FOLK CONCEPT OF 'A PERSON': STRUCTURE AND WARRANT*

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The main goal of this paper is to discuss the folk concept of 'a person'. The secondary goal is to present a new field of experimental philosophy by using its theoretical framework to study folk concepts. The major part of this paper is devoted to descriptive issues of the concept of a person: in one section I outline the very notion of folk conceptions and then discuss the folk concept of a person; in another section I present a cognitive scientific view of persons. Finally, I outline a tentative answer to the substantive question about the reliability of folk concepts. It is argued that this kind of empirical conceptual analysis (of 'a person' or any other concept) can be of use within the standard methodological tool-kit of analytic philosophy, it can contribute to conceptual clarity in cognitive science, and possibly shed some light on normative issues.

Keywords: *folk concepts, folk psychology, a person, experimental philosophy, cognitive science.*

1. Introduction

It is commonplace in analytic philosophy, especially ordinary language philosophy, to study the structure and nature of everyday concepts by using methods of conceptual analysis (Nichols 2004). Alternatively, it has been of great interest to cognitive scientists to figure out the same conceptual structures and psychological origins of concepts by using empirical methods (Thagard 2005). So it is not surprising to find a collaborative work between philosophers and cognitive scientists in studying various philosophically relevant folk concepts. Recently, a new

burgeoning field of *experimental philosophy* not only considers empirical evidence from social and cognitive psychology or from cognitive anthropology, but is also directly engaged in research and *empirical conceptual analysis* (for review see: Knobe and Nichols 2008; Knobe at al. 2012). Of course, not all questions are easily subjected to the kinds of experimentation that these new researchers pursue. However, the questions that take into account commonsense or folk concepts and intuitions are indeed subject to such experimentation. People always and in all cultures have strong feelings towards and opinions about questions of moral responsibility, free will, personal identity, knowledge, consciousness, cau-

sation, and other philosophical questions. Therefore, empirical investigation of these feelings and opinions is relevant to philosophical inquiry[1].

How does one study these folk concepts? What is the relevance of this new research program? And what are the implications of such research for philosophical and practical concerns? These are the three general questions addressed by experimental philosophers. In the same vein, this article will focus on a particular folk concept of *a person*[2] and analyze it in relation to the aforementioned questions. The project to uncover structures of the folk concept of a person is interesting in its own right, but some philosophers were perplexed by this issue also because they noticed that an image of human persons in commonsense or the folk view of persons contrasts with the scientific view of persons (e.g. Sellars 1962; Flanagan 2002). Even though science is rooted in commonsense, over the last centuries it slowly departed from our commonsense intuitions. Our intuitive physics and biology are often poor guides for understanding the contemporary science of physics and biology. The same is true about our minds and our selves, cognitive science

begins to challenge our basic intuitions about what mind is and who we are.

Usually, experimental philosophers approach the problem of folk concepts and intuitions by dividing research into three distinct projects: descriptive, substantive, and prescriptive. The goal of *the descriptive project* is to determine the character and structure of folk intuitions and concepts; the goal of *the substantive project* is to figure out what does cognitive science say about it and then to determine whether folk views are compatible with that; then, *the prescriptive project* is concerned with the question whether given what we know about our concepts and the world we should revise or preserve our practices (Nichols 2006: 59; 2008). Similarly, I will analyse the concept of a person in the following way. The major part of this paper will be devoted to the descriptive project. Before addressing any normative issues (substantive and prescriptive projects)[3], it is good to have solid descriptions of the concepts in question. The descriptive part will be divided into two sections: (a) in one section I will outline the very notion of folk conceptions, then will talk specifically about the folk conceptual structure of a person by presenting relevant empirical research; (b) in another section I will discuss a cognitive scientific view of persons, a different kind of descriptive project that is relevant for further substantive discussion. In the final section, I will outline a tentative answer to the substantive question about reliability and warrant of

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[1] For a full collection of topics and publications in experimental philosophy see this website: http://pantheon.yale.edu/~jk762/ExperimentalPhilosophy.html

[2] Theoretically, the concepts of a person and self could be defined in slightly different ways, but I propose to use them interchangably. It is usual to find notions of a person as being composed of different parts (Olson 2010); also, it is quite usual to find the notion of different kinds of self (Gallagher 2000). Therefore, the concept of a person could be understood as being composed of different kinds of self (e.g. minimal self, psychological self, bodily self). While personal identity is the notion of a person as being extended in time, and the problem is to determine which parts of the person are necessary for that person to be the same over time.

