

Title of Presentation: Divesting language of belief

Language or linguistic ability has long been regarded as constitutive of belief, leading debates about the nature of doxastic phenomena to focus heavily on their language related properties. Although more contemporary views rarely endorse such a close link between the two, discussions about belief remain strongly influenced by linguistically motivated considerations. Despite their intuitive appeal, retaining some of these inherited assumptions runs the risk not only of conflating distinguishing features of belief with those of language-mediated thought, but also of imposing unwarranted cognitive complexity requirements on doxastic states. This paper addresses the question of whether it is possible to coherently tackle the subject of belief while avoiding these pitfalls. By way of an affirmative answer, I propose an alternative perspective that takes belief's relationship to truth as an uncontroversial starting point, drawing on pragmatist theories to develop a more substantial account of that relationship and motivate a way of conceptualizing belief that sidesteps some of the relevant issues. In what follows, I discuss several implications of this view, one of which is the reversal of belief's position relative to language, such that instead of language being constitutive of belief, belief itself emerges as foundational for language based thought.

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