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The Priority Debate between Hyslop and Nagel: A Unificationist Reconciliation

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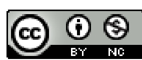
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ABSTRACT
The Problem of Other Minds (POM), in philosophy, is the challenge of explaining the commonsense idea that others possess minds and are capable of thinking and feeling similar to oneself. The dilemma has been explored in the analytic (Anglo-American) and continental philosophical traditions. It has also been a point of contention in epistemology, logic, and philosophy of mind since the 20th century. Contemporary discourse on POM has been approached from different disciplinary perspectives. However, two of these perspectives, epistemological and conceptual, have been central. The trend of literature discussing POM has separated the two perspectives as though they are independent, without exploring the possibility of seeing them as two sides of the same coin. Using the positions of Alec Hyslop and Thomas Nagel as representative of epistemological and conceptual problems, respectively, this paper argues that a proper solution to POM lies in the ability of the proposed solution to see the two perspectives as two ways of solving a problem. Therefore, the POM must represent the unity of the two perspectives such that the solution simultaneously solves both challenges. This is the objective of this study.

Keywords: Other Minds; Separatist Thesis; Unificationist Thesis; Thomas Nagel; Alec Hyslop.

INTRODUCTION

According to Avramides (2019; 2001), there is little agreement on what constitutes the Problem of Other Minds (POM). This, in a way, shows that interpreting POM is itself a problem. Two significant interpretations of the problem have emerged namely, epistemological and conceptual interpretations. According to the epistemological problem of other minds (EP), POM is primarily concerned with the justification of commonsense belief in the presence of other minds; hence, the problem is epistemological. On the other hand, the conceptual problem of other minds (CP) insists

that POM is more about grasping what the concept "other minds" really means, given that each person is aware of only his/her mind from the first-person perspective.

The approach to tackling POM described above is what this paper terms "the separatist thesis." The separatist thesis identifies a version of POM and attempts to resolve or dissolve it, neglecting, as it were, other forms in which the problem might be generated. This paper rejects the separatist thesis for its lopsidedness and seeks a more balanced approach to resolving or dissolving POM. Using the debate between Nagel and Hyslop as a representative of EP and CP, this paper attempts to reconcile these two extremes by exploring a unificationist option wherein the two problems are reduced to two sides of the same coin.

THE SEPARATIST THESIS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL

Hitherto, the debate on POM has been characterised by the strategy of selecting one of the many versions of the issue and then seeking to either resolve or dissolve it. When this is done, the resulting resolution or dissolution is taken as a standard solution to POM, regardless of whether or not it gets some other versions of the problem covered. This approach to POM I will here call the separatist thesis. I will illustrate the separatist thesis using EP and CP in this section.

EP and CP represent the two most popular POMs so far (Avramides, 2019, 2001). Fundamentally, "EP has to do with whether, and, if so, how beliefs concerning the minds and mental states of people other than the person who has the beliefs in question are justified" (Bonjour, 2010, p. 149). Epistemologically conceived, POM focuses on the following questions: How is the knowledge of other minds acquired? "How is it possible to have knowledge of other minds?" (Gomes 2009, p. 219) If such knowledge is possible, how is it justified? How do we know that other people are not simply philosophical zombies, similar to us in all physiological respects but lacking an inner life? Even if I know that another person has sensations, sees, and believes, how can I know just what the other feels, sees, and believes? (Avramides, 2019: 2001; Gomes, 2014). Rationalising the need for these questions, Becchio et al. (2018) clarify:

> How possible questions of this nature arise when something seemingly impossible nevertheless happens. These are, therefore, obstacle-dependent questions: we ask how the knowledge of x is possible when there appears to be an insuperable obstacle preventing knowledge of x. In the case of knowledge of other minds, the apparent obstacle is the supposed opacity of other minds, such as the idea that we can never have direct knowledge of another's mental states (internet).