[3] Substantive project is normative in the sense that it is concerned with epistemic norms – which beliefs are *warranted* and which are not. While prescriptive project is normative in the sense that it is concerned with ethical norms – which practices we *should* abandon and which to preserve.

folk concepts, and will caution any pre-scriptive project to take into consideration various cognitive constraints.

2. A descriptive project I: folk conceptions of a person

The question of what a person or the self is has been a traditional philosophical question. For instance, philosophers have been interested in the question of the substance of the self – is it an immaterial, simple and an immutable thing or a composite thing? Subsequently, a related question was asked about the right criterion in determining a person's identity over time – is it secured by immaterial, simple and immutable self or is it a matter of psychological continuity? His-torically, Descartes (1637/1970) and later Cartesians like Thomas Reid (1785/1975/) argued that it is the immaterial, simple and immutable self that matters in personal identity, as Reid wrote:

> My thoughts, and actions, and feelings, chan-ge every moment; they have no continued, but a successive, existence, but the self, or I, to which they belong, is permanent, and has the same relation to all the succeeding thoughts, actions, and feelings which I call mine. (Reid 1785/1975: 109)

John Locke (1690) argued that personal identity cannot be based on such rather con-tent-empty notion of the self, instead, the person A at one point in time is connected with the same person A at another point via memory. Furthermore, David Hume confessed that he could not even perceive a permanent, simple, indivisible (not to men-tion immaterial) self, to him the phenom-enology of experience does not support the Cartesian claim. Thus, Hume wrote:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.... If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continued, which he calls *himself*; though I am certain there is no such principle in me.
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> (Hume 1739/2003: 180)

Interestingly, such examples from the history of Western philosophy (for more, cf. Martin and Barresi 2006) provide a good illustration of the standard philosophical method of thought experiments and appeal to intuitions. Locke, for instance, used a famous thought experiment about body-swap between a prince and a cobbler – he appealed to third person perspective intui-tions about psychological continuity. On the other hand, Reid and Hume appealed to first person perspective intuitions, that is, they were appealing to introspection that should reveal the truth of their statements.

Now, how do non-philosophers think and intuit about the same and related issues, how do folks conceptualise *persons*? In what follows I will outline the very term of 'folk conception' and give a brief account of its cognitive underpinnings, then I will discuss how folks apply three main criteria in conceptualising persons.

2.1 What are folk concepts?

From a cognitive scientific perspective, folk concepts are discussed either (a) in terms

of their own internal composition at the *personal* level, (b) or in terms of cognitive/neural mechanisms that underpin them, i.e. at the *sub-personal* level. And all that is often framed in terms of ontogenetic (individual) and phylogenetic (evolutionary) development.

Typically, folk concepts are divided into several broad domains that could be further divided into sub-domains or separate concepts, for instance: folk physics (e.g., concepts of gravity, mechanical motion), folk biology (e.g., the distinction between animate and inanimate objects, concepts of living kinds, and life cycles of birth and death), and folk psychology (e.g., concepts of intentions, beliefs, desires, emotion and perceptions). Each domain is sub-served by a cluster of dedicated, domain-specific cognitive systems. These cognitive systems: (a) at a sub-personal level operate in a specifically prescribed manner by taking in and processing a particular kind of information from natural or social environments; (b) as a result, activated cognitive systems produce spontaneous inferences and judgements, which are felt at the personal level. In this paper, I will mainly focus on *folk psychology* since it is the most relevant domain for the folk notion of a person.

