

Magel commentary

1. From: human adults' ~~explanations~~ attributing everyday explanations of thought and action involve treating knowledge as a mental state.

To:

2. Knowledge is a mental state.

Start. What do humans understand of knowledge.

2 claims about what knowledge is

- 1). Sources
- 2). Hawthorne

Fricker: concedes that K plays role in explanations of thought & action; but still claims that K is hybrid and not purely mental (does allow that it is mental in one sense). ("absolutely is human...")

Claims about hybrids are weak — if chimps can grasp only ~~some~~ features of K in their ordinary thinking, surely the same is true of humans. → see 1000

①

- Order of dev. not obviously revealing of adults.
- Knowledge of adults' understanding abilities is limited. (conceptual structure and processing aspects)

- What if the motivation for ascribing chimpanzees understanding of K is their failure in false belief tasks — if the grounds are negative rather than positive.

View opposed to odd:

1. select in favour ← K matters
2. their guidance explained by this K if it were not, if what explains their actions were mere belief, why seek out an informant with K?

Nagel commentary

Apparently empirical claims without supporting evidence

Cartman:

Tricker: "when science knows..."

Leading epistemologists make these claims... scandalize psychologists.

(Two obstacles to program: one is that we don't know very much about understanding of K; the other is that we make entirely unsupported claims.)

(Would be neat to cf psych on K as a consolation prize for lacking PR.)

Start with point about want informat. to K;

Inf. spce K explains their actions

(Maybe reply is that you want informat to have TR.)

2

Tricker: "In each case in which science knows that P, this fact about her is constituted by her believing that P, and some other conditions being satisfied, in virtue of which her belief counts as K."

Need to bracket two issues

1) K is hybrid

2) B better explains than K

(or maybe: appeal to K is only explanatory, if at all, because appeal to B is explanatory).

(or Nagel & Cohen: expl. in terms of K extends a system relative to one that appeals to only B (& B-similarity sentence) down).

3) We add to ordinary appeal to K to explain thought & action.

(Nagel argues that (3) is evidence for (2), but I suppose that it is only evidence if you suppose that humans are concerned with the meta-physics as well as getting through the day.)

Understanding of Knowledge

- There is a tendency to spse we know what adults understand (examples: Fricker, Canan)
- But in practice ~~this~~ we don't know, any more than we know what adults understand of how things work (Keil).

- Nagel's argument is important just for its core — the issue of whether we in fact treat knowledge as explanatory of action. (And as this is just one of General Commentaries, I hope it will be ok to focus on just this core claim.) #9
- What is her argument for this claim?

- I think it is that R-explanations
 - (i) come earlier in development
 - (ii) evolutionary more basic.

* So I will be bracketing the philosophical concern — Fricker allows this & X + Cohen are concerned with the role of explanation rather than directly with commonsense explanations

→ To illustrate, it is one thing to agree that $K \rightarrow P$, another to discover that ~~ordinary~~ human adults' ordinary thinking respects this inference (Cf. research on modus ponens.)

Just here we need a distn: one

Issue is whether a concept is R (Roman's gold); another issue is whether facts about R are reflected in any way at all, in any given of

~~group~~ ~~particular~~ subjects ordinary thinking.

My concern is with the latter issue: in particular with whether R is thought of as explanatory of knowledge where K has some of the other properties characteristic of K from the p.o.v. of the agents.

What is Nagel's argument?

Understand "incommensurability" (one source) for the claim that K is not a mental state. (Nagel's thesis does not appear to prohibit Fricker, nor perhaps Maymon & Leven).

- 1. "an ability to track what others would believe to be the ~~pre~~ precondition, rather than the product, of an ability to track what they would believe"
- p. 3.

p. 7. fr. 3 Roman's gold. / cf p. 22 fr. 20 mental concept

p. 11
phil's d. view:
"in attributing ~~the~~ K of a p. to some target agent, we attribute the mental state of belief..."

2 readings: psych. realistic description (attempt to describe mechanisms); vs. attempt to align everyday thought with a metaphysical picture - The latter reading is not incompatible with the psych. findings.

fr. 1: So I disagree when Nagel moves into argument from the claim about ~~exp~~ intuitive explanation to a claim that "Evidence... seems to support the view that K is naturally seen... not as a composite of belief and non-mental factors." If "naturally seen" means by ~~epist~~ metaphysicians, then I want to press Fricker's idea. But if it is "naturally seen" means by ordinary people, then I also doubt see that the point about ~~exp~~ determines the point about composition.