Based on appropriate responses, two sets of questions are posed above, which lead to two versions of the EP. Both are demands for justification for the claims we make concerning the minds of others. The two versions of EP are identified by Overgaard (2017) as the th*at version* and the what *other version* of EP. The *that version* asks how we arrive at the knowledge of other minds in the first place, while the *what version* asks how we come to know what mental states others are in at any time. It should be noted that the two versions of the EP are not mutually exclusive. An appropriate answer to the latter version has the former covered, although not the other way around. Besides these two versions of the how-question (of) EP, Zahavi (2014) identifies the *why* question. The "why" question asks why others think and feel the way they do and what this means to them (Avramides, 2019).

EP has been historically associated with the problem of epistemic scepticism. Graham (1996) describes it as "the problem of how to defend our common-sense belief in other minds against the general denial of other minds." Here it is clear that EP arises from a specific variety of scepticism, which, like other kinds, should not be allowed to thrive. Given that scepticism stands at the heart of POM, the philosopher's primary concern in the problem is the pursuit of a defensive mechanism aimed at dismantling the foundation of this scepticism and establishing our knowledge of other minds on solid footing. The philosopher's interest in the other minds problem centres on answering the question: "How can we show that the belief in other minds is warranted, and that wholesale scepticism about other minds is false?" (Graham, 1996) As an epistemological question, this requires setting out epistemic norms for determining the presence of minds and mental states wherever they may be found.

On the other hand, CP, to also quote Gomes (2009), asks the question: "How is it possible to think about other minds?" (p. 219). This question raises the problem of the unity of concepts of mental states (Smith, 2010). It arises precisely from the difficulty of reconciling the generality of mental concepts with the unity of mental states. Mental concepts refer to mental states. Mental concepts are general because they apply equally to others and to oneself, whereas mental states are unified. After all, being qualitative or subjective states, there is something it is like to have them. Hence, when I use a mental concept, I refer to a mental state to which I alone have access. The mental concept of pain, for instance, is what each subject comes to possess from subjective feelings of an individual's own pain. My pain is entirely different from someone else's pain in all phenomenological details. The mental concept used to refer to the sensation of pain ought, therefore, to be unique to the individual subject of pain. Here, the saying that experience is the best teacher is correct because experience teaches each subject to know what pain feels like from his/her own case alone. Suppose this is true about the nature of mental states. In that case, it raises the question of how the subjective experience of mental states is to be reconciled with the general nature of mental concepts employed to communicate them. This is what CP consists of, according to Avramides (2001):

> Where questions concerning the minds of others are taken to be epistemological, there is not only an assumption that it makes sense to think about one's own mind in advance of others but there is also an assumption that the concept one comes to have in this way is essentially general... I shall allow that it may be possible somehow to come, by reflection, to have a concept of my mind. What I want to question is whether the concept one comes to have in this way can be thought to have the generality required to permit one to raise questions about the mind of another. This question has come to be known as CP (p. 219).

As Balogun (2022) notes, the foregoing way of generating CP derives primarily from a particular conception of the nature of concepts. According to Davidson (1987), "what counts as evidence for the application of a concept helps define the concept, or at least places constraints on its identification" (p. 422). This suggests the fact that determination of the meaning of a concept includes what counts as good evidence for its successful application. The consequence of this idea of concepts is well noted by Davidson (1987):

> If two concepts regularly depend on their application to different criteria or ranges of evidential support, they must be different concepts. So, if what is apparently the same expression is sometimes correctly employed based on

> a specific range of evidential support and sometimes based on another range of evidential support (or none), the obvious conclusion would seem to be that the expression is ambiguous (p. 422).

The ambiguity to which Davidson alludes results from two perspectives on mental states: one requires evidence, and the other requires none. Suppose I describe my pain as excruciating, and another subject describes her pain as excruciating. There seems to be no way of settling the meaning of "excruciating" because my own "excruciating" pain is arrived at non-inferentially, whereas I arrive at the "excruciating" pain of the other subject based on her verbal or other bodily behaviour (Balogun 2022, p. 31). Donald Davidson thinks that such an expression as "excruciating pain" must be ambiguous because its meaning is arrived at on a different evidential basis from one subject to another. Reconciling these various conceptual perspectives has constituted a large chunk of CP.