One influential way to account for the workings of the sub-personal representational level of cognition is to postulate tacit theories that folks unconsciously apply to the observable aspects of the world. On this account, folk psychology is a common-sense *theory of mind,* where *theory* is something akin to scientific theory (cf. Gopnik and Wellman 1994; Gopnik 2003), but is not necessarily explicit. In particular, understood in a minimal sense, this *theory*

of mind postulates unobservables (mental states like beliefs and desires), predicts them from observables (by observing certain behavioural cues, like goal-directed reach of an arm or a gaze), and use them to explain other observable behaviour (cf. Malle 2005). Note, however, that this is not the only account of folk psychology available. For instance, there is a heated debat between this *theory-theory* and a *modularity theory* regarding the extent to which a *theory of mind* is innately predisposed (Baron-Cohen 2005; Carruthers 2006). On the other hand, both theories agree that some type of theory-based process is needed in order to account for our understanding of other minds. However, this model is opposed by the so-called *simulation theory* (Gordon 2004; for review see Nichols and Stich 2003). This approach argues that we don't need to postulate a theory, it is enough to assume that we use our own cognitive resources to simulate what others might have in mind, and on basis of this simulation we predict and explain their behaviour. In this paper I will assume a hybrid position, which takes both theories as possible components of a general folk psychology (see Nichols and Stich 2003). Furthermore, it is still an open question of how theories underlying folk conceptions develop, i.e., to what extent such concepts are predisposed innately and how cultural learning affects the development and change of those theories (for review see Wellman 2010).

2.2 Folk conceptions of personal identity

The question of how ordinary folks conceptualise a person is broad. Many factors are to be taken into consideration. For ex-

ample, the composition question would be concerned with folk conceptions of parts (or different kinds of self, see footnote 2) that make up a person, while the context question would be concerned with relevant situational triggers that activate one or several self concepts. In any case, the best evidence for the folk conception of compositional person-parts is a recent research on folk conception of *personal identity.* Note, however, that the composition question is still broad enough, this perspective is merely concerned with the list of composing person-parts. Whereas personal identity question, narrowly construed, focuses on such person-parts that are most important in the continuity of that person (see Olson 2010, for more aspects of personal identity). Even through a more focused perspective, we still get to see several folk conceptual elements that are important in the general conception of *a person*.

Thus, personal identity as a philosophical problem boils down to the question of what is necessary and sufficient for a person to be the same over time (Olson 2010). Throughout the history of Western philosophy there have been put, in one form or another, three criteria to account for personal identity (Perry 1975; Parfit 1984; Martin and Barresi 2006; Olson 2010; Nichols and Bruno 2010), namely:

(1) *Psychological* **criterion:** ever since Locke (/1690/1975), psychology was taken as the most important aspect of the person; memory (in the sense argued by Locke) and psychological connectedness and continuity (in a broader sense endorsed today- cf. Parfit 1984) is said to be the best criterion to determine personal identity.

(2) *Bodily* **criterion:** more recently, some philosophers began to argue for a bodily approach (Williams 1970; Olson 2003, 2010), in this approach it is argued that the body is the real locus of person's identity and the continuity of the body is a necessary condition for a person to persist;

(3) *Minimal self* **criterion:** this is an old notion going back to Plato and later refined by Descartes, it postulates an *essential self* (Martin and Barresi 2006); furthermore, Reid suggested that we must posit the self as a separate concept from the mind concept to explain how action and experience is possible as *mine*.

Nichols and Bruno have noted that "academic philosophers did not invent this problem – its seeds are within us" (2010: 294). What they meant is that philosophical theories of personal identity (like many other notions mentioned in the introduction) have sprung from intuitions that are, presumably, quite common. Therefore, it is no surprise to find philosophers elaborating on what is widely intuitive and then appealing to those same intuitions to make the case. Recently, however, some empirical work has been carried out to test folk intuitions regarding personal identity criteria (Blok, et al. 2001; Blok et al. 2005; Nichols and Bruno 2010). One interesting work has been written describing how folk conceptions of personal identity underlie the transmission of reincarnation beliefs (White 2009), and my own doctoral work addressed folk conceptions of the self in the context of Mongolian Buddhist beliefs of Nirvana and afterlife (Berniūnas 2012).

When cognitive scientists and experimental philosophers conduct experimental research, they expect to uncover folk *intuitions* about various cases, which helps to elicit various structural elements of folk conceptions. The same is true of the concept of personal identity. Most studies focus on psychological and bodily conceptions of personal identity, leaving the notion of minimal self out of picture. However, there are some preliminary results about the folk conception of the self that is not reducible to psychological and bodily properties. In general, the existing studies point to a picture more complex than some philosophers have assumed – people don't really think about selves and personal identity in terms of only one necessary and sufficient criterion. Perhaps, cognition in concrete situations requires more flexible strategies.

