Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 21

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Plan

1. Theories of perception and how Siegel's theory relates to them.

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2. Setting up questions about inference.

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2. Setting up questions about inference.
3. Siegel's objection to taking theory

Four Theories

1. Disjunctivist/Naïve Realist

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2. Reliabilist

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3. Inferentialist

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1. Disjunctivist/Naïve Realist
2. Reliabilist
3. Inferentialist
4. Dogmatist

Disjunctivist

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- Appearances/experiences on their own have little epistemic charge.
- What has power is **perception**, where this is understood as a success term.
- This is very externalist; what is happening on an occasion, and what force it has, depends on external factors.

Disjunctivist

This is the natural theory to adopt if you have what Pasnau called a **diaphonous** view of perception.

- If what one sees is that there is a desk, not that one is having an experience of a desk, then it is natural to simply take the desk to be the inputs to later reasoning.

Reliabilist

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- Typically, experiences are reliably tied to reality.

Reliabilist

- Anything can provide positive charge as long as it is reliably tied to reality.
- Typically, experiences are reliably tied to reality.
- There is nothing particularly special about perception.

Inferentialist

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- Extra step needed to get to claims about the external world.
- Lots of options for next step.

Inferentialist

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- Second choice: how is the link claim grounded? IBE, Basic, something else?

Inferentialist

- One choice: what is the link claim? Presumably something about reliable connection.
- Second choice: how is the link claim grounded? IBE, Basic, something else?
- Third choice: does the individual perceiver have to appreciate the ground?

Dogmatist

- In the first instance, experiences provide positive charge for the proposition that one is having the experience.

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- But unless something stops them, they also provide positive charge for external world propositions.

Dogmatist

- In the first instance, experiences provide positive charge for the proposition that one is having the experience.
- But unless something stops them, they also provide positive charge for external world propositions.
- And the ‘something’ has to be accessible to the perceiver.

Dogmatist

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Dogmatist

The big difference with the inferentialist concerns presence vs absence of reasons.

- The inferentialist thinks you need a positive reason to go from Looks *p* to *p*.
- The dogmatist thinks you need an absence of defeating reasons to go from Looks *p* to *p*.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

What we want to do next is to see how plausible these theories are if we think Siegel is right and perception itself can be rational or irrational.

- The argument for that is hardly complete, so this is a slightly weird thing to do at this stage.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

What we want to do next is to see how plausible these theories are if we think Siegel is right and perception itself can be rational or irrational.

- The argument for that is hardly complete, so this is a slightly weird thing to do at this stage.
- And you could think any incompatibilities here are problems for Siegel.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Disjunctivism is no problem.

- In the bad case you don't have real perception, just apparent perception.

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- So there isn't much charge there.

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Reliabilism isn't much of a problem.

- Provided we get the **reference class** right, the bad cases will be actually unreliable.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Reliabilism isn't much of a problem.

- Provided we get the **reference class** right, the bad cases will be actually unreliable.
- Bit of a trick here about getting the reference classes right, but not a big deal.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Inferentialism isn't much of a problem.

- Provided the 'link' is defeasible, and doesn't work in all cases, you can easily get that the support fails.

How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Dogmatism does look like a problem.

- Hijacked perception lacks defeaters that are apparent to the perceiver.

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Dogmatism does look like a problem.

- Hijacked perception lacks defeaters that are apparent to the perceiver.
- So the dogmatist thinks they have full charge.
- But they don't.

Two Dogmatist Responses

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2. Maybe dogmatism just applies to a much narrower band of properties.

Dogmatism and Perception

Most actual dogmatists don't think we really **perceive** things like that something is a gun or a power-tool.

- They think we just perceive things like shapes and colors.

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Most actual dogmatists don't think we really **perceive** things like that something is a gun or a power-tool.

- They think we just perceive things like shapes and colors.
- And it's much harder for those to be hijacked.

Inference

We often form mental states by inference.

- But what does this mean?

Causation

If state S2 is the result of inference from S1, then S1 must cause S2.

- Inference doesn't just mean that S1 would have been a good reason to believe S2.

Causation

If state S2 is the result of inference from S1, then S1 must cause S2.

- Inference doesn't just mean that S1 would have been a good reason to believe S2.
- It means S2 must actually come from S1.

Causation

But causation is not sufficient.

- Imagine I hear a song in the supermarket, and it reminds me of a beach holiday where we played that song a lot.

Causation

But causation is not sufficient.

- Imagine I hear a song in the supermarket, and it reminds me of a beach holiday where we played that song a lot.
- The hearing state causes the remembering state, but I don't **infer** anything about the holiday from the song.

States Not Contents

Informally, we can sometimes say things like this.

- “Holmes inferred that the butler did it from the fact that no one else had access to the murder weapon.”

States Not Contents

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- “Holmes inferred that the butler did it from the fact that no one else had access to the murder weapon.”
- This suggests that inference is a relation between facts.

States Not Contents

Inference can't be a relation between facts.

- Sometimes we draw inferences from mistaken beliefs, and they aren't facts.

States Not Contents

Inference can't be a relation between facts.

- Sometimes we draw inferences from mistaken beliefs, and they aren't facts.
- But there is a more subtle question that's harder to answer.

States Not Contents

Is Holmes's inference a relation between:

1. The proposition that no one else had access to the murder weapon, and the proposition that the butler did it; or

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Is Holmes's inference a relation between:

1. The proposition that no one else had access to the murder weapon, and the proposition that the butler did it; or
2. Holmes's belief that no one else had access to the murder weapon, and his belief that the butler did it?