Overgaard also identifies two versions of CP: the *that* and the *what*-versions. The *that* version points to the mystery of how we come to form the notion of other minds, given that only our own minds are ever directly accessible to us throughout our lives. Merleau-Ponty (2012) interprets the th*at* version of CP in light of the following questions: "How can the word "I" be made plural?" How can we form the general idea of the "I"? How can I speak of another "I" than my own?" The difficulty involved in answering these questions results from the alleged unobservability of mental states from the third-person perspective. The *What* version of CP asks how it is possible to conceive of mental states inaccessible to one. Like the former, the *what* version becomes problematic because of the lack of direct perceptual access to others' mental states. Wittgenstein's (1958) remark below clarifies:

> I am told: 'If you pity someone for having pain, surely you must at least *believe* that he has pains'. But how can I ever *believe* this? How can these words make sense to me? How could I even have come by the idea of another's experience if there was no possibility of any evidence for it? (p. 46).

The worry expressed above is informed by the absence of "possibility of evidence" for believing in the existence of mental states other than one's own. An appeal to others' bodily behaviours fails to foot the bill here because there is no necessary connection between bodily behaviours and the mental states they are (historically) associated with.

Although there are traces of CP in the premodern period, especially in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (Avramides, 2001), a contemporary articulation of the problem has been attributed to certain portions of the later Wittgenstein. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1963) argues that "if one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is not too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I do not feel on the model of pain which I do feel" (p. §302). The difficulty that Wittgenstein is grappling with here has to do with how an extension of the meaning of mental concepts to other people's mental ascriptions is achievable, given that we come to have these concepts on an individual basis. If all the mental states I ever experience are mine, what warrant do I have to attribute mental states to others? Gomes (2011) characterises the difficulty of answering this question as "the problem of accounting for our ability to think of another person as a bearer of mental states or a subject of mental states" (p. 355). This, Gomes claims, is distinct from any worries we might have about whether it is possible to know about other people's mental lives, hence his acceptance of the distinction between EP and CP.

Fundamental to CP is the problem of solipsism. The solipsist argues that she alone exists in the universe since nothing else is real except her own experiences. One of the consequences of the solipsist mode of thinking is the problem of ambiguity. A concept is ambiguous when it does not admit to a unified conception of meaning at every instance of its use. Ambiguity suggests varieties of meaning. Within the context of CP, solipsism poses the problem of whether we have one unified concept in all cases when we consider mental concepts such as pain. Consider Smith's (2010) articulation of this problem:

> Suppose that one can be in a position to grasp a mental concept Ψ simply by reflecting upon one's own inner experience. From this first-person perspective, one's conscious mental states are given to one as one's own. It might then seem that being given to me should be a part of the meaning of Ψ. But this makes it problematic to see how the very same concept, Ψ as-given-to-me, could be attributed to another. So it is not clear how one can, from the first-person perspective, come to have a grasp of Ψ that allows it to be ascribed to others (p. 203).

The problem of ambiguity arises here because if each subject has a unique way of being aware of her mental states, based on which she describes them using certain mental concepts (e.g. pain), then the suspicion that the meaning of each of the mental concepts is relative to the individual carrier of mental states appears to be a real possibility.

This section has explained EP and CP as different versions of POM. Of course, there are more problems in other minds than those here presented. The two are relevant to the subsequent analysis because of their central position in the other mind's discourse. In the following section, the paper will rehearse the debate between Hyslop and Nagel over which of the two problems of other minds deserves more attention than the other.

HYSLOP'S EP VERSUS NAGEL'S CP

Hyslop (2010; 1995) is a staunch defender of EP. He believes that EP is a challenging problem for other minds and that CP engenders no severe problem. His motivation for settling for EP hinges on the claim that POM is strictly about the justification of our beliefs about other minds. I have averred in the last section that CP is a search for a general concept of mind. However, it seems "in order to have a general concept of something, we presumably must have some background set of knowledge that contextualises the general significance of the concept and its applicability" (Stoll, 2019, p. 100). This will generally suggest that EP is logically prior to CP, especially given that the former is presumably required to understand the latter. Arguably, this supposed requirement of the background knowledge needed for a general conception of mind spurs Hyslop's prioritisation of EP over CP.