Psychologists classify false belief as a mental state — we should take seriously the idea that it really is over sociology of science doesn't much help.

Parallel with intention? Start w b-d. reasoning and shows that intending introduces an irreducibly factive element; the challenge for opponents is then to show that the roles of intention could after all be played by beliefs, or by some structure of belief and desire. An analogous argument here would call for there to be additional roles in the explanatory and normative roles for knowledge; this is what is suggested by, e.g., Hawthorne's idea that R provides premises for practical reasoning.

This is quite different from the issue of priority (and not well put in terms of whether K is a hybrid state). [and]

pp 15-16 reply to Mayan + Cohen

p. 20 to 18 — may say something against assuming understanding is a single thing (just as physical reasoning is intricate + non-trivial).

Williamson's view: belief is explained in terms of K. }
 This is a view about what belief is. }
 Does it follow, as Nagel writes, that }
 K is not to be taken to start from an attitude of b, }
 or Wron's view; rather, the capacity to recognize belief }
 depends on some prior mastery of the concept of K. }
 If we distinguish ~~att~~ e.g.: }
 — what are there subjects tracking? }
 — which principles governing the concepts C are reflected }
 in some way in their ordinary thought + action? }
 — what is the process by which these subjects make }
~~ascriptions~~ particular ascriptions. }
 NO: Problem is that, in the above quote, "capacity to recognize belief" }
 has to be understood as a about understanding for }
 this to be a consequence of Wron's view, whereas all }
 the evidence is about tracking only. NO! Even }
 the claim about understanding doesn't follow directly from Wron's view.

if we're worried

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p. 21] " If intuition rep: of k really is a composite involving intuitive rep: of belief, the capacity to represent k should not be available until the capacity to represent b. ~~really~~ is in place."

~~What does~~

[I spoke to say that k is a composite involving k is to say to Kp is to Sp plus...]

What does it mean to say that a rep: of k is a

composite?

exercising capacity to track k involves exercising capacity to track b.

Understanding: principles ~~the subject~~ reflecting in

The subjects thought or action include 'k is b plus...' (but hard to see how this principle might be so-reflective.)

Mechanism:

PROBLEM: I don't understand what this consists.

(And certainly not in a way that any epist. should be committed to the truth of the antecedent.)

or (later) maybe I do understand it but I don't see its relevance

p.25 : "measures the capacity to alter false belief, and is panned by humans early later than the levi task"

Really? Kovacs.

p.26]: "studies of immature ... concept are naturally raise questions about which young children are really referring to knowledge as such when they come to succeed at tasks of the sort just given" for

for p.25 p.29 "By observing that chimpanzees have some capacity to recognize the state of K, one need not thereby credit chimpanzees with any very sophisticated understanding of the nature of knowledge ... Arguably-- rudimentary mental state concepts ..."

p.30.] The issue of cost, - Nagel claims alter belief, even TB., is predicting action "is a more complex task" which incurs "computational costs" not incurred when predicting actions by ascribing K.

(This seems hard: little is known about mech: the point is presumably that one way of implementing predictive mech. there is more cost in B than in K; but this is not to say that actual mech is like that.)

Concluⁿ contains 3 claims :-

p31. "our natural mindreading system poses agency with the help of epistemic state concept of k and b rather than b alone"

p31. "we intuitively attribute k to others as a state which explains their actions"

p33 (and this is offered as the thesis) "the identification of k as a mental state is one of the central principles of our mindreading system"

p33
Linda "anyone with a generally non-skeptical ~~stance~~ attitude towards intuition mindreading should see the thesis that k is a mental state as well confirmed"

The contrast v. Intention

- Recognizing intention as a mental state is clearly consistent w. ~~recogn~~ the conjecture that understanding intention comes later than understanding belief & desire and may presuppose such understanding, and may be cognitively more demanding
- The case for intention is also not that it can better explain something that could be explained by appeal to ~~that~~ b & d alone, but that there are things which can't be explained at all w/o intention (structure of agency over time) — and relatively subtle things
- Connection w. "intentional understanding" is difficult to understand. Intention is surely unsusceptible to intending subjects' thought about intention, but perhaps in no very direct way.