(1) Psychological self versus bodily self. All researchers to date have found that psychological properties are to some significant degree more important than bodily properties for folks when determining whether a person is the same person (Blok et al. 2001; Blok et al. 2005; Nichols and Bruno 2010; White 2009). Moreover, there is some evidence that certain psychological properties, in particular *autobiographic memories*, are more important than others (Blok et al. 2001; and especially White 2009).

Importantly, these studies have employed some version of the transformation scenarios (e.g. a transplantation of the brain from A body to B body, or a reincarnation scenario (White 2009)), to obtain these results. Framing scenarios in this *concrete* way may bias participants towards the psychological criterion. Indeed, the alternative framing suggested by Williams (1970) can change the focus and elicit quite different intuitions, where bodily criterion takes hold. Still, in spite of this framing effect being verified empirically by Nichols and Bruno (2010), it was demonstrated that an *abstract* question formulation about personal identity (thereby reducing the framing effect) elicited a stronger psychologically-based view in contrast to the bodily-based view (for details see Nichols and Bruno 2010).

Even if psychology is slightly more important for personal identity, the role of the bodily continuity should not be underestimated since there are situations where bodily cues are often necessary. For instance, White (2009) ran a series of studies with UK participants asking them to judge the likelihood of the 'true' reincarnation of the deceased person based on a list of similar physical and psychological traits. Results suggest that people implicitly (believers and non-believers in reincarnation alike) reasoned about personal identity in reincarnation by regarding *episodic autobiographical memories* and *congenital bodily traits* as the best evidence that the reincarnated person is one and the same.

Similarly Blok et al. (2001) observed that even though memories are important in a person's continual identity, the continuity of memories *together* with the continuity of the brain (as a physical carrier of mental contents) after transplantation makes it even more significant. In general, salient bodily acts, appearances, mannerisms, facial expressions, etc., are important cues for determining a person's identity. In fact, as it is argued by some developmental psychologists, the development of an infant's notion of a person is not restricted to their understanding of minds, but also involves

the understanding of bodies since the conception of human bodies as objects occur before the development of the theory of mind (Meltzoff and Moore 1995: 65). It seems that people place some importance on *bodily self* in everyday interactions. Therefore, the cited studies suggest that people have mixed intuitions about which criteria, broadly speaking, are necessary and sufficient in determining a person's identity; although psychological properties are considered to be somewhat more important than bodily properties.

(2) Conceptions of the minimal self. The concept of the minimal self is complex in itself. In what follows, I will outline three main components that fall under this concept, that is: (a) causal agent, (b) subject, and (c) essential self. In general, the folk conception of the self that I am trying to outline here is akin to what philosophers have been talking about since Descartes, and it might well be the case that they derived it from one of the basic folk intuitions. For instance, Reid wrote more than two hundred years ago, that "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers" (Reid 1785/1975: 109). In this view, psychological states are not what constitutes the self but *belong* to the self, in the sense that it is a source of action (*causal agent*) and a *subject* of experiences. Similarly, cognitive anthropologist Roy D'Andrade, while studying the folk model of the mind (in his case, North American), noticed that the self stands apart from the folk reasoning about the mind and has a dual relationship to it. On the one hand, the self is an active *causal agent* that intends, thinks or desires; while on the other hand, the self can be conceived as a passive experiencer, that is, a *subject* (D'Andrade 1987: 118). More recently, Shaun Nichols raised the same point about active causal agency in folk psychological attributions (2006, see also Sousa 2006). Together with Joshua Knobe, he proposed the account of an *executive self* that is understood as a *causal agent* initiating actions and is apart from psychological and bodily properties (Knobe and Nichols 2011). In their recent article, Knobe and Nichols discussed an intuitive concern about free will that people have in the context of deterministic descriptions of the world (for review see Sarkissianet al. 2010; Sommers 2010). They argued that these intuitions stem from people's ordinary thinking about the self. In general, people have access to at least three different conceptions of the self (bodily, psychological and minimal self). But importantly, while people are capable of understanding the self as a sequence of psychological processes (e.g. the way David Hume perceived it), they also seem to have a minimal conception of the self that is not reducible to the psychological or the physical, but is a *further fact* (Parfit 1984) that initiates or accepts psychological or bodily states.