At least three questions are relevant here. (i.) Why is the search for justification of belief in other minds important to the other minds discourse? (ii.) How is the need for this search generated? (iii.) How is the justification to be sought? These three questions are central to understanding Hyslop's characterisation of POM as squarely epistemological. Part of my task in this section will be to attempt to respond to these questions within Hyslop's framework of analysis of POM. Before answers are sought to these questions, one should note, contrary to Avramides (2019), that Hyslop regards neither scepticism nor solipsism as a threat to the belief in the existence of other minds. Hence, attempts to resolve other minds problems are not borne out of the desire to combat either scepticism or solipsism. For Hyslop (1995), neither solipsism nor

scepticism is an option because they only arise within philosophical theorising, and do not constitute any worries outside of it. Hyslop (1995) writes:

> Outside of professional scepticism or psychopathology, we are sure we are not alone. Other human figures are, at least to an extent, sufficiently as we are. We are sure they, too, engage in thinking, reasoning, doubting and believing. We are sure they feel sick, in pain, happy, and so on, from time to time (p. 1).

Against this backdrop, POM is not about whether we are sure that others have minds or mental states. It is instead the question of what entitles us to be sure they do. On what basis is the sureness that others have built their minds? This, according to Hyslop, is the real problem with other minds.

It can be appropriately answered in the following manner. The epistemological issue of justification pertains to the evidence that we have in holding something to be the case—or not the case. The existence of other minds is an example of cases where we have sureness, but we do not know what entitles us to be so sure. There is the belief that others have minds, but justifying the belief is problematic. Perhaps POM is an instance of what Cassam (2007) calls the *how-possible* questions in epistemology. Generally conceived, a *how-possible* question is one in which there are obvious reasons to doubt the possibility of the phenomenon about which the question is asked. According to Cassam (2007), "To ask a *how-possible* question is to ask how something which looks impossible given other things that one knows or believes is nevertheless possible" (p. 1). Given the human inability to directly perceive the mental states of others, nothing about others suggests that they have minds or mental states as we do. To claim the contrary demands that we give a justification for our claim. This is why the need for justification of belief in the existence of other minds becomes imperative.

Hyslop appeals to the asymmetry problem. According to this analysis, POM is generated by the asymmetrical relation one subject bears to another, which makes mutual transparency of mental states to each other impossible. Hyslop (2010) writes:

> The asymmetry is a matter of what is known directly and not known directly, and the specific kind of knowledge. It is not a matter of what can be observed, perceived, felt, as opposed to what cannot be observed, perceived, felt. Were I able to observe the mental states of another human being that would not mean that I did not have a problem of other minds. I would still lack what I needed. What I need is the capacity to observe those mental states as mental states belonging to that other human being. They would have to be experienced by me as someone else's mental state. My experience of the other would have to come accompanied by that guarantee, attached as it were to an epistemological label. The situation would only then be as it is in my own case. I would only then be in possession of the direct knowledge that I and all of us forever lack (n.p).

In order to substantiate the point above, Hyslop urges us to imagine a set of Siamese twins, Fred and George, who share a leg. This means that when there is a pain in the shared led, they both feel it. But each feels the pain as his own pain, and not as the other's. "In feeling what is George's pain, Fred does not thereby learn that what he feels is felt by George" (Hyslop 1995, p. 6). Even though the pain is a shared one, each does not feel what the other's pain is.

Meanwhile, what is needed is for each to feel the other's pain as what it is—the other's pain. This phenomenon is what Klein (2015), using the craniopagus example, refers to as "shared mental states but distinct personal ownership." Since each of the parties involved in the shared mental states feels the same state as distinctively hers without feeling the same as the other, shared mental states do not provide evidence for the possibility of knowledge of other minds. It is reasonable to note that the lack of direct knowledge of the other by each of the twins does not generate POM. The problem is generated because each person involved has direct knowledge of her own pain but lacks the same as the other. This creates some kind of asymmetrical relation between them. Hyslop argues that without this asymmetrical relation between Fred and George, ultimately among persons, there would be a problem of minds, not of other minds (Hyslop 2010; 1995). The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the asymmetry in respect of knowledge creates the other minds problem. Each of us is aware of our own mental states in a non-inferential way. We know our (unexpressed) anger, hunger, anguish, pains, etc., in a way that others do not. Moreover, just as others lack this direct knowledge of our mental states, so do we of their own mental states as well. If this narrative well describes what is known as POM, then the problem is that of justifying our belief in the existence of other minds, which makes it straightforwardly epistemological.

