

Mind and Supermind. By KEITH FRANKISH. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp xiv + 255. Price £45.00 (US \$75.00). ISBN 0521 812038 (hardback).

The folk-psychological notion of belief is not a unitary kind. On the one hand, it refers to conscious, linguistically articulated and semantically evaluable states of mind. On the other hand, it can include nonconscious mental states that seem to involve little more than an encoding of information in a way poised to guide action. The cognitive role of these two different types of mental states is so importantly different —Keith Frankish claims— that we should regard them as exemplars of different *cognitive kinds*, reflecting a genuine distinction in the mental domain. If we adopted, as Frankish suggests, a two-strand theory of mind built upon this ontological dichotomy —the mind and the supermind, in his terminology—, many of the debates in contemporary philosophy of mind regarding the nature of folk psychology would —we are told— be resolved.

The *strand 1* or *basic mind* encompasses non-conscious, *basic* beliefs: ones not apt to be activated in occurrent form, partial, passively formed, and not language-involving. Partial beliefs are considered as Bayesian subjective probabilities, in turn characterized as multi-track behavioural dispositions. As a reasoning system, the basic mind is non-conscious, probabilistic and dependent on non-explicit, non-linguistic sub-personal processes. Frankish's *strand 2 mind* or *supermind* contains conscious, flat-out beliefs: ones apt to be activated in occurrent form, that can be actively formed and that usually involve language —*superbeliefs*. As such, and unlike basic beliefs, they are unique to humans. The supermind is a conscious, classical, actively controlled, explicit, language-driven reasoning engine.

Frankish's taxonomy is quite close, both in motivation and execution, to Dennett's useful (and underappreciated) distinction between beliefs and opinions. That said, Frankish claims that his strand 2 beliefs have a wider theoretical role than Dennett's opinions, including not just commitments to assert, but also to think and to act. Dennett follows de Sousa in depicting belief as the basic "less intellectual" phenomenon, shared by humans and non-human animals, and assent to a proposition —opinion— as the "fancier", verbally infected one involved in, for example, both making up and changing one's mind. Assenting to a proposition, on Dennett's account, involves taking an attitude to (roughly speaking) a mentally rehearsed sentence, while being in the more basic state of simply believing such-and-such is determined by the pattern of non-verbal actions to which a creature is disposed. Phenomena such as weakness of will depend, Dennett argues, on the possibility of conflict between the beliefs implied by a pattern of actions and the beliefs explicitly endorsed in sentential formulations —a possibility which is simply not present in the simpler case (Frankish also addresses the topics of akrasia and self-deception in the final chapter of the book).

The contrast between Frankish's basic beliefs, which he regards as *thickly carved* functional states and superbeliefs, viewed as *finely carved* sub-states of the cognitive system, is tied up with two —*austere* and *rich*— functionalist views of the mind, each supporting a different type of psychological explanation. On an austere view — Frankish claims— psychological explanations single out *sustaining* causes —causally

relevant standing states necessary for a triggering event to produce its effect— whereas rich functionalists maintain that intentional explanations serve to pick out individual causal events —or *dynamic* causes.

Again, this is an interesting distinction, one that helps the reader understand why austere functionalism strikes some of us as an attractive option in the philosophy of mind, namely because it does not require that our folk psychological discourse in terms of belief and desire single out any discreet, individually stored mental events. However, Frankish also thinks that this is the reason austere functionalists —such as e.g. Dennett— can only view beliefs as sustaining causes. This claim doesn't sound very convincing since, even if the content of the states involved in belief-desire ascriptions is not explicitly represented, there is no doubt that an austere functionalist can consider the equivalence class of all the physical states that may carry that kind of information as a dynamic cause.

It is important to notice that Frankish's proposal of a two-strand theory of mind is not offered simply as a taxonomic analysis of folk-psychological practice, but as a theoretical regularization and development of it. His dual framework is offered as a way of organising some of our commonsense —often genuinely irreconcilable— intuitions about our folk-psychological talk and —unlike Dennett's— the proposal comes with a strong realist flavour. Folk psychology —if Frankish is right— encompasses two different theories, with two very different ontological commitments, quantifying over two very different kinds of entities.