I found the same pattern in my own work with Mongolian Buddhists, which is an especially interesting case since there is explicit teaching of no-self (Siderits 2007). Indeed, in the Buddhist context, contrary to explicit teaching, most people when faced with narratives of a recently deceased person (and especially enlightened lama) did not consider various mental states to be *selfless* and passing on without any *owner*. The non-self idea was not a default option for the Mongolian participants.

In addition to that, the conception of the *essential self* might have some psychological basis in folk reasoning. That is, along with notions of subjectivity and agency, some form of *psychological essentialism* could be yet another factor that influences reasoning about persons as possessing irreducible minimal self. They might perceive individual persons as natural kinds that possess unobservable essences – a defining feature of a category (see Gelman 2005; Richert and Harris 2008).

To sum up, people have different intuitions about what makes the person the same person at a time and over time. However, there may well be some hierarchy in the default application of criteria. Under normal conditions a person could be considered to be the same over time if he has some psychological continuity, while body provides many cues of such continuity (in terms of behaviour that indicates psychological continuity) as well as exclusively bodily cues that are unique expressions of that person (appearance, face, exceptional marks, rigid behavioural markers like particular mannerisms, etc.). At the same time, it is quite possible that people imply some notion of the minimal self (e.g. causal agency, subject of experiences, and an essence) in the conception of the psycho-physical self, although it is in principle dissociable. At this point, it is still and open empirical question: under which conditions the minimal self is dissociated from psycho-physical properties of the person? How different kinds of self interact in people's everyday causal/social/moral cognition? In which contexts are these concepts activated? And what kind of, if any, social or normative role do they play?

3. A descriptive project II: cognitive science and persons

Figuring out folk conceptions of a person and figuring out what is a person from a cognitive scientific perspective are notably different *descriptive* projects. In this subsection I will sketch an outline of what seems to be a person in the naturalistic framework of cognitive science. Since my purpose is to explicate only main theoretical assumptions that are relevant in thinking about a person, it is going to be inevitably an incomplete depiction of the whole interdisciplinary project (for more comprehensive reviews see Bermudez 2010; Davies 2005; Friedenberg and Silverman 2006; Thagard 2005).

In general, cognitive science is a naturalistic interdisciplinary project that seeks to understand how the mind works. The so-called cognitive revolution began in the s1960's as a response to behaviourism. Unlike behaviourists, who explicitly denied the need to study internal mental processes, early cognitively oriented researchers reclaimed this domain of the mind by devising new methodological techniques of study and new theoretical tools of analyses (mainly thanks to the developments in computer sciences and linguistics)[4]. Therefore, such different disciplines as psychology, philosophy, linguistics, neuroscience, AI and anthropology are united not only by the very object of study – the mind – but also by their commitments to general theoretical assumptions about cognition.

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[4] Actually, as Davies notes: 'Many commentators agree in dating the conception of this inter-disciplinary approach, cognitive science, to 11 September 1956, the second day of a symposium on information theory held at MIT' (Davies 2005: 358)

It was mentioned in the introduction that a particular cognition (in this case folk psychology) could be analysed at two different levels: *personal* and *sub-personal* levels of description and explanation (Dennett 1969). Typically, the notion of *levels of explanation* is used to address the complexity of cognition and respond to the integration challenge – a challenge of how different parts of cognitive science fit together (Bermudez 2010: 284-409). In the context of this paper, the distinction between personal and sub-personal levels is also useful in addressing the difference between folk and scientific conceptions of a person. This way we get the distinction between folk (personal) conception and cognitive scientific (sub-personal) conception of a person. More specifically, as Davies sums up Dennett's point, the distinction would be as follows:

> at the personal level, we talk about persons as such – as experiencing, thinking subjects and agents. We describe what people feel and what people do, and we explain what people do in terms of their sensations, desires, beliefs and intentions. These personal-level explanations are of a distinctive, not straightforwardly causal, kind and they do not work by elaborating accounts of mental processes. Still less do they work by postulating physical mechanisms underpinning the activities of persons. An account of the physical mechanisms that are involved when a person withdraws his hand from a hot stove belongs at a quite different level of description and explanation. We abandon 'the explanatory level of people and their sensations and activities' and shift to 'the sub-personal level of brains and events in the nervous system' (p. 93). At this sub-personal level of description and explanation, the kinds of occurrences that are described receive causal explanations in purely mechanistic terms. (Davies 2005: 360)

