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Reasoning and Reasons

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Beliefs and Occurrent Judgments

Standing beliefs versus occurrent judgments

Explicit standing beliefs versus *implicit*.

The explicit ones originated in some occurrent judgment.

Epistemic Bases for Standing Beliefs: Bases as Mental State

What *sorts of things* are such bases?

Bases as propositional attitudes, rather than the *propositions* themselves.

Epistemic Bases for Standing Beliefs: Then and Now

Explicit standing beliefs have *whatever bases they had* when they were formed as occurrent judgments.

Proof and Memory

[Preservative] memory does not supply for the demonstration propositions about memory, the reasoner or past events. It supplies the propositions that serve as links in the demonstration itself. Or rather, it *preserves* them, together with their judgmental force, and makes them available for use at later times. Normally, the content of the knowledge of longer demonstration is not more about memory, the reasoner, or contingent events than that of a shorter demonstration. One does not justify the demonstration by appeals to memory. One justifies it by appeals to the steps and the inferential transitions of the demonstration.... In a deduction, reasoning processes' working properly depends on memory's preserving the results of previous reasoning. But memory's preserving such results does not add to the justificational force of the reasoning. It is rather a background condition of reasoning's success. (Burge, pp233-34)

The Basis for Occurrent Judgments

Claim I am against: inference as a *psychological process* is irrelevant to epistemology. It belongs to the ‘context of discovery’ not to the ‘context of justification.’

Types of Reasoning

Reasoning 2.0:

- (1) I consider explicitly some proposition that I believe, for example p.

I ask myself explicitly:

- (2) What follows from p?

And then it strikes me that q follows from p.

- (3) I take it that q follows from p

At the points I ask myself

- (4) Is q implausible? Is it less plausible than the negation of p?

- (5) I conclude that q is not less plausible than not-p.

- (6) So, I judge q.

I add q to my stock of beliefs.

Reasoning 1.5

(Rain Inference)

- (1) It rained heavily through the night

I conclude that

- (2) The streets are filled with puddles,
(and so I should wear my boots rather than sandals).

System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control.

System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration.

Inference versus Association

(Taking): Inferring from p to q necessarily involves the thinker *taking* p to support q and drawing q *because* of that.

First family of objections, there is no need for a taking condition on inference as is evident (a) from the existence of ordinary cases of inference that have no role for taking, and (b) from the existence of perfectly good accounts of reasoning that give no role to taking.

Second family of objections, it is conceded that taking might be involved in inference, but it is insisted that it is not implicated in some interesting way, and certainly not by playing a becausal role in generating the conclusion.

The first sort of objection is pressed by Hilary Kornblith in his recent book *On Reflection*.

And both types of objection may be found in Mark Richard's paper "Is Reasoning a form of Agency?" which originated in a commentary on my work.

What is at Stake in this Debate

The role of reasons and reasoning in the way in which we hold thinkers to be *responsible* for their rationality.

Kornblith on the Clever Plover

Reasons for the Taking Condition: Responsibility and Control

Helmholtz and Sub-Personal Inference

Richard's Objections

Richard disputes that responsibility requires agency:

One can be responsible for things that one does not directly do.

The Under Assistant Vice-President for Quality Control is responsible for what the people on the assembly line do, but of course she is not down on the floor assembling the widgets. Why shouldn't my relation to much of my reasoning be somewhat like the VP's relation to widget assembly?

Suppose I move abductively from *the light won't go on* to *I probably pulled the wire out of the fixture changing the bulb*. Some process of which I am not aware occurs. It involves mechanisms that typically lead to my being conscious of accepting a claim. I do not observe them; they are quick, more or less automatic, and not demanding of

attention. Once the mechanisms do their thing, the conclusion is, as they say, sitting in the belief box. But given a putative implication, I am not forced to endorse it. I can accept the implacatum (sic), or reject the premise, or try to consciously check to see if the implication in fact holds. It is up to me as to whether I preserve the belief. It thus makes sense to hold me responsible for the result of the process. I say that something like this story characterizes a great deal --I'm tempted to say all --adult human inference.