States Not Contents

As the header might make clear, Siegel takes the answer to be 2.

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States Not Contents

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- And this makes sense if you care about causation.
- The fact that no one else had access doesn't cause the butler's crime.
- But the belief that no one else had access does cause Holmes's belief.

Which States

If inference was tightly tied to contents, then it would be natural to think that it primarily related **beliefs**.

- This is **not** Siegel's view.

Which States

If inference was tightly tied to contents, then it would be natural to think that it primarily related **beliefs**.

- This is **not** Siegel's view.
- She thinks that any number of states can be related by inference.

Which States

This could be an inference.

1. Desire to have omelette for dinner.

Which States

This could be an inference.

1. Desire to have omelette for dinner.
2. Beliefs that (a) I'm out of eggs, (b) that the only nearby places to get eggs are Sparrow and the Co-op, and (c) roadworks make it unpleasant to go the Co-op.

Which States

This could be an inference.

1. Desire to have omelette for dinner.
2. Beliefs that (a) I'm out of eggs, (b) that the only nearby places to get eggs are Sparrow and the Co-op, and (c) roadworks make it unpleasant to go the Co-op.

C. Intention to go to Sparrow.

A Test?

Here is a good heuristic for whether something is an inference.

- If we can say it was **rational** or **irrational** to form the latter state because of the earlier state, it's an inference.

A Test?

Here is a good heuristic for whether something is an inference.

- It's not rational or irrational to remember a holiday on hearing a song; rationality doesn't care about those kinds of memories.

A Test?

Siegel sometimes sounds like she is taking this to be more than a test, but almost definitional of an inference.

- I'm not sure if that's the right way to read her.

A Test?

Siegel sometimes sounds like she is taking this to be more than a test, but almost definitional of an inference.

- I'm not sure if that's the right way to read her.
- In any case, it doesn't sound that plausible to me; defining inference in terms of norms seems odd.

The Subject Matter

What we really care about here is understanding whether a transition between states is an inference, not whether it's a good or bad inference.

- But these questions can't really be 100% separated.

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The Subject Matter

What we really care about here is understanding whether a transition between states is an inference, not whether it's a good or bad inference.

- But these questions can't really be 100% separated.
- Compare, understanding what a joke is can't be wholly separated from sorting jokes into good and bad.
- A bad enough joke is not a joke.

The Taking Condition

A lot of the contemporary literature on inferences revolves around this theory.

- A transition from S1 to S2 is an inference if and only if the thinker takes S1 to support S2.

Virtues of This Theory

It gets our canonical cases right.

- Holmes does take his belief about weapons to support his belief about the butler's guilt.

Virtues of This Theory

It gets our canonical cases right.

- Holmes does take his belief about weapons to support his belief about the butler's guilt.
- The person hearing a song doesn't take this to support reminiscing about the beach holiday.

Virtues of This Theory

It allows for bad inferences.

- This is often a challenge.

Virtues of This Theory

It allows for bad inferences.

- This is often a challenge.
- But as long as the person thinks they are making a good inference, the taking theory can say they are inferring.

Why Siegel Has To Oppose It

- She wants to say that hijacked experiences involve bad inferring.

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- But the taking condition clearly does not apply to experiences.

Why Siegel Has To Oppose It

- She wants to say that hijacked experiences involve bad inferring.
- But the taking condition clearly does not apply to experiences.
- Vivek does not take his vanity to provide a reason to believe that everyone is happy!

Two Objections

1. Regress

Two Objections

1. Regress
2. Over-intellectualisation

Regress

Assume that to infer S2 from S1, another state T - the taking S1 to provide a reason for S2 - is required.

- Then S2 is inferred from S1 and T.

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Regress

Assume that to infer S2 from S1, another state T - the taking S1 to provide a reason for S2 - is required.

- Then S2 is inferred from S1 and T.
- But then we need a T′, taking S1 and T to support S2.
- And then we'll need a T′′,taking S1, T and T′ to support S2, etc.

Regress

Siegel does **not** endorse this objection.

- And the first step on the previous slide does look a bit dodgy.

Regress

Siegel does **not** endorse this objection.

- And the first step on the previous slide does look a bit dodgy.
- That's not to say the regress objection fails; it's an interesting challenge.

Over-Intellectualisation (Toddlers version)

1. Toddlers can make inferences.

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2. Toddlers don't take things to provide reasons for other states.

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1. Toddlers can make inferences.
2. Toddlers don't take things to provide reasons for other states.

C. Inferences don't require takings.

Over-Intellectualisation (Toddlers version)

Again, this isn't quite Siegel's objection, though it's getting closer.

- And I think it's fairly plausible.

Four Cases from section 5.5

1. Kindness (categorisation)

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1. Kindness (categorisation)
2. Pepperoni (aggregated factors)

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2. Pepperoni (aggregated factors)
3. Too far north (spatio-temporal calculation)

Four Cases from section 5.5

1. Kindness (categorisation)
2. Pepperoni (aggregated factors)
3. Too far north (spatio-temporal calculation)
4. Rockmouth (search for information)

Two Questions on Each

1. Are they actually examples of inferences?

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1. Are they actually examples of inferences?
2. Are they cases where the person does not, even tacitly, take states to provide reasons.

For Next Time

We'll look at the argument that hijacked experiences are inferential.