To the third question, there have been two significant ways of justifying belief in the existence of other minds: direct perceptual and inferential models (Stoll, 2019; Avramides, 2019; Krueger, 2010). According to the first model, the justification of belief in other minds takes the form of direct observations of the mental states of others. Hyslop rejects this model for two reasons. One, it is not clear that observing other people's mental states is impossible—here, perhaps he has in mind mental phenomena such as telepathy and other extra-sensory means of observation. Two, directly observing the minds of others does not make any difference since it does not differentiate the observer's own mental states from those being observed. Hyslop (1995) notes that "what would be needed would be my observing it as the pain of another" (p. 5). Having rejected the direct perceptual model, Hyslop opts for the inferential model, and particularly, the analogical inferential model. I will not be here concerned with the details of his version of the old argument.

Nagel believes that the interesting problem of other minds is not EP but "the problem of how I can conceive my mind as merely one of the many examples of mental phenomena contained in the world" (Nagel 1989, p. 19). That is, it is not (an EP of) "how can I conceive of minds other than my own" but (a CP of) "how can we conceive of minds subjectively incommensurable with our own" (Nagel, 1989, p. 19). It is instructive to point out that the interestingness of Nagel's CP consists in the claim that once an appropriate answer is offered to it, then EP loses its intractable grip. For before one can raise the epistemological question, one must have a quite general concept of mind—general because it applies both to oneself and others (Avramides, 2001). Hence, the problem with which Nagel may be thought to be grappling here has to do with the origin of our belief in the general concept of mind. It is the question of how I come to conceive mind as capable of being instantiated in others, given that my own mind is revealed to me through an introspective means. If all my life I have been aware of only one mind, that's mine, what puts me in a position as to conceive of minds other than mine? This question, as Nagel understands it, is logically prior to the epistemological question of how we come to believe that others have minds.

In choosing CP over EP, it seems that the ultimate motivation for Nagel's preference is the avoidance of the problem of conceptual solipsism. Avramides (2001) argues that "the conceptual solipsist challenges us so much as to make sense of the attribution of mind to another" (p. 49). The point is that if I come to think about the mind in the first place from reflection on my own mind, it is a fundamental question of how I extend this concept to include the mind of another. Solipsism, as understood by Nagel (1978), is a metaphysical problem rather than an epistemological one. As a metaphysical position, "it denies sense to the supposition that there are other persons beside oneself" (p. 104). This way, the implication remains that the concepts which one applies to one's experiences do not include the possibility of application in the sense to anything outside one's experience. Nagel cites Wittgenstein's (1958) remark in *The Blue Book* as representative of the solipsist position: "If what I feel is always my pain only, what can the supposition mean that someone else feels pain?" (p. 56).

The solipsist's idea of experience, pain, for example, is that it is something felt. Once this felt element of the experience is stripped or unavailable, the subject loses her right to apply mental concepts referring to the experience because, then, there will not be an experience anymore. All experience is a felt experience. This makes all experiences a product of phenomenal consciousness. In the case of pain, particularly, a solipsist may insist on a particular way of feeling and ask how can there be pain when this way of feeling is not present in my body? The reply that it might be present in another body, as noted by Nagel (1978), is of no help with that problem:

> …for it presupposes an understanding of what it would be for the same thing to be experienced not by me but by another, and that understanding is exactly what is lacking. His view is that the pain, something with which he is familiar, cannot be conceived apart from its relation to his own consciousness. A solipsist may retain the full range of first- and third-person psychological language, but he must regard himself as using it in a different sense… when he ascribes 'experiences' to 'others' from that which is operative when he describes his own experiences" (p. 104).

