

## Lecture Three: The Theory Theory [TT]

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### A. FOLK PSYCHOLOGY *as a* THEORY OF MIND

1. *Commonsense- or folk-psychology*: whatever accounts for our capacity to make OM-judgments. *Theory Theory*: we have the capacity because we have *a theory* about the psychological: [FPsy] = *a theory*; a *set of principles* for explaining some *data*. The data = props. about behaviour-given-circs. And the principles of [FPsy] tell how circs. & behaviour relate via the interaction of *psych. states and processes*.
2. [TT] aims to answer questions about methodology, epistemology and nature of psych. concepts (I'll call it 'semantics'). On all counts, folk psychology comes out as of a kind with other natural sciences. Minds aren't spooky entities, but just another part of our natural-scientific understanding of the world. This makes [TT] popular (current philosophy's penchant for *naturalism*).

### B. THINKING ABOUT THEORIES: QUARKS (see also Lewis [1])

1. M: Quarks are *unobservable*, but *posited* by a theory which explains *observable behaviour* of hadrons (the data). Quark-judgments made by applying the principles to the data (behaviour of hadrons) and inferring presence of (certain kinds of) quark. We get particular judgments out of general ones.
2. S: 'Quark' etc. are *theoretical* concepts; are *implicitly defined* by principles of quark theory. If nothing behaves in the way defined by these principles *there are no quarks*.
3. E: We're *justified* in believing in quarks (generally) just in case best theory of hadrons posits quarks. We're *justified* in making particular quark-judgments just in case it's a good application of the theory.

### C. [FPsy] *as a* THEORY OF MIND (in a bit more detail)

1. [TT] says: Minds are like quarks! They are *unobservable*, but *posited* by a theory which explains *observable* behaviour of humans – this theory is FPsy.
2. [FPsy] details I) what kinds of mental state/process there are, II.i) how they're typically caused by circs.; and how they interact to cause II.ii.a) other mental states/processes and II.ii.b) observable behaviour (the data!). For example:
  - a. "If S sustains bodily damage, she will *ceteris paribus*, experience pain"
  - b. "If S is facing an object *o* with her eyes open, in good light etc. she will *ceteris paribus* have a perceptual experience as of *o*."
  - c. "If S perceives *that Fa*, and S possesses the concepts *F* and *a*, S will (*ceteris paribus*) form the belief that *Fa*."
  - d. "If S believes that P and desires that  $\neg P$ , and S believes that she is able to bring it about that  $\neg P$ , S will, *ceteris paribus*, try to bring it about that  $\neg P$ ."
  - e. "If S experiences pain, she will *ceteris paribus* grimace / groan."
  - f. "If S experiences pain, she will *ceteris paribus* attempt to diminish the pain."
3. Disputes within [TT]: i) is theory represented sub-personally, or as *beliefs*? ii) if latter, are beliefs tacit or explicit?, iii) are principles innate or learned? I'll talk of principles as *beliefs* (avoid talking of *knowledge*).

4. (Recall B1-3). **M**: Particular behaviours plugged into general principles, particular OM-judgments pumped out. **S**: Psych. concepts are *theoretical* concepts; *implicitly defined* by the principles of [FPsy] **E**: We're justified in *general* OM-judgments (that e.g. *there are minds, beliefs etc.*) just in case FPsy. is the best theory of human behaviour. We're justified in *particular* OM-judgments just in case we make a good application of the theory to particular case.

#### D. [TT] AS AN IMPROVEMENT ON [AT]

1. *Theory Theory and Solipsism*: TT and solipsism are *incompatible* because principles of TT need to be largely true for psych. concepts to apply (since they are *theoretical* concepts). But principles apply to human behaviour *in general* – not to LC's behaviour! [AT] and [TT] respond to solipsism differently, then. [AT] accepts  $\diamond$ -solipsism and says: *even so*, OM-judgments can be justified; [TT] rejects  $\diamond$ -solipsism. Note related difference between view of psych. concepts in [AT] & [TT].
2. *Holism and Thick Behavioural Concepts*: Recall thick/thin concept distinction from L2. [TT] accepts we pick out behaviours using thick concepts without rendering OM-inferences question-begging. Compare picking something out *as a hadron* – 'hadron' is theoretically laden ('thick') too using it presupposes quarks.

“even action-descriptions presuppose folk psychology!” [ ii ]

“the scientific inference account allows for a holistic approach to the problem of belief in the mental lives of others. What the hypothesis explains is the whole behavioural pattern of other people in their varied circumstances” [ iii ]

#### E. A PROBLEM FOR THEORY THEORY

1. Is [FPsy] *the best* theory of human behaviour? If not, a) OM-judgments *not justified* and b) psych. concepts *have no reference*. That is: *there are no* beliefs, desires, intentional actions, pains, emotions etc. (eliminative materialism)
2. Why not best theory? Various reasons in literature (see [ iv ]). But for us: too many *ceteris paribus* clauses in [FPsy] principles. Plausible we won't get these in e.g. developed *neuroscience*.
3. Eliminativism threatens folk psy. *only* given [TT] about folk psy., since it's only if folk psychology *is a theory* that it's in competition with other theories. We can save folk psy. by denying [TT].
4. Special problem for [TT] *as justifying rejection of solipsism*: threat of solipsism arose because knowledge of own & of others' minds seemed asymmetric. If [FPsy] is a false theory then there *are no minds at all* – including mine! But surely there's *something* I can know about myself in a special way ('introspection'). And can't I wonder whether (I know that) others too are in such states? Ep. prob of OMs again!

#### F. READING FOR NEXT WEEK (SIMULATION THEORY)

Gordon, R. 1986. 'Folk Psychology as Simulation' in *Mind and Language* Vol. 1(2). Reprinted in Davies and Stone Eds. *Folk Psychology* (1995). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Heal, J. 1986. 'Replication and Functionalism' in Butterfield, J., ed. *Language, Mind and Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted in Davies and Stone Eds. *Folk Psychology* (1995). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Heal, J. 2003. 'Other Minds, Analogy and Rationality' in *Mind, Reason and Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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<sup>i</sup> David Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 50, no. 3 (1972): 249–258.

<sup>ii</sup> Peter Carruthers, "Simulation and Self-Knowledge," in *Theories of Theories of Mind*, ed. Peter Carruthers and Peter Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>iii</sup> Robert Pargetter, "The Scientific Inference to Other Minds," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62, no. 2 (1984): 161.

<sup>iv</sup> \* P. M. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 67–90; P. S. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Towards a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).