1. Folk psychologies

1.1. Folk psychologies as social practices

Imagine that we had a device that enabled us to sample the verbal behaviours of our ancestors at any time in the past. Starting at, say, two million years ago, forms of communication might not be strikingly different from those seen in present-day great apes, but moving forward in time we would begin to discern uses of word-like expressions, which after a while were combined into the first sentences. Initially, these budding linguistic exchanges would be confined to the humdrum and concrete, but in due course more abstract meanings would appear, and eventually our samples would begin to show up utterances that in English might be rendered like these:

I don't *mind*.	Why are you *angry*?	He did it *on purpose*.
I *like* you.	What do you *mean*?	She's *considering* it.
I *feel bad*.	*Think* about it.	They *agree* on that.
I *forgot* to do it.	*Look!*	They are one *mind*.
I lost my *sense of smell*.	You're *stupid*.	Her *soul* is pure.
I wasn't *expecting* this.	You don't *understand*.	He *suspects* it will rain.
I did it against my *will*.	You don't *love* me.	Her *memory* is fading.

Of course, all these forms didn't arrive at once, and some will have appeared much later than others, but all share a feature that is of special interest to us: they convey meanings that in English would be expressed in psychological terms, such as "feeling", "thinking", "suspecting", "being angry", and so on.

This peculiar style of social behaviour, which has been studied by ethnographers, anthropologists, lexicographers, and etymologists, among others, deserves the epithet "folk psychology" if anything does, and that is how the term will be used in this section. Folk psychologies, thus understood, are inevitably associated with languages, and the "folk" engaging in folk psychology may be any culture or group with a shared language. However, folk psychology is first and foremost a form of interaction that involves language *use*, and therefore our main quarry are the social practices rather than the languages used.

1.2. Diversity

All folk psychologies are not alike. Different cultures have different folk psychologies, and the differences run deep. To begin with, whereas some languages, like English or Indonesian, have large psychological vocabularies containing thousands of words, much lower numbers are reported for other languages, like Chewong, for example:

> The people to be discussed are the Chewong, a small aboriginal group of hunters, gatherers, and shifting cultivators in the tropical rain forest of Peninsular Malaysia. In the West, inner states are openly acknowledged and manifested both verbally and in bodily expressions. Among the Chewong there is little such overt evidence. [...] I was soon puzzled by the seeming paucity of words referring to the emotions, and I decided to make special efforts to record as large a vocabulary as possible in this area. [...] I met with little success, however, and was forced to conclude that their vocabulary is, in this respect, very limited and undifferentiated by comparison with Indo-European languages. (Howell (1981: xxxx))

After several years of painstaking research, Howell had managed to collect a psychological vocabulary of no more than twenty indigenous words and eight loan words from Malay. These remarkably low figures are in line with her observation that the Chewong rarely talk about psychological states. They are by no means unique in this respect. In many societies of the Pacific, but also elsewhere, mental talk is infrequent, and even actively discouraged, usually on the grounds that one cannot know what others think, feel, or intend (Robbins xxxx). These attitudes and practices are in stark contrast with the situation in anglophone populations, where folk-psychological talk is rife, and although it has been claimed that in these societies, too, it is a marginal phenomenon, at best, the statistics suggest otherwise. In two major corpora of English, the British National Corpus (BNC, Burnard and Aston 1998) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA, Davies 2010), five psychological verbs rank among the 25 most frequent verbs of English, with "know", "think" and "see" even being in the top 15.[1] Apparently, in anglophone cultures, speaking about the things people know, think, and see is anything but a marginal phenomenon.

Given these quantitative disparities, it is only to be expected that there will be considerable qualitative variation, too, and there is. As documented at length by Lillard's (1998) survey, folk psychologies differ markedly in their treatments of thinking, knowledge, intentionality, agency, feelings and emotions, minds and souls, other-worldly influences on the mind, and mind/body relations. Here we highlight two topics that are especially relevant to our concerns:

- Whereas Western cultures tend to hold agents responsible for their actions, on the premiss that "there is a conceptual tie between genuine action, on the one hand, and intention, on the other" (Wilson and Shpall 2016: 1), elsewhere in the world the tie between intention and action is not nearly as strong, with responsibility being assigned to, or at least shared with, other people, dead ancestors, ghosts, or gods (Lillard 1998: 15). Apparently, intentions aren't valued equally across cultures, if they are recognised at all.

