

# Folk Psychology vs Social Cognition Notes

## 1 Questions

*Poorly formulated*

### 1.1 Questions about The Main Distinction

1. Why, if at all, does the distinction matter?
2. Isn't Folk Psychology merely the (all but) inevitable consequence of having Social Cognition in place and adding a capacity for communication with words? [We discussed this in relation to an analogy with time.]
3. Isn't Social Cognition merely a label for whatever representations and processes are necessary to support the social practices we call 'Folk Psychology'?
4. To what extent can there be divergence in the models of minds and actions involved in Folk Psychology and in Social Cognition?
5. Do Folk Psychology and Social Cognition fulfill distinct functions? (Maybe Folk Psychology exists in part so that humans can regulate their interactions and cooperate, whereas Social Cognition enables prediction and coordination.)
6. How are Folk Psychology and Social Cognition synchronically [ontogenetically|phylogenetically] related?
7. What, if any, aspects of Social Cognition [Folk Psychology] enable which Folk Psychological practices to occur [Social Cognitive mechanisms to exist]? (Simple example: maybe an ability to represent states exhibiting aspectuality enables the social practices which reflect the opacity of belief attributions.)

8. If we distinguish Folk Psychology from Social Cognition, can we also maintain a dual process theory of social cognition? (Yes, but only if we recognise that we cannot use Folk Psychology directly to characterise slow processes (because Folk Psychology is neutral on mechanisms).)
9. In what domains other than the mental is there a distinction like that between Folk Psychology and Social Cognition? What is the best articulated theory of interactions between counterparts of these two in another domain?

## 1.2 Questions about Folk Psychology

1. Are there aspects of Folk Psychology which could exist in agents who do not communicate by language?
2. Why is there Folk Psychology [Social Cognition] at all?
3. Might considering Folk Psychology in isolation from practices associated with moral psychology (e.g. ignoring tracking blame and responsibility to focus just on belief or desire attribution) lead to distortion?

## 1.3 Questions about the targets of research

1. Are philosophical theories about belief, intention and other attitudes (e.g. Davidson's or Bratman's) attempts to characterise Folk Psychological practices or Social Cognition (mechanisms) or are they something else?
2. In comparative [developmental] psychology, are questions about mindreading best understood as questions about Folk Psychology (because they are often characterised in terms of notions like belief, which comes from Folk Psychology) or in terms of Social Cognition (because they are often characterised in terms of putative mechanisms, such as inferential processes operating on metarepresentations)? Are there cases where researchers conflate social practice and mechanisms and where de-conflating creates a new insight—or is any conflation mostly harmless?

## 2 Distinctions

*Not assuming the distinctions line up; just noting distinctions that have come up in discussion.*

- Folk Psychology, a family of social practices; vs Social Cognition, a family of mechanisms

- rooted in language vs pre-linguistic
- serving a regulative function (perhaps among others) vs not doing so
- serving a predictive function (perhaps among others) vs not doing so
- opacity (a semantic feature) vs aspectuality (a feature of mental states)

## 2.1 Distinctions relevant to Folk Psychology

- individual (self-directed) folk psychology; which supports *internalization* vs dyadic folk psychology vs large-scale collective folk psychology
- practically directed folk psychology (e.g. our intentions, yours and mine, settle what will be done) vs theoretically directed folk psychology (e.g. your intentions provide opportunities to exploit and constraints to work around)

## 2.2 Distinctions relevant to Social Cognition

- evolutionarily old vs evolutionarily new
- cognitively efficient vs cognitively demanding
- automatic vs nonautomatic
- social cognition involving maximally sophisticated theory of mind vs social cognition involving minimal theory of mind
- originated with Folk Psychology (via internalization or some other process) vs originated independently of Folk Psychology

## 3 Premises

In Folk Psychology, the dyadic is onto- and phylogenetically most basic; as is the practically directed. [This is four assumptions rolled up together.]

## 4 Processes

- internalization (Vygotskyian)
- routinization
- cultural learning