

## SK Seminar, 27.11.18, Shoemaker continued

**Present:** Giacomo, Giovanni, Fiona, Xintong, Eduardo, Peter, Jose, Peter, Indrek, Carrie, Jonathan, Sonia

**Presenter:** Carrie

**Carrie** notes that Shoemaker takes self-blindness to be impossible because we cannot tell self-blinds apart from normal people. This seems to be a verificationist move in the paper. **Giovanni** wonders if one could make a stronger point than Shoemaker actually makes. Instead of appealing to behavioural identity, one could appeal to functional identity between the two persons. This is not compatible with Shoemaker's own description, though, since George in Shoemaker's case has to reason. But perhaps at some point he doesn't. Is there room for this stronger version of the argument? **Carrie** responds that there seems to always be some root functional difference, even if there is similarity on the surface. We would have to be hardcore functionalists to buy the stronger argument. **Giovanni** suggests that with respect to intentional states functionalism isn't such a radical view. If we go with functionalism, the conclusion would be that you cannot generate functional duplicates of normal persons without giving them knowledge of their beliefs.

**Carrie** raises another point. According to Shoemaker, self-blinds cannot use language assertively, since the subject must recognize being in a situation where to assert. But the person can recognize being in such a situation using third person means (see also Carrie's criticism on the handout).

**Peter** notes an unclarity in Shoemaker's oscillation between what seems plausible about George and what is actually not plausible about George.

**Jonathan** raises an issue concerning the structure of Shoemaker's argument. Shoemaker raises a problem (rule-following), shows that an opposing view cannot deal with it, and concludes that his view is better. But he does not explain how his own view deals with the problem.

**Peter** responds to Carrie's worry concerning verificationism. Independently of any general arguments for or against verificationism, it is more plausible in some areas than in others. Compare with Quine's point that behaviourism in the theory of meaning is obligatory for everyone. If Shoemaker makes verificationist assumptions, they are of a different category than verificationism about the far side of the Moon. Carrie agrees that Shoemaker's verificationism might be restricted to this domain and could be more close to a form of functionalism (as Giovanni suggested earlier).

### *Section VI: Second objection*

**Giovanni** makes two points concerning Shoemaker's discussion of Moore-pradoxical statements. First, he reminds us of the ambiguity identified by Byrne (or Burge?) in "total evidence", noting that in one sense George has total evidence in another he does not. Because of this, it is not clear if the Moore-paradoxical case is inconceivable. Second, it is true that George would be puzzled, but perhaps

even a normal person would be puzzled in that case. George says tacitly that he believes it's raining, but everything else suggests that he doesn't. **Peter** responds that what seems to make George's case puzzling is that the only reason he can see he believes that it is raining is that he can reason to it. But that's the only reason. Normal people don't have that puzzlement.

### *Section VII*

**Peter** expresses reservations about some of the examples of the alternative Moore sentences, e.g. 'I'll be there but I intend not to be' could be used to mean something like 'I will be there but I will try not to be'. The link between action and intention does not seem to be as tight as that between truth and belief. **Paul** adds that it is possible to intend things one knows one is unable to do, e.g. paramedics still intend to save the patient, even if they know they are not able to. **Carrie** adds that to the extent the examples are less like the standard Moores paradoxes, they are less problematic for Shoemaker, since even normal people might not avoid them.

**Giovanni** wonders about the relationship between Shoemaker's view and the view that self-knowledge is an artefact of grammar. Maybe our practice of belief ascriptions requires a certain way of talking, but then the question becomes: why is the practice needed or successful in the first place? **Carrie** asks, if this point is similar to the point that, if the link between first and second order beliefs is a matter of conceptual truth, then why do we have such concepts. **Peter** responds that Shoemaker seems to provide an answer to that question rather than posing it. Having a belief and making rational use of them is what it is to have second order beliefs.

**Carrie** notes that Shoemaker's conclusion (see bottom of p. 5 on the handout) does not concern first- and third-person asymmetry. Rejecting self-blindness as he defines it earlier is not part of the conclusion. **Giovanni** asks about a conceptual tie, but at that point this issue has disappeared.

**Carrie** suggests that the moral later in the paper is that second order beliefs are either superfluous or supervenient and agrees that, if superfluity is the only option, then supervenience would be plausible. **Peter** asks what would make second order beliefs superfluous. Is it that they make up a second realm of the mind that needn't be there if the first realm is there? If the first order beliefs can be interconnected in a rational way, then second order beliefs start looking superfluous. **Giovanni** adds that second order beliefs wouldn't be superfluous in the sense that you cannot keep them out of the picture. **Carrie** notes that rationality might bring the second order beliefs in the picture, since this is what the second order is said to supervene on. **Peter** agrees and adds that whatever it is it must be what puts the believer in the realm of normative criticism.

### *Section VIII*

**Peter** expresses puzzlement about the weakness of Shoemaker's conclusion. A self-blind person is someone who *never* has first-person access to their thoughts, but the argument points to a "most of the

time” conclusion. Shoemaker doesn’t want infallibility/omniscience but something like “necessarily most of the times”. **Carrie** notes that the main rival is the perceptual model. **Peter** then wonders whether the weaker conclusion is all that’s necessary to defeat the only rival.

**Giovanni** agrees that the George argument only gives us a “sometimes” and notes that before the argument Shoemaker claims that each belief doubles as knowledge of itself, which suggests that he aims for a stronger conclusion. **Carrie** adds that Shoemaker also says that the connection between first and second order is not mediated but direct which also suggests a stronger conclusion. **Giovanni** reads out Shoemaker’s argument on pp. 121-122. **Carrie** notes that rationality is still in play in the argument as the additional condition and that our objection still applies. **Peter** notes that the argument is not very compelling in itself. It builds on the idea that if there are only first order beliefs and desires, then they don’t rationalize changes in themselves. Going back to the bomb analogy that Shoemaker uses, bombs bring about changes in themselves. **Carrie** suggests that the point is not that first order beliefs couldn’t bring about changes in themselves but that they couldn’t bring about rational changes in themselves.