1. Word frequencies from ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bncfreq (BNC) and wordfrequency.info (COCA).

- One recurring theme in ethnographical accounts is that many folk psychologies fail to support the distinction between thinking and feeling that is central to Western culture (Lillard 1998: 23). For example, Chewong folk psychology lacks synonyms or near-synonyms for "think" and "feel". A handful of subspecies of thinking and feeling are lexicalised, but these are uniformly attributed to the liver. Thus, the Chewong will say "My liver did not remember" ("I did not remember") or "My liver is good" ("I'm feeling fine"). (Howell 1984: 153)

As the Chewong examples show, even if a folk psychology lacks a custom-made word similar to English "believe", for example, it may still provide other means of attributing beliefs. It is not uncommon for internal organs to be recruited for this purpose, and different cultures may pick different organs, but there is a lot more cross-cultural variation than that. It is a well-attested observation, for example, that in many cultures perception verbs like "see" and "hear" have been extended to talk about epistemic states, as in English "I see what you mean" or "I hear what you're saying" (Sweetser 1990, Evans and Wilkins 2000). But there are also languages in which verbs of saying play the lead role in mental-state attribution (Pascual 2014, Geurts 2021). Many Australian Aboriginal languages, for example, feature a single verb whose primary meaning is "say/tell", but which is also used to attribute thoughts, wishes, among others. A case in point is Ungarinyin, an Aboriginal language spoken in North-Western Australia:

ngurrba	nya$_2$-nga$_1$-yi-minda	a$_1$-ma	jirri	
hit	her$_2$ I$_1$ will take	he$_1$ SAY	he	(Spronck 2016: 259)

According to Spronck, this sentence can be used to convey a range of meanings, including: "He says: 'I will hit her' ", "He thinks: 'I will hit her' ", "He thinks that he will hit her", and "He wants to hit her".

And here's an example from Yurakaré, a nearly extinct language of central Bolivia (Pascual 2014: 92, crediting Sonja Gipper, p.c.):

a-teshe	ti-yurujre	ku-ta-ja	otto-ja	mala-ti	ana	tumumu
sleeping	my owner	SAID	go out	go	that	frog

Pascual translates this as "Knowing that his owner was sleeping, the frog went outside and left", but we surmise that the same sentence might be used to attribute a belief.

Summing up, there are various ways in which folk psychologies may enable the attribution of mental states that they lack specialised words for. To some degree, this mitigates the gravity of our observation that there are serious quantitative disparities between folk-psychological vocabularies. But to some degree only, because it is doubtful that, even in aggregate, the various alternatives we have sampled could be nearly as expressive and effective as a copious vocabu-

lary of psychological words.

1.3. Normativity

Normativity is a core feature of the human condition. We relentlessly treat each other's behaviours as correct or incorrect, appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong, and so on, and this holds as much for communicative as for non-communicative behaviours. Just as we consider it correct to keep our promises, flush the toilet after using, and refrain from belching in public, we consider it correct to use the word "sofa" (rather than, say, "potato") to refer to sofas, stress the second syllable of "tomato" (rather than the first or the last), put articles before nouns (rather than the other way round), say "Okay" to express approval, answer questions addressed to us, and so on.

Given that it is part and parcel of our social-communicative interactions, it shouldn't surprise that our folk psychology has its share of normativity. Just a handful of examples:

- There is a host of trivia that we expect each other to know: that dogs bark, $1 + 1 = 2$, pens are made for writing, snow is white, and France is a country. These expectations are normative. You may be forgiven for faling any one of them, but if you fail more than two or three, there is something wrong with you. Common ground.
- Likewise, you are entitled be angry, nervous, ashamed, or sad under certain circumstances, and sometimes the circumstances are such that you ought to have certain feelings or emotions, for example, if your child is wronged, in pain, or in danger.
- As mentioned earlier, there are cultures in which talk about beliefs, knowledge, or intentions is discouraged, if not taboo. Likewise, in Victorian times, feelings
- …

1.4. Polysemy, flexibility, and indeterminacy

All or nearly all words have more than one conventional uses, and if you pick an arbitrary word from your lexicon, it is a practical certainty that it will be polysemous: it will have several related uses. For example, the adjective "red" is used differently when applied to tomatoes, wine, hair, skin, or grapefruits. What counts as "red" depends on the context, but nevertheless its various uses are clearly related.

