophy of practical mind'. This may suggest, to some extent, a novel holistic perspective. Unfortunately, the subtitle serves rather as a rhetoric ornament: the idea of a practical mind, remaining rather a metaphor, is not explicitly developed in the text.

Although the essay is almost equally split into two parts, Roughley's investigations and theoretical ambitions lean decidedly towards the second part on the concept of intention. The book target is—according to the climax of explorations—generally intending and its roles. In this light, and given the book's length, Roughley's aspiration to offer a similarly meticulous

(analogous in each case, xviii) discussion of both wanting and intending may appear as overambitious. The variety of issues discussed in both parts would be good material for two independent studies. Still, although the work offers a truly impressive overview of valuable literature—both in action theory and psychology, there are various interesting ideas which either did not enter the scope of Roughley's investigations (for example: the idea of motor intentions) or received insufficient attention (for example: hedonic aspects of desire, 90) or have been discussed unconvincingly (intention agglomeration, 202).

Generally, Roughley's style of writing is reasonably clear. Only some of his terminological solutions appear peculiar (cf. 'optative attitudinizing', 'intentional syndrome'). It should be noted that the book also contains a number of philosophically clichéd statements whose banality is not highlighted—as one might expect from a good philosophical text (e.g. "Rational agents are disposed to act in accordance with the principles of rationality." 226). Additionally, despite the overall clarity in writing and the book structure, the text contains a significant amount of remnants of insufficient editing and proofing.

Notwithstanding the minor flaws, some of which have been pointed out above, Roughley's book is a painstaking, sensibly written and remarkable philosophical enterprise. It gathers and discusses many views in one place, buckling the whole variety of ideas into a philosophically interesting picture of intentional agency. An attempt at leaving the functionalist nonreductivism about intention by re-entering the Aristotelian path is certainly an attractive strategy in the contemporary philosophy of action. And the fact that the book includes significant portions of empirical knowledge from the area of developmental and cognitive psychology (research on infants and primates) adds to its value.

Roughley's presentation of the concept of wanting is telling and his novel approach to the concept of intention is worthy of further interest. Thus, the book is essential reading for researchers in the philosophy of action and related disciplines.

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