Perhaps, Nagel's concentration on the fight against solipsism can be explained in terms of his belief that conceptual solipsism poses a graver danger to our understanding of other minds than the traditional problem of epistemic scepticism. Of course, both conceptual solipsism and traditional scepticism pose some difficulty to other minds, but with different dimensions and intensity. Hence, the choice of the more critical problem largely depends on which of them – conceptual solipsism and epistemic scepticism – a philosopher thinks is more pressing. 'More pressing' can be given at least two interpretations. One, as in the case of Hyslop, 'more pressing' means inadmissible of *easy* solution. Hyslop opts for EP because there are no particular difficulties associated with CP for him. On the other hand, Nagel interprets 'more pressing' in terms of the interestingness of CP.

One may ask why Nagel thinks solipsism poses a greater danger than scepticism to the understanding of other minds? This may be answered in terms of the measure of tolerance that Nagel is prepared to mete out to the difficulties posed by each of these problems. Whereas Nagel is willing to allow some measure of epistemic scepticism with regard to other minds, he has zero tolerance for solipsism. In order to be able to ask any question about other minds, *ab initio*, the problem of solipsism must be properly dealt with. Hence, unless we can solve CP, we are left in the position of conceptual solipsism;

that is, we are left in a position it does not so much as make sense to raise a question about the mind of another (Avramides 2001).

Nagel accepts that there are minds in other organisms, both those sufficiently like us and those radically unlike us. In "What is it Like to be a Bat?", Nagel (1974) tells us that conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon occurring at different levels of animal life, even if we are not entirely sure of its presence in simpler organisms. However, it is generally challenging to say what provides evidence of it. Even in the face of the extremism of denial by some of the possibility of conscious experience to mammals other than humans, Nagel is prepared to concede to countless other creatures unimaginable to us in diverse places, even beyond the human planet. This point is suggested by the fact that, regardless of the difference between the human sort of experiences and those of others, there seems to be something it is like for every organism to be the organism it is. This Nagel's (1974) 'hard realism' makes scepticism an unavoidable position for Nagel. Avramides describes scepticism as the flip side of Nagel's hard realism, meaning that it is not theoretically possible for Nagel to accept hard realism and reject radical scepticism about the knowledge of other minds even though the latter appears incongruent with his project. Hence, Nagel's overall epistemological programme and picture of reality accommodate some dose of scepticism. This scepticism, however, is not inconsistent with our commitment to the belief that there are other minds. As Avramides (2006) writes,

> Hard realism is Nagel's starting point: other minds exist, and it would be flying in the face of reality to deny this. Part of this hard realist picture is that other minds exist – not just in human beings, and not just in creatures like ourselves, but in creatures in many respects dissimilar to ourselves (p. 231).

Notice that Nagel's hard realism is ontologically motivated. It only covers the *existence* of conscious experience in other creatures, either like us or otherwise, but it does not go beyond that. It does not, for instance, cover what it is like for these diverse creatures to be the creature that they are. This may not be possible on our own part. In the specific case of bats, for example, Nagel (1974) writes:

> I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet, if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate for the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining addition to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of addition, subtraction and modifications. [...] On the other hand, it is doubtful that any meaning can be attached to the supposition that I should possess the internal neurophysiological constitution of a bat. Even if I could by gradual degrees be transformed into a bat, nothing in my present constitution enables me to imagine what the experiences of such a future stage of myself thus metamorphosed would be like. The best evidence would come from the experiences of bats, if we only knew what they were like (p. 439).

One could gather from the above that Nagel's hard realism extends as far as he is willing to grant the possibility of conscious experience in other creatures. This implies that the extent of this realism dictates the extent of Nagel's scepticism about what it is like for these various creatures to be what creatures they are. In other words, even though we can be confident that other animals, such as bats, have minds, we are unable to comprehend what things are like for them. Such scepticism as this, Nagel concedes, is tolerable,

harmless and therefore manageable. There seems to be nothing anyone can do about it because it is a brute fact that stares all of us in the face. The case is not the same for conceptual solipsism, however. It is the possibility of avoidance of conceptual solipsism that makes CP interesting. Unlike EP, CP is a problem philosophers can, indeed, say something about if they are not to fall into conceptual solipsism. As Nagel (1978) asserts, "the avoidance of solipsism requires that the conception of other persons like oneself (not necessarily the belief that there are any) be included in the idea of one's own experience from the beginning" (p. 106).

