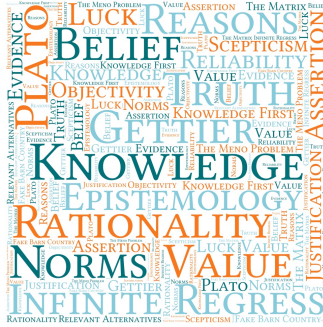




Knowledge, Information & Society

JAKE CHANDLER

Varieties of knowledge



Different modes of knowledge?

- We'll focus on a particular type of knowledge ascription: ascriptions of 'knowledge-that' ('propositional knowledge')
- Example:
 - 'Ali knows **that** he won't make it on time.'
- But knowledge ascriptions also come in other formats:
 - 'Isaac knows **how** to make a pavlova.'
 - 'I know **who** Superman is.'
 - 'Maarten knows **why** zebras have stripes.'
 - 'Toby knows **where** Peckham is.'
 - 'Kani knows **_** Faisal well.'
- Is our focus too narrow?

Intellectualism

- Proposal: all these ascriptions boil down to ascriptions of k.-that
- For instance:
 - 'I know **that** Superman is Clark Kent.'
 - 'Maarten knows **that** zebras have stripes to deter parasitic flies.'
 - 'Toby knows **that** Peckham is in South London.'
 - 'Kani knows **that** Faisal lives in Kennington, gets cranky when he hasn't exercised, likes his KFC,...'
- Similarly:
 - 'Isaac knows **that**, to make pavlova, he has to whisk egg whites in a bowl until soft peaks form, then gradually add sugar,'
- I should note that this last one is actually quite controversial...

Objection 1: Ryle's regress

- Ryle (1949) has influentially claimed that intellectualism leads to an implausible regress
- Assumption: intellectualism is committed to an '**instruction manual**' understanding of intelligent action, namely
 - Carrying out action X involves looking up a set of mentally represented instructions and acting in accordance with them



Objection 1: Ryle's regress

- Given this, knowing how to X plausibly requires knowing how to act in accordance with the relevant instructions
- But this 2nd know how will require further instructions and further know-how, etc.



- This regress is implausible

Know-how as an ability

- The distinction between k-that and k-how is now deeply entrenched (not just in philosophy: **declarative** vs **procedural** knowledge in cog. sci.)
- But if knowledge-how doesn't amount to knowledge-that, what does it amount to?
- Ryle's suggestion: one knows how to $X \Leftrightarrow$ one has the **ability** to X
- This has some prima facie plausibility:
 - If I know how to ride a bike, then surely I have the ability to do so, and conversely

Objection 2: verbalisation

- Another complaint:
 - Intellectualism commits us to the claim that people are able to correctly verbally describe the way in which they carry out tasks that they know how to perform.
- But people often cannot provide any such descriptions and to the extent that they can, often provide inaccurate descriptions

Know-how as an ability, qualified

- Objection ($\Rightarrow$):
 - A pianist who loses his arms still knows how to play the piano, although doesn't have the ability to
- Objection ($\Leftarrow$):
 - A novice golfer who, by fluke, managed to land a hole in one had the ability to do so, but didn't know how to do it
- Perhaps one knows how to $X \Leftrightarrow$ one would have the ability to X **under some relevant range of circumstances**
 - In the case of the pianist, these involve her having arms
 - In the case of the novice golfer, they involve different configurations of the golf course

Intellectualism strikes back

- Against Ryle's regress:
Sure, the Instruction Manual view of intelligent action seems implausible, but why think that intellectualism commits one to it?
- Against the objection from verbalisation:
Why assume that all knowledge-that is verbalisable?
- Against the ability account:
What range of circumstances counts as 'relevant'? Until this is specified, the proposal is untestable.

References

- Ryle, G. 2009. *The Concept of Mind*, 60th Anniversary Edition. London: Routledge. Originally published in 1946 by Hutchinson.