

SK minutes, 05.11.19, Constitutivism

Present: Alan, Crispin, Xintong, Paul, Peter, Giovanni, Jonathan, Carrie, Indrek

Presenter: Crispin

Concerning §2 on the handout: **Giovanni** wonders why we should say that the Cartesian description of the first-third-personal asymmetry is too strong, rather than saying that it's too weak? **Crispin** responds that it's difficult in the Cartesian picture to spell out what is getting in the way when I'm not sure how I'm feeling. The picture is too strong in one sense, but too weak in another.

Giovanni also wonders whether the distinction between there being independent data for cognitive competence (e.g. of bats navigating in the dark) and whatever reason we have to think that we are good at telling our own mental states is meant to be a dichotomy: either there is independent evidence or there isn't. Couldn't it be a bit of both? I have some data about what my intuitions are, how they affect my behavior, etc. **Crispin** responds that, in that case, we do not doubt that the data are data. **Jonathan** wonders whether Crispin's point applies not only to self-knowledge but also to perceptual knowledge. **Crispin** responds that there is some evidence that our perceptual knowledge is sometimes off. We have a concept of how it could be off when we think of skeptical scenarios. We do not seem to have anything comparable to this with self-knowledge. The best evidence in the case of self-knowledge is what a subject is prepared to acknowledge about him/herself. To this, **Peter** adds a comparison with the bat case. We do have evidence that people can navigate in the light. This is evidence for perceptual knowledge.

Paul adds the question: Could we make sense of a rational subject with a fundamental misconception of themselves. **Crispin** responds that the subject would need to be an intentional subject. So, it seems that the answer is no. **Paul** notes that that would another create a dis-analogy between the cases of self- and perceptual knowledge.

Giovanni wonders if Crispin's point is the following: we don't take the trifecta (see handout p. 1) to be true on the basis of evidence but because they are an institution, they are a priori, etc. **Crispin** responds that what we are looking for is a conceptual explanation of the following shape: the concepts are such that they give us the trifecta. **Peter** suggests an alternative way of putting it: what is it about self-knowledge that makes it reasonable that the trifecta are true. The issues not merely a matter of spelling out the metaphysical grounds of self-knowledge nor a matter of describing a coherent practice of talking of mental states. It is both.

Paul wonders whether there is a parallel with the adoption problem (which we looked at in the a priori stream) and the trifecta. We also cannot have evidence for logic.

Concerning §3 (p.2): **Crispin** clarifies the language-first vs thought-first dichotomy: expressivism is one way of making a language-first proposal. We take your avowals to be manifestations of your mind. Your avowals are the ultimate data.

Giovanni wonders what kind of explanation we can expect from a language-first account. If someone asks me 'why is Julius the inventor of the zip?', would the answer be e.g. 'the concept of Julius and the concept of being an inventor of the zip are related in this-and-this way'? But there is another way of answering the question: 'Julius is the guy who invented the zip'. **Crispin** suggests that the account is better understood with the help of the distinction between deep and superficial necessity. The distinction is a matter of what the truth is grounded in. That is where the action is going to be. In the case of Julius, the language-first answer will be: no reason.

Concerning §4 (Constitutivism): **Xintong** adds a further metaphysical construal of constitutivism which is advocated by Coliva: your 1st-order mental state depends on the existence of certain 2nd-order judgments.

Paul asks whether, if we want to hold on to immediacy (first trifectum), we have to give up detection. **Crispin** suggests that detection could still be immediate. **Peter** wonders where immediacy fits in with constitutivism. Authority (second trifectum) is the left to right direction of the bi-conditional, and salience (third trifectum) is the right to left direction. What about immediacy? **Peter** also wonders whether and what role does the explanatory isolation of redness and secondary qualities play in connection to constitutivism. Is constitutivism meant to account for psychological qualities in light of their very limited explanatory role? **Crispin** responds that this idea should perhaps be in play.

Giovanni asks if immediacy in the constitutivist framework is explained as arising from the fact that a second-order judgment can determine the extension of the concept of the property it is about, and whether it is necessary to explain it that way. It is difficult to see what the ground would be of a judgment that determines the extension of the property it itself concerns. **Crispin** responds that if you detected your mental state, then there is something out there to detect. Constitutivism turns that around. **Giovanni** then wonders whether the apriority of the bi-conditional is really playing any role. The bi-conditional provides a necessary connection between the two sides, to this we add that it does not capture a very good detection mechanism. What role is left for apriority? **Crispin** responds that apriority plays a role because we have to justify that the biconditional holds necessarily.

Peter adds a clarification: apriority does not really concern the biconditional 'S judges $S(M) \equiv S(M)$ ' but the C-conditions in ' $C \rightarrow (S \text{ judges } S(M) \equiv S(M))$ '. The question is: Could we specify the C-conditions a priori?