THE UNIFICATIONIST THESIS

The unificationist thesis I am proposing here is the view that, taken from a holistic point of view, and EP cannot be divorced entirely from CP and vice-versa. In this section, I will sketch out and offer arguments in defence of the unificationist thesis. In all, three arguments are offered. The first appeals to the common ancestry of both EP and CP, the second to the reducibility of one to the other, while the third argument is an implication from the claim that knowing is a mental state (Nagel 2013; Williamson 2007; 1995).

A good understanding of the two forms of POM shows that they both derive their explanatory force from common ancestry, namely, their acceptance of the existence of an asymmetrical gap between one's case and others. Stoll is right when he observes that "both problems rest on a fundamental asymmetry between oneself and others" (Stoll, 2019). They both accept that POM is generated by asymmetry between first- and third-person attributions of mental states/concepts. Hence both EP and CP endorse the asymmetry thesis. In its epistemological formulation, POM results from asymmetry in knowledge between one's mental states and those of others. It is this asymmetry that brings about the gap in epistemic exposure or extension to other minds. Hyslop, who has earlier been shown to accept the asymmetry thesis, notes that the asymmetry that generates the epistemological problem of other minds is that each of us sometimes knows directly that we are in the mental state we are in, and we never know directly that someone other than ourself (*sic*) is in the mental state they are in (Hyslop, 2010).

Conceptually conceived, on the other hand, POM is generated by the asymmetry in the meaning of mental concepts. This creates a conceptual gap in the meaning of mental concepts. It is because we do not know what things are like on the other side that this problem arises. If mental concepts refer to mental states, then there is a problem of how meaning (of mental concepts) is to be fixed where the possibility of directly observing mental states to which they refer is permanently foreclosed. Hence, CP owes its intractability to the inability to secure the sameness of the meaning of mental concepts across intersubjective domains.

It could then be surmised that both variants of asymmetry rest on what has come to be known as the unobservability principle (UP). This is the "idea that minds are composed of exclusively intracranial phenomena, perceptually inaccessible and thus unobservable to everyone but their owner" (Krueger, 2012; Bohl & Gangopadhyay, 2014). The thesis that we are not privileged observers of others' mental states stands at the heart of both EP and CP. Hence, in seeking out a solution to POM, either in the form of EP or CP, what is being sought is how to explain the possibility of other minds, despite UP; or otherwise (how to) show that UP is false. In any case, it shows an inextricable connection between EP and CP regarding their generation as problems. Hyslop (1995) writes:

> Nagel's way of putting it helps clarify the connection between this (conceptual) problem and EP. The latter looks for the justification of our belief in the pains of others, given that we cannot feel them. The former wonders how we can conceive of those pains, given that we cannot feel them (p. 9).

One could then argue that EP is explanatorily *reducible* to CP and vice versa. In each of these cases, the same response will suffice for them both. For instance, John Wisdom opines that the issue involved in POM, really, is "that we do not *know* what it would be like for this condition to be fulfilled, what it would be like to observe the state of the soul which inhabits another body" (Wisdom, 1946, p. 125). This is EP. However, if this is transposed to Nagel's manner of speaking, it may yield something like: "POM is generated by our lack of knowledge of what it is like for others to have minds." This is both EP and CP. Also, rather than asking, "How do we know that another person is in pain?" which would be completely epistemological, we may ask, "How do we know what it is like for another person to feel pain?" which combines both EP and CP together. This is because it not only raises the epistemological concern about how we know that others are in pain, but it also raises the conceptual problem of acquiring the perspective required for determining the meaning of the mental concept 'pain'.

Another way of stating the above argument is to reverse the order and reduce CP to EP. Malcolm presents one of the classical ways of generating CP. According to him,

> If I were to learn what pain is from perceiving my own pains, then I should have learned that pain exists only when I feel it. This property is essential, not accidental; it is nonsense to suppose that the pain I feel could exist when I did not feel it. So if I obtain my conception of pain from the pain that I experience, then it will be part of my conception of pain that I am the only being that can experience it. For me, speaking of another's pain will be a contradiction (Malcolm 1963, pp. 105-106).