Another case is the word "school", which according to the OED has the following senses (among others):

(a) an institution for educating children

(b) the buildings used by a school
(c) the pupils and staff of a school

If I say, "The headmaster addressed the whole school", then (c) is the relevant sense, but note that this doesn't mean that (a) and (b) are simply discarded. At least (a) is part of the message, too. The various senses of a polysemous word are *connected*, and if you select one, others may come along. Different from "red".

Given that, except perhaps for a trifling minority of technical terms, all words are polysemous, it is practically an *a priori* truth that mental-state words are polysemous, too. Examples: "belief", "knowledge", "pain", "intention".

- *Believe:* "The superintendent believed Lancaster's story", "I believe you", "I believe in you", "He believes in ghosts", "She believes in communism", ...
- *Know:* "She knows what she's doing", "I know her", "I know her BMI", "Mother knows best", ...
- *Pain:* Liu (2021)
- *Intention:* see below

In addition to polesemy, there is prototypicality. Content-words (or the concepts associated with them) are associated with "prototype effects", which may depend on the context. E.g., prototypical red is different for wine, hair, skin, ... Concomitant with prototypicality is vagueness or zones of indeterminacy, which are also observable in psychological words.

In the foregoing we said that speakers of such languages as Chewong, Ungarinyin, and Yurakaré employ alternative linguistic ways for attributing thoughts, beliefs, intentions, wishes, and other mental states. We also said that speakers of languages that do have specialised words for beliefs (say) quite freely attribute beliefs to babies, pets, and even to inanimate objects like telephones, cars, and triangles; and ditto for other mental states. How seriously should such claims be taken?

A Chewong produces an utterance that, transcribed word by word, reads "My liver is good", but which we *interpret* as "I'm feeling good". Now, if one of us were to say "I'm feeling good", we wouldn't hesitate to affirm that she attributed a feeling to herself. But was the Chewong *really* doing the same thing, only with different linguistic means? Howell, who is our main source on Chewong culture and language, suggests that it is a figure of speech (1984: 153). But is it really? Would the Chewong agree that their psychological uses of the word that Howell translates as "liver" are merely figurative, and not to be understood literally? For that matter, would everyone who shares Howell's cultural background agree with her judgment?

Closer to home, similar quandaries arise. If Betty says, "My phone thinks it's in Norway", she probably would admit that she was speaking figuratively. But

if she said, "The cat believes it's feeding time", she might very well insist that her pet *really* believes that it is feeding time, while Barney and other, equally competent speakers of English would shake their heads in disbelief at so much naivety, for surely cats don't have beliefs?

These observations show that our folk psychological practices have zones of indeterminacy in which even competent users disagree about the applicability of mental-state words. This shouldn't come as a surprise, since practically all our words are indeterminate in some respect or other. Competent users of English may disagree about whether this colour swatch is blue or green, about how many spelling errors count as "many", and so on. Zones of indeterminacy are rife, and it would have been surprising if our folk psychologies didn't have them.

Outside academia, these indeterminacies rarely matter. Even if Barney is convinced that cats don't have beliefs, and therefore dismisses Wilma's utterance as patently false, he may still be able to gauge what she means when she says that "the cat believes it's feeding time." One person's literal truth is another person's figure of speech. However, in academia the distinction may matter a great deal, if only because, in many cases, it is precisely the borderline cases that are of special interest.

1.5. Folk psychology enters academia

Let us now restart our device for sampling verbal exchanges in the past, and dial forward until we hear people saying things like: "Seeing is believing", "The road to hell is paved with good intentions", and so on. By this time, which is considerably closer to the present than where we began, our ancestors were not only attributing mental states to one another, but were also making generic claims about mental states. This was a major step up in abstraction from the previous stage, and it cleared the way for philosophers who began to ponder "thoughts", "pains", "minds", and so on, all of which were notions borrowed from their local folk psychologies: Greek for Greek philosophers, Chinese for Chinese philosophers, and so on. Thus academic psychology sprang from folk psychology, *and the umbilical cord was never cut.* Even now that psychology is being discussed across a range of academic disciplines, scholars freely and for the most part unreflectingly employ mental terms from English and other natural languages.

