

KBNS self knowledge Seminar 26/11/19

Attending: Paul, Giovanni, Giacomo, Xintong, Peter, Indrek, Crispin, Sonia

Part I Discussion on Crispin's notes

Presenting: Crispin

Giovanni: I see the point that people are good at telling what mental states one is in is not supported by evidence. But what's the link between that observation and the claim that we cannot identify a special mechanism for self-knowledge?

Crispin: we don't have independent tool to find out the mental states and check whether there is a correlation. We rely on first-person reports and it presupposes reliability.

Giovanni: we have no independent tool to detect, but this is not to say that there isn't an organ, an organ from which where one has perceptual state that tracks mental states.

Crispin: whether there is an organ is not important; Byrne's inferential model would be a special mechanism on my use of the notion.

Giovanni: any mechanism might malfunction, every account would allow for brute error to some extent; lack of concept, lack of concentration, C condition.

Crispin: What generates the impression? There is no distinct phenomenal seeming; whatever the account is, it needs to handle the blindsight case.

Giovanni: it is the kind of story a perceptual account would give. There can be perception without consciousness. Blindsight is a form of perception nevertheless.

Giovanni: the objection from brute error is this. Brute error is impossible. Any account predicts that brute error is possible should thereby be rejected. I think the talk of some subpersonal special mechanism is a distraction.

Paul: the special mechanism account at best provides an empirical/psychological story. We are interested in why this mechanism is reliable.

Crispin: the view is committed to say there is a reliable mechanism. But why it is reliable is science. If we have evidence of its reliability, then it can be knowledge. But we don't have independent evidence for that; it relies on a rationality assumption. Special mechanism views haven't vindicated anything.

Giovanni: regarding Shoemaker, why can't we say that one might be wrong in some cases?

Crispin: We need to minimize inexplicable error, which is a general constraint on how to interpret other subjects.

Giovanni: I think it is the impossibility of brute error of a single case that we should be focusing on.

Crispin: It could be localized. People are in general pretty good in telling their minds, but when it comes to articulate hope, they got it hopeless wrong.

Peter: How holist is the view?

Crispin: we should allow localized cases; one could be colour blind but pretty good at perceiving in general. It is the Davidsonian point that there is no such thing as having the concept you have (at the conceptual level, we won't describe you having perceptual belief) unless you are good at perceiving things.

Part II research presentation, *the 'I' paper*

Presenting: Paul and Indrek

Giovanni: the argument is that to know the truth condition of the I sentence, I need to know who the speaker is. I either know it in third-person or I know it first-person. If the former, there is a gap; if the latter, I need to appeal to another 'I' sentence. But why it cannot be a basic knowledge? I am the speaker, is all I need to know. Certain things are basic knowledge, what's the problem with that simple picture?

Crispin: You need a premise to the effect that there is no knowing of who you are unless you master the use of first-person pronoun. Consider a de se thought that has no first-person pronoun. There is a mystery as to how to get that knowledge.

Giovanni: to understand and then gain knowledge that I am the speaker would involve the mastery of first-person concept. To give an account of how one can come to master first-person pronoun is a difficult task. How do I get into the practice of using first-person concept? But this seems to be a problem for every concept.

Peter: there can be an asymmetry though. The concept red—you learn and apply it by looking at them red things; the thought is that it is not like that in the first-person case.

Crispin: I don't learn the use of 'I' without help from others.

Giovanni: how do we get from semantics to epistemology?

Peter: Replace 'how do we know' with 'how do we understand'. Take the epistemological justification side out.

Crispin: If it is the question how do I understand, then there is no circle. How do we get to the conclusion that 'I' doesn't refer? The context needs to be settled by the fact about who is speaking. It is not assumed that 'I' refers.

Giovanni: The thought seems to be that we deny that there is referent, without denying it that 'I' has semantic value.

Crispin: how is saying 'I am s' helps to fix the context of 'I am F'?

Sonia: if we replace the sentence 'I am F' with the sentence 'I, indrek, am F', would that generate the same problem?

Giovanni: If Giacomo says that 'I, indrek, am F', 'I' refers to the speaker, Giacomo,

Crispin: It could be that, if Giacomo was confused for some reasons, that the speaker intention is to refer to indrek, but the semantic referent is the speaker.

Crispin: how is it that if choose 'I am' operator, we can solve the problem?

Peter: is there an analogous problem for world parameter? I don't need to identify this world in order to understand sentences I utter; I just need to speak in this world.

Crispin: It may be that referring is cheap but not that it is not to say that 'I' does not refer.