Although we are reminded that this is not the only possible classification, but only the most consistent one (p. 50), I wonder whether even the truth of that weaker claim can be sustained. Are all conscious beliefs binary? Are all nonconscious beliefs partial? Is a Bayesian model only applicable to nonconscious reasoning? The division here seems to be too sharp easily leading to counterexamples, and although Frankish acknowledges counterexamples would be unavoidable, the alignment of conscious and flat-out beliefs under a classical model of reasoning seems to be just wrong.

Once all the pieces of his two-strand framework are in place, Frankish shows how to use it for fleshing out his supermind theory of mind. In the first place and following the steps of Cohen's account of acceptance —as a commitment to *mental* actions such as deeming, positing or postulating—, Frankish devotes Chapters 4 and 5 to the analysis of strand 2 beliefs, which get characterized as states of a premising (*virtual*) machine. Despite Frankish's efforts to again separate his position from Dennett's (pp. 78-80), this part of the proposal is not that far removed from Dennett's Joycean machine model. Frankish explicates the difference between the two, and the superiority of his account over Dennett's, by arguing that —unlike the supermind framework— the Joycean model lacks the resources to explain conscious reasoning, conscious *standing* beliefs, and the relation between conscious thought and action. I think these claims are highly contentious, and certainly required a lot more discussion.

The second step —in Frankish's attempt to show the virtues of his taxonomy— comes in the form of an analysis of the ontological commitments of folk psychology (Chapters 6 and 7). Here we find out more about how mind and supermind relate to each other. The two theories are not self-contained. Superbeliefs supervene on basic

beliefs. Strand 2 conscious states are realized — we are told— in basic-level, strand 1 intentional states, which in turn supervene on sub-personal mechanisms, with neurological states and processes underpinning them all. Folk psychological descriptions and explanations, however, are pitched at either the level of the basic mind or the supermind, and involve no commitments about the nature of these two last levels.

The claim that the supermind is realized in the basic mind plays an important role in Frankish's proposal even though we are never told exactly how to understand this notion of realization. The view that these two very different cognitive kinds nevertheless share a physical base seems to be ultimately justified by the need to reconcile the empirical nature of any discoveries about cognitive architecture with his realist view of the entities over which folk psychology quantifies over. To wit, folk psychology takes propositional and conceptual modularity as central assumptions in the explanation of behaviour. If Frankish's strand 2 psychology had a distinct neural realization, this could be viewed as implying that the neurological architecture pertaining to this component of the two-strand theory had the same discreet, language-like structure. However, as a good intentional realist, Frankish not only denies that empirical issues about cognitive architecture could be settled by a priori considerations regarding the shape of psychological explanations, he also denies that we should give up our very efficient and reliable folk psychological notions as a result of accepting any of those empirical findings. The reconciling solution is to claim — as he does— that superbeliefs are realized in the non-conscious, partial, basic belief counterparts inhabiting strand 1 psychological explanations, whose implementation in the brain is not a matter that belongs to psychology, but only to neuroscience.

Again, this strikes as perfectly sensible, but not that different to Dennett's multiple drafts model of human consciousness, which vindicates a “more-or-less” serial virtual computational architecture —the Joycean machine— implemented on a parallel cerebral cortex. Like Dennett's Joycean machine, Frankish's supermind is also the product of memetic and cultural evolution, with propositional and conceptual modularity realized in the natural languages that feed it. The main difference seems to be Frankish's addition of various meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic skills that allow us to adopt certain attitudes toward our inner drafts so as to manipulate them in chains of reasoning. The supermind could thus be considered a Joycean-cum-premising machine.

Frankish's book pins down and clarifies many existing tensions in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. There are indeed a wide variety of topics whose treatment would become more fruitful if we didn't treat the folk psychological notion of belief as picking up a unitary cognitive kind. These topics go beyond the nature of folk psychology and include, for instance, the role of perception in belief acquisition, the prospects for naturalized accounts of belief, and the moral psychology of belief, not to mention more empirically oriented ones like the nature of nonconscious thought vis-à-vis e.g. self-knowledge and delusion. Frankish doesn't here deploy the complex machinery of mind and supermind to shed light on these important topics, but they provide one possible direction of future research.

University of Edinburgh
JOSEFA TORIBIO