This practice is fraught with difficulty. As discussed in the foregoing, folk psychologies are social practices that (1) vary greatly between cultures, (2) are pervasively normative, and involve psychological terms that, like practically all words, are (3) polysemous and (4) indeterminate. That's four very good reasons for avoiding folk-psychological terms in academic discussions of matters psychological, and exercising the utmost care whenever their use cannot be

avoided. By and large, this issue has been ignored, and the consequences have been dire, as the following cases illustrate.

- Emotions: Fiske (2020)
- Intentions

  > Philosophical perplexity about intention begins with its appearance in three guises: intention for the future, as when I intend to complete this entry by the end of the month; the intention with which someone acts, as I am typing with the further intention of writing an introductory sentence; and intentional action, as in the fact that I am typing these words intentionally. As Elizabeth Anscombe wrote in a similar context, "it is implausible to say that the word is equivocal as it occurs in these different cases" and from the fact that "we are tempted to speak of 'different senses' of a word which is clearly not equivocal, we may infer that we are pretty much in the dark about the character of the concept which it represents" (Anscombe 1963, p. 1). [...] The principal task of the philosophy of intention is to uncover and describe the unity of these three forms. (Setiya 2018: 1)

  Setiya's claim that intention is one phenomenon that appears in three forms or guises agrees with the fact that the English words for these forms share the same lexical root, "intend". It is this lexical unity that dreives the notion that there must be a corresponding conceptual unity, too. However, this lexical unity is a quirk of the English language, which disappears when we try to translate Setiya's examples into other languages, like Dutch, for example:

I intend to...	≈	ik ben van plan om...
with the intention of...	≈	met de bedoeling om...
I am typing intentionally	≈	ik typ weloverwogen

  For speakers of Dutch and many other languages, Setiya's "unity" of forms of intention is a mirage, caused by the polysemy of the root "intend", and Dutch philosophy students need a fair amount of tutoring to appreciate the unity that comes seemingly naturally to native speakers of English.

  Setiya maintains that the English root "intend" is "clearly not equivocal". In view of the foregoing observations this is a bold claim, to say the least, and Setiya doesn't even bother to motivate it. Instead, he bizarrely defers to the authority of Elizabeth Anscombe, who made the same claim about *another* word.
- Related case: speaker meaning vs. sentence meaning. Different in Dutch and German, among other languages, and again Grice's idea that the two are intimately connected is a lot harder for Dutch students to accept than for their English peers.
- ...

We now dial forward to historical time for the most recent stage in the aca-

demic career of folk psychology, where we find philosophers debating what they call "attitude reports", that is, statements like "Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy" (Quine 1956). By this time, folk psychology has become an object of academic interest, a development that began in medieval philosophy (if not before), and since Frege (1892) has become firmly established in the philosophy of language.

Since attitude reports are speech acts, this line of research is concerned with folk psychology as we are using the term in this section. However, in the second half of the last century, quite different ways of using this or very similar terms begin to appear:

> The unformulated or half-formulated knowledge of interpersonal relations as it is expressed in our everyday language and experience [...] will be referred to as common-sense or naive psychology (Heider 1958: 4)

Whereas we have been using the term "folk psychology" to refer to a social practice, Heider's "common-sense or naive psychology" is purported to be a psychological phenomenon in its own right. Heider seeks to connect the two by saying that the former "expresses" the latter, which is not self-evident to us, but for the moment our key point is that, from now on, we're dealing with two entirely different kettles of fish: social interactions *between* individuals versus cognitive capacities *of* and mental processes and representations *in* individuals. The second topic has become associated with a variety of labels, which includes "folk psychology", but also "theory of mind" and, more recently, "mind reading":

> The capacity to understand and interact with other agents is called *folk psychology*. (Spaulding 2018: 1)

> [...] folk psychology has been construed as the prediction and explanation of behavior in terms of mental-state concepts, such as belief, desire, and intention—a capacity also referred to as *mindreading* or *theory of mind* (Westra 2021: 8213)

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