In the previous section I've tried to specify what the personal level conception of persons amounts to, and to describe different interconnected elements of folk conception in some detail. Here I address the sub-personal level of description and explanation. At this sub-personal level, cognitive science assumes operation of cognitive systems that are largely inaccessible to conscious introspection and are best described in terms of a *theory of mental representations* and a *computational theory of mind*. Concepts, for instance, are prototypical mental representations. As such, concepts have *content* (they are about something in the world), have *a referent* (a thing in the world that it refers to) and are *represented to or for* someone or something (e.g. a cognitive system). In this view, representations are only key components of the mind, the mind also performs certain *computations* on those representations – there are many information processing cognitive systems that take in, manipulate and process representations of various sorts. Furthermore, this level is also underpinned and constrained by another sub-personal level of neurobiology. At this level of explanation, any remnants of intentional talk are completely substituted by purely mechanistic descriptions of brain activities[5].

Thus, acceptance of the representational and computational account of the mind (in one form or another) in scientific psycholo-

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[5] It should be noted that a given depiction of explanatory levels is somewhat simplistic. For instance, in neurobiology we do not have a single level. Contrary, this level could be divided into subsequent levels that interact in complex ways, for instance, neuroscientific research is conducted in these areas: cognitive/behavioral neuroscience → systems (neural networks) neuroscience → cellular neuroscience → molecular neuroscience (Bermudez 2010: 96).

gy and a complementary biological account in neuroscience characterizes cognitive science as a unified project. In this respect, contemporary cognitive science presents a picture of a distributed, fragmented person with its biological, cognitive, and social and cultural origins (e.g., Martin and Barresi 2006; Metzinger 2009). It implies no unified control centre of action and no particular locus of experience – many different cognitive and neural systems work in accord to execute an action or to process sensual or perceptual information. To be sure, this conception of a person as being made up of psychological states and process that are physically realised in the brain, is not entirely inconceivable to lay people (i.e., non-scientists and non-philosophers). With little tutoring, people can (and most of them do) understand it quite well since there is a kind of continuity between folk psychology and biology, and scientific psychology and biology[6]. They simply recruit the same cognitive resources underlying folk conceptions of psychological or bodily self[7].

However, even if there is some conceptual continuity between folk and scientific psychologies, cognitive scientific (sub-personal) explanation leaves no room for the notion of a *'further thing'* that is an independent source of human action. There are only certain states and certain processes that generate specific behaviour (Knobe and Nichols 2011). In this view, *the minimal self* (as a causal agent and a subject), as not reducible to psychological and physical processes, is dispensable (e.g., Dennett 2008; Flanagan 2002; Wegner 2008).

4. Beyond description

After providing a descriptive empirical account of relevant concepts, experimental philosophers often engage in further philosophical inquiry. In particular, they are engaged in a *substantive* evaluation of folk concepts and views. Typically, evaluation proceeds by first identifying the source of these concepts and beliefs, something we briefly discussed in the previous section. Then, it is assessed whether these beliefs are warranted: (a) given the sources of these beliefs; and (b) given what we know about the world (from sciences).

Source and warrant. It is obvious that sometimes people acquire beliefs from untrustworthy *external* sources (unreliable and biased people, media or books), but experimental philosophers are particularly interested in "an unreliable and distorting *internal* source" (Knobe and Nichols 2008: 7). In general, the goal is to determine whether these internal sources (presumably unreliable cognitive processes) of beliefs, for instance, in such concepts as (libertarian) free will and moral responsibility "undercut the warrant for the beliefs" (ibid.). Similarly, this strategy could be applied in the case of folk notion of the minimal self.

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[6] Of course, the continuity is not smooth. For instance, in cognitive science psychological states (as beliefs or desires) ultimately supervene on the brain, while in folk understanding the relation between mind and brain is not so obvious. Indeed, developmental psychologists demonstrated that children learn about the mind and brain differently, and later as adults think differently about mind and brain (Wellman and Johnson 2008). This led some researchers to hypothesise that perhaps all of us are *intuitive dualists* (Bloom 2004).

[7] In the case of folk psychology, to use Dennett's (2009) terminology, it could be argued that we extend our *intentional stance* towards scientific psychology, we talk about cognitive processes 'as if' they are *intentional systems*.