(9)

~~Why think that ~~the~~ understanding what knowledge~~

~~is should take us through~~

I want to start by separating three issues: —

1. Is K. a mental state?

2. Do adult humans ordinarily treat K as if it were a ~~mental~~ st explanatory

of thought or action?

2b. Does "the capacity to attribute belief depend on some prior mastery of the concept of K?"

3. Can K be analysed as belief plus other ingredients? (i.e. is K in some sense hybrid?)

Relations among these questions are hard to understand;

we can see there is no straightforward linear bel. (1) & (2)

by noting that in arguing for a true ans. to (1),

Fricker grants a true arg for (2) ... quite.

[Need st. on (2) vs (3) & (1) vs (3) ideally too.]

Questions about mindreading

What ~~is~~ an agent

1. Do adult humans ~~for~~ ever treat k as explanatory of ~~it~~ her thoughts or actions? Does any other subject group?

2. Does "the capacity to attribute belief" depend on "some prior mastery of the concept of knowledge"?

3. Is ~~any~~ any "intuitive repⁿ of k " a composite involving intuitive repⁿ of belief?

4. In what ways, if any, is representing what an agent k more costly than representing what an agent b ?

5. Do adults ordinarily think of k as an ability or as a state (if human).

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What should persuade us that adults think of k as explanatory of thought and action?
~~not~~ intep: track: understand.

Problems with using developmental evidence

- 1) belief does appear to come early (belief-tracking)
- 2) Don't know what older children understand of knowledge (many experiments ask only whether children can siting with knowledgeable from ignorant speakers — which might not ~~even~~ involve understanding much about knowledge.)

→ see p.26 — not the same

as the issue of behaviour reading —
 ruling that out does not mean we should ascribe understanding of k rather than of something like registration (but incapable of falsity).

This may be a forced
 synchronic time period

In this way it can predict their behaviours.

I'd like to offer advanced explanatory role for k:

when you ask a stranger for directions, it's what they know that counts (you aren't just seeking truth, you want to get to the party reliably, and you want to know that you're going to get there.)

R1:

Suppose you have a very simple robot, which verifies propositions represented as ~~the~~ predicate - location. So you can tell it 'get newspaper' and it will go to ~~the~~^a location of something w. newspaper features if it has encountered any such location.

We extend R1 so that it tracks presence or absence of several people (perhaps ~~that~~ they are carrying RFID identifiers). It stores a tag by each propⁿ reporting who was present when the propⁿ was verified.

If k is a psychological state, what are its

distinctive explanatory roles?

1. Distinguish questions
2. Difficulty of using dev. and comparative evidence parallel with intention
3. Demonstrate sensitivity to these roles.

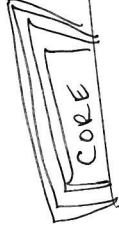
Frame it as challenging the point about whether belief must be prior to knowledge.

What are the minimal commitments of someone who thinks that k is a psych. state?

- Not that b is analysable in terms of k
- Not dev. or ex. priority
- Not that reasoning about k might be more costly than reasoning about b .

→ this evidence is also used to argue against a certain kind of hybrid claim, (6) p. 21 quote

Here the problem is the relⁿ of that hybrid claim to a claim about what k really is.



Nagel

In attributing b we depend on grasp of k

Stol

In attributing k we are attributing belief & ---

me: Qⁿ of whether k is a mental state:
~~can~~ can give a positive answer while rejecting both views (and corresponding views about the analysis of b in terms of k or vice versa)

At the heart of Nagel's paper is a contrast between two views.

On the view she opposes ...

On her own view, ...

Which view is right? I want to propose that we should accept neither.

It is important to distinguish the question from related issues.

engagement rept =

pre-2 On 16.

At the core of Nagel's argument is the claim that

"the capacity to ... depends on ... of belief" (p. 4)

I want to start by rejecting her arguments for this

claim, before explaining why and then arguing for

~~that~~ a converse dependence is compatible ~~so~~

~~dependence of belief understanding on understanding~~

knowledge depends on understanding belief.

→ that the claim that knowledge states explain actions

actually supports a converse dependence,

a dependence of knowledge

~~Nagel proposes to argue for the claim that~~

In defending the view that knowledge is

a mental state, Nagel considers whether

~~facts about what agents know explain~~

~~why they act~~ knowledge explains action

which in turn leads her, right at the

core of her ^{view} argument, to ~~examine~~ argue that

'the capacity to ... depends on ... of belief' (p. 14)