Given that I have the concept of one thing following from another, I will (be in a position to) interpret the appearance of my new belief as (a sign of) the conclusion's following from the premises. Indeed, if I have the concept of consequence, I will normally "take" the belief I have formed to be a consequence of the thought I had that was the "input" to that process of which I had and have no conscious awareness. In these cases, inference involves the agent taking her premises to support her conclusion. But this taking is a reflex of the inference itself. Here, it is not necessary, in order that inference occur, that the agent comes to believe what is inferred *because* she takes her premises to support it.

1. First you accept one thing (Old Belief, OB).
2. Then, you find yourself accepting another thing (New Belief, NB).
3. You are not aware of any process leading up to New Belief. You are not sure where it came from.
4. But if it concerns you, you might 'conjecture' that it had something to do with Old Belief, that OB implied NB.
5. However that may be, once you become aware of NB, you have to decide whether to keep it or reject it.
6. If you take it that it was delivered to you by OB, then you may want to assess the entailment from OB to NB, and hence whether to accept NB in addition to OB or reject both.
7. In any case, you have to make a decision about NB, and that is why you can be held responsible for NB, however it was delivered to you.

B. Richard on the process:

I've been arguing that the fact that we hold the reasoner responsible for the product of her inference – we criticize her for a belief that is unwarranted, for example -- doesn't imply that in making the inference the reasoner exercises a (particularly interesting) form of agency.

Now, it might be said that we hold she who reasons responsible not just for the product of her inference, but for the process itself. When a student writes a paper that argues invalidly to a true conclusion, the student gets no credit for having blundered onto **the truth**; he loses credit for having **blundered** onto the truth. But, it might be said, it makes no sense to hold someone responsible for a process if they aren't the, or at least an, agent of the process.

Let us grant for the moment that when there is inference, both its product and the process itself is(sic) subject to normative evaluation. What exactly does this show? We hold adults responsible for such things as implicit bias. To hold someone responsible for implicit bias is not *just* to hold them responsible for whatever beliefs they end up with as a result of the underlying bias. It is to hold the adult responsible for the mechanisms that generate those beliefs, in the sense that we think that if those mechanisms deliver faulty beliefs, then the adult ought to try to alter those mechanisms if he can. (And if he cannot, he ought to be vigilant for those mechanisms' effects.)

C. Inference without knowing your premises

More significantly, there are cases that certainly seem to be inferences in which I simply don't know what my premises were. I know Joe and Jerome; I see them at conventions, singly and in pairs, sometimes with their significant others, sometimes just with each other. One day it simply comes to me: *they are sleeping together*. I could not say what bits of evidence buried in memory led me to this conclusion, but I --well, as one sometimes says, I just *know*. Perhaps I could by dwelling on the matter at least conjecture as to what led me to the conclusion. But I may simply be unable to.

Granted, not *every* case like this need be a case of inference. But one doesn't want to say that *no* such case is. So if taking is something that

is at least in principle accessible to consciousness, one thinks that in some such cases we will have inference without taking.

D. Taking as not becausal

Furthermore, one has to wonder whether in normal examples of inferring my conclusion from my premises --even in the example at hand --the inference occurs **because** I take the former to be supported by latter. What is obvious in the example is that:

- (a) I am aware of thinking p;
- (b) I am then aware of thinking that if p, then q;
- (c) I am then aware of thinking that q follows and of accepting q.

It does not follow from the fact that this is what happened that the second part of (c) occurred *because* the first part did. The acceptance of q, after all, could have been brought about by underlying processes that were fast, automatic, and below conscious perusal; the thought that q followed from the rest might be simply a matter of the my consciously endorsing something that had already occurred.

E. No taking in perception

If we had reason to think that it was only in such explicit cases [he means 2.0] that justification could be transmitted from premises to conclusion, then perhaps we could agree that such cases should be given prize of place. But we have no reason to think that. I see a face; I immediately think *that's Paul*. My perceptual experience -- which I would take to be a belief or at least a belief-like state that I see a person who looks *so* --justifies my belief that I see Paul. It is implausible that in order for justification to be transmitted I must take the one to justify the other.

Non-reflective Reasoning in Humans

We still need to contend with the point that a taking state doesn't seem phenomenologically involved in reasoning 1.5. How could it be there, and yet not seem to be there? Kornblith writes:

Conclusion