More specifically, lets take an example of agency. In cognitive science, there is a body of literature that discusses the sources of our *sense of agency*[8]. A detailed description often is supplemented by considerations about the reliability of our 1st person experiences – whether "the sense of agency derives directly from the consciousness of actions" or maybe emerge through a more complex processes (de Vignemont and Fourneret 2004: 16; for discussion see also Metzinger 2009; Nahmias 2005; Wegner 2004). Apparently, our folk phenomenology, though so intimate, is not the most reliable internal source for developing the concept of agency and forming a belief about agent causation[9]. Indeed, it is not the most reliable source for many other related beliefs, such as libertarian free will since "introspection fails to provide the kind of access that would be needed to detect whether our own choices are generated by libertarian free will" (Nichols 2008b: 24). More generally, some have provocatively argued that indeed "no weight should be placed on the introspective intuition" (Carruthers 2009: 17) since psychological data shows that we are quite often engaged in *post hoc* rationalizations of our actions, rather than having a direct and uninterrupted access to reasons for those actions (see also Nahmias (2010) for how such data are potentially challenging to the folk notion of free will). No doubt, there still remains conceptual work that needs to be done in figuring out the exact relation between the sources of beliefs and their warrant. At this point, it is a weak claim on the part of experimental philosophers, and it needs to be sharpened.

Science and warrant. Furthermore, a closer comparison of folk (as they are at the personal level) and scientific (at the sub-personal level) concepts eventually highlights substantive *differences* (Nichols 2006). As it was indicated in the previous section, the most obvious difference is in the way *the minimal self* is treated. Now, given what we know about the mind from cognitive science, does this concept (as it was described above) refer to anything in the world? As Knobe and Nichols observe:

> … people's ordinary understanding of human action is importantly different from the picture one finds in cognitive science. While cognitive science aims to explain behaviour entirely in terms of the interconnections of certain states and processes, people's ordinary understanding appears to involve something more – a separate self that stands outside all

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[8] An aspect of the minimal self – agency – is a complex phenomenon in itself. Just talking at the personal level, the notion of a *sense of agency* is a more primitive component then a concept of a *causal agency*. The former is exclusively first personal conscious experience that underlies later developed, linguistically mediated concept of the causal agent, and an attribution of causal agency is typically a third person attitude.

[9] The best evidence comes from many neuropsychological studies about various agency related disorders (like alien hand syndrome, dissociative identity disorder, and schizophrenic auditory hallucinations). Also, there are experiments that manipulate a sense of agency. First, it should be noted that a sense of agency is itself not a single phenomenon, there is a clear distinction between a sense of ownership and a sense of action initiation. To give you an example of how a sense of ownership for body part is manipulated, consider an example of a simple but ingenious experiment – the rubber-hand illusion (see Metzinger 2009; de Vignemont and Fourneret 2004). It proceeds as follows. A subject observes a human-like rubber-hand in front of her while the real hand is concealed. Both the artificial and the real hands are stroked repeatedly and synchronously with a probe. After a minute or so of stroking, a subject begins to feel as if her real hand shifted towards the rubber-hand. She begins to have phenomenal experiences of the rubber-hand as her body part – by virtue of the visual and tactile feedback, the body schema in the brain is tricked into integrating it and producing a false sense of ownership.

these states and processes and can choose to ignore their promptings. (2011: 550)

As science proceeds, it becomes evident that in many cases *scientific* ontology does not necessarily match that of folk *intuitive* ontology (Boyer and Barrett 2005). This is not a new observation, already Sellars (1962) has pointed out a difference between the *scientific* image and the *manifest* image of human persons (see also Flanagan 2002, 2007), where manifest image is humanistic, rooted in a commonsense and personal level psychology, and scientific image is a reductive view that reduces persons to sub-personal parts.

Finally, descriptive and substantive considerations can direct prescriptive projects in one way or another. That is, given our descriptions and substantive evaluations, should we revise practices that are directly or indirectly related to the relevant concepts (like that of retributive punishment in relation to notions of free will and moral responsibility)? So, what kind of practices are relevant to the folk notion of the minimal self that *should* be changed? I do not have a ready-made answer to this pressing question, but one thing could be considered before pursuing any kind of prescriptive project. In particular, it should be seriously considered why certain folk concepts prevail, and a good psychological account of such prevalence could predict any prescriptive project's success and failure. For instance, the so-called cognitive science of religion demonstrated that typical religious concepts and beliefs are more attention-grabbing to folks and they seem to be much more 'natural' than many scientific concepts and therefore they are widespread (Boyer 2001; Dennett 2006; McCauley 2000, 2010).

