

I have decided to go to the Tate Gallery next Friday

“To decide to perform an action X is partly to perform an intention to do X. A necessary condition of the agent’s deciding at time t_1 to do X at time t_2 is that the agent may not have had the intention of doing X for a certain period of time prior to t_1 . A second necessary condition of his having decided at t_1 to do X at t_2 is that during a period of time after t_1 , he intends to do X at t_2 . But these necessary conditions do not together form a sufficient condition of deciding to do X. For an agent can come at t_1 to have, and can continue for a period of time to have, the intention of doing X at t_2 without having decided to do X at t_2 . What further conditions must the formation of an intention satisfy in order that that formation of an intention count as a decision?”*

Deciding to do X seems to be closely related to deliberation. It seems that nothing can count as a decision to do X unless the agent has deliberated about doing X. So it is possible that the three conditions consisting of: (1) the two necessary conditions of deciding to do X which are mentioned in the above paragraph; (2) the agent’s having deliberated about doing X; (3) the agent’s having formed the intention to do X as a result of having deliberated about doing X, are each a necessary condition of and together form a sufficient condition of the agent’s having decided to do X.*

‘–the only step in deciding is the formation of an intention after deliberation takes place. There is no additional step named “deciding” occurring between the deliberation and the formation of the intention which is distinct from the formation of the intention and which then brings about or results in the formation of the intention. Deciding to do X is identical with the formation of an intention to do X.’*

The statement, ‘I have decided to go to the Tate Gallery next Friday’, would then, in this context, be synonymous with the statement, ‘I intend to go to the Tate Gallery next Friday’. It is the expression of an intention where the intention formed is the result of deliberation.

Meiland says, ‘statements’ of the form “I intend . . .” are either true or false.* If I say that I intend to do X and I do in fact intend to do X, then my statement of intention is true; if I do not intend to do X, my statement of intention is false. However, some philosophers would wish to say that statements of fact differ in regard to certain logical features from statements which express intention; they would say that statements expressing intention are either sincere or insincere.

‘If a man sincerely utters a statement which fails to accord with the facts then he is mistaken; if he utters . . . an expression of intention, then he is not mistaken merely because the facts do not accord with his utterance.’**

“The expression of an intention in the form of a statement about the future is condemned as a lie not on the grounds merely that it is not

fulfilled (not even if the non-fulfilment is voluntary), nor yet merely because the utterer does not expect it to be fulfilled; but only on the grounds that the expression of the intention is not *meant*.’**

‘It seems to mark off the concept of intention that when we contradict a man’s statement of his intention we call him—in effect, maybe in good humour, and except in very special cases—a liar; for in the usual sort of case we do not suppose that a man is or even can be mistaken about his intentions. But another mark of the concept of intention is that a man *can* lie about them.’***

*Jack W. Meiland, *The Nature of Intention*.

**A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*.

***Brice Noel Flemming, ‘On Intention’, *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXIII 1964.

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