I have earlier indicated that CP is a problem with the meaning of mental concepts. So the argument here is that if my concept 'pain' is learned from my first-person perspective on pain, then it is a real question of how I come to know the meaning of another's concept 'pain'. This is CP. However, the argument can be rephrased, without loss in content, to yield EP. To achieve this, one needs only to follow a pattern similar to Malcolm's argument above by observing that knowledge of other minds and mental states is an extension of knowledge of one's own mind and mental states. But knowledge of one's own mind is introspectively accessed, which implies that it is direct and without any mediation between the knower and what is known. The same thing can be said of mental states, for example, pain. There is no pain that I know is not my pain. Hence, to claim to know the pain that is not my pain is to stretch my epistemic capacity beyond its limits. Pains, or any mental states for that matter, are simply not sorts of thing that one does know when one is not currently undergoing them.

The third argument derives from the mental status of the concept of knowing. Philosophers have been cautious about granting this claim, but, as Nagel (2013) noted, the inclusion of knowledge in the class of mental is a good piece of knowledge in psychology. Although not all philosophers hold this bias (Carruthers, 2009), the denial of the mental status of knowing within the philosophical community stems from the claim that because the analysis of knowledge includes the condition of truth, which is to be sought outside the knowing subject, it is not correct to reduce knowledge to a mental state

(Williamson, 1995). While this argument may be correct for the concept of knowledge, the same cannot be said of the concept of knowing, which has been widely recognised as a mental state. One motivation for this is the acknowledgement of knowing as an intentional state (Williamson, 2009; 2000; 1995; Jacob, 2019) and a propositional attitude (Nelson, 2019). As an intentional state and a propositional attitude, knowing has intentionality. Philosophers have agreed that intentionality is a mark of the mental (Place, 1996; Crane, 2011, 1998; Horgan & Kriegel, 2008; Voltolini, 2013; Jacob, 2014; Neander, 2017; Pernu, 2017).

Considering that knowing is a mental state, and every mental state has what it is like, there must be something it is like to be in a mental state of knowing. This is the subjective character or distinctive aspect that accompanies every mental state. What, then, is it like to know another person's mind? A proper answer to this question is capable of helping us find a mid-way between EP and CP, thereby providing further support for the unificationist thesis. Since knowing implies possessing a specific mental state, knowing other minds puts one in possession of a specific mental state in relation to the mind claimed to be known. However, mental states, because of their phenomenality, are inherently perspectival. Hence the question, what perspective is knowing other minds required to have? A standard response to this question is that to know the mental state that another person is in, the knower must be capable of accessing that person's mental state from a distinctively first-person perspective. The resultant difficulty in achieving this explains the intractability of EP. This is because accessing the other person's first-person perspective on the mental state implies having her perspective on the mental state in question, which is conceptually suspect.

To demonstrate the interface of EP and CP, consider a claim that I know that another person is in pain. If I claim to know that another person is in pain, I am required, as a warrant for my claim, to know what the feeling of pain is like, from the perspective of the person whose pain I claim to know. Given this requirement, what starts as a claim to knowledge now becomes a conceptual demand on what it means for another person to be in pain. It is a conceptual demand because, for one to claim to know that another person is in pain, there is a need to settle what it means for another person to be in pain, which turns on the interpersonal knowledge of pain. This interpersonal or objective notion of mental state (i.e. pain) is at stake in CP. This way, EP is CP, differently understood.

CONCLUSION

The consequences of the foregoing discovery on POM are enormous. For instance, it helps to point out that attempts by earlier scholars to separate EP from CP may not yield a complete solution to the problem because just about when one gets resolved, the other rears its ugly head. Apart from the fact that conceptual issues are epistemological issues, there are cases in which conceptual issues cannot be addressed except in relation to epistemological issues. Besides, some discussants of POM, for example, Davidson (2001) and Cassam (2007), do not distinguish between CP and EP. Davidson's concern about POM is purely EP, but this has severe implications for CP. On his part, Cassam starts with what he refers to as the perceptual model, an epistemological journey, only to discover that, in achieving his aim, he has got CP to deal with. In all, one can submit that EP and CP are two sides of the coin and that solving one in isolation from the other is, at best, a palliative approach that may only reduce the severity of the problem but does not remove the substance; and at worst, impossible to achieve.

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