In general, cognitive science showed that we rarely change our minds in the light of new evidence and often fall prey to our cognitive biases (e.g. confirmation bias). More specifically, as McCauley (2010) noted, we are especially biased to perceive agency not only in our actions, but everywhere in the environment. Therefore, beliefs (weaved in various narratives) that postulate a causal agent of any natural or supernatural sort is much easier to *swallow cognitively* (see also Boyer 2001). In the course of cognitive evolution, *a hyperactive agency detection device* (HADD) was a much more useful survival tool for *Homo sapiens*, then a truthful causal description of the situation. As a result, there is a minimal input requirement for HADD to be activated. For HADD in action just remember the last time you got irritated *at* your computer for 'intentionally' not working properly (see Guthrie 1993 for a wide discussion of HADD expressions in art, religion, philosophy, and science). Science, on the contrary, banished the language of agency, not only from explanations of physical and biological (e. g. natural selection) phenomena, but also from ultimate explanations of mental phenomena (McCauley 2010). For counter-intuitive and 'unnatural' (cognitively speaking) scientific concepts and theories to persist, an extended tutoring and cognitive effort is required and, most importantly, social institutions supporting that (McCauley 2000). This claim still needs to be clarified, but it is reasonable, at this point, to presuppose such cognitive constraints while communicating cognitive or any other science to the public; and anticipate at least a minimal cognitively determined resistance to any new *prescriptive* projects (Nichols 2006; 2008).

5. Concluding remarks

The main goal of this paper was to discuss the folk concept of *a person.* The secondary goal was to present a new field of experimental philosophy by using its theoretical framework to study folk concepts (by dividing research into descriptive, substantive and prescriptive projects). The major part was devoted to descriptive issues since solid empirical data obtained through real experimentation (and not just imaginary) is argued to be crucial in solving various problems related to substantive and prescriptive questions. As a result, detailed description of the folk conception in general and the folk concept of a person in particular was presented in several sub-sections. Furthermore, cognitive scientific sub-personal conception of a person was presented as a distinct descriptive project. In relation to substantive project, I presented two possible strategies to evaluate the reliability of folk concepts, and tentatively applied them to the folk concept of a person. Another avenue for the research in the future is related to prescriptive questions, that is – what should we do with our social, ethical practices related to the folk concepts of a person? My caveat was to keep in mind our cognitive biases since these are real yardsticks to measure the success of any prescriptive project. In general, an empirical conceptual analysis (of 'a person' or any other concept) can be of use within the standard methodological tool-kit of analytic philosophy, it can contribute to conceptual clarity in cognitive science, and possibly shed some light on normative issues.

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KASDIENIS „ASMENS" KONCEPTAS: STRUKTŪRA IR PATIKIMUMAS

Renatas Berniūnas

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinis šio straipsnio tikslas yra išnagrinėti kasdienį „asmens" konceptą. Gretutinis tikslas yra pristatyti naują eksperimentinės filosofijos sritį, naudojant jos teorinę prieigą tyrinėti kasdienius konceptus. Didžioji straipsnio dalis yra skirta kasdienio „asmens" koncepto deskripcijos problemoms: viename poskyryje bedrais bruožais apibūdinu patį „kasdienio koncepto" terminą, tada aptariu kasdienį „asmens" konceptą; kitame poskyryje pristatau asmens sampratą, kuri kyla iš kognityvinio mokslo. Galiausiai pateikiu preliminarius atsakymus į substantyvius klausimus apie kasdienių konceptų patikimumą. Šiame straipsnyje yra teigiama, kad tokio tipo empirinė konceptualinė analizė gali praturtinti standartinius analitinės filosofijos metodus, prisidėti prie koceptualinio aiškumo kognityviniame moksle bei padėti spręsti normatyvines problemas.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: kasdieniai konceptai, kasdienė psichologija, asmuo, eksperimentinė filosofija, kognityviniai mokslai.