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## Why Alison Gopnik should be a behaviorist

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[Gop] Alison Gopnik's account of privileged access as expert intuition is marvelous. Hers is the first account of consciousness I have read that corresponds to my own experience. Cognitive scientists as a rule seem to claim an infallible grasp of their own minds. Moreover, they seem to claim only an inferior access to the minds of others. I myself am often muddled about what is going on in my own mind and as often find myself in the grip of powerful, apparently "im-mediate" perceptions of the minds of others. Gopnik gives an account of consciousness for which first- and third-person and mediation and "im-mediation" are orthogonal. I am grateful to know that at least one other psychologist

experiences the world in this way and grateful also for Kasparovia as a thought experiment with which to demonstrate this point. I predict that many a prominent philosopher of mind will dwell in Kasparovia before this millennium is out.

But having said this, I would like to take Gopnik to task for her renunciation of behaviorism, because on the evidence of her target article, she is a behaviorist and in renouncing behaviorism she lends her considerable authority to some silliness. She writes "I do not deny that there are internal psychological states," and a bit later, "First we have psychological states . . ." (sect. 8, para. 1-2). The notion of an internal psychological state, something that "we" can "have," is woefully confused. When we speak of machines or other systems and states, we speak of the system as being in the state. But for some reason, when we speak of psychological states such as emotions, feelings, and beliefs, we feel entitled to describe the state as being in the person. But surely this is misplaced concreteness. If my computer malfunctions I might say that it was in a malfunctioning state, but I would never say that there was an internal state of malfunctioning within my computer. Computer malfunction is a state whose specification requires knowledge about computers and their relationships to people; and while the malfunctioning state of the computer may be caused by something wrong inside it, the state itself is *of* the computer, not inside it. There is no way we could look inside a computer to determine definitively that it is malfunctioning, although, of course, we might discover there *why* it is malfunctioning.

Similarly, psychological states are states whose specification requires knowledge about people, their behavior and their circumstances and, while a psychological state may be caused by events in the braincase or body of a person, the state itself is *of* the person, not inside it. We cannot look inside people and hope to determine definitively that they are in particular mental states, although, of course, we might discover there *why* a person was in a particular mental state. If something has to be inside something else (and I don't recommend it), then the human has to be in the psychological state - in the motivation, in the feeling, or in the belief - rather than the other way around.

This misplaced concreteness leads to yet another confusion, the notion that psychological states can lead to or explain behaviors and experiences. To say that a psychological state causes a behavior or experience is like saying that the brittleness of the glass caused its breakage. Easy breakability is a defining characteristic of brittleness and as such cannot be caused by it any more than being unmarried can be caused by bachelorhood. Brittleness is itself a lawful relation between some objects and the consequences of those impacts. The baseball causes the breakage. The physical nature of the glass causes its brittleness, that is, mediates the lawful relation between strength of impact and probability of shattering. But it is vacuous to say the brittleness causes the breakage. Similarly, emotional behaviors (for example) are constituents of emotions and as such cannot be caused by them. Emotions are lawful relations between persons, some events, and the responses they elicit. The events cause the emotional behaviors. The glands and the nervous system cause the emotion, that is, mediate the lawful relation between emotional stimuli and probability of emotional behavior. It is vacuous to say that emotions cause emotional behavior (Derr & Thompson, in press).

If Gopnik is determined to avoid behaviorism, she might consider resuscitating the New Realism. The New Realism was a philosophical movement that was organized at Harvard in the 1910s by students and associates of William James (Holt 1914; Holt et al. 1912). It held that each person's consciousness is a cross section of the world "out there" consisting of all the features of that world to which the person responds. According to the New Realists, observer and subject stand in the same relation to the world. No particular privilege is granted to first person consciousness, since it is just one of an infinite number of possible cross sections through the real world. New Realists

trained two psychologists who are important to Gopnik's exposition. One of these was J. J. Gibson, who held that perception, like the New Realist's consciousness, was a direct awareness of features of the world. The other was E. C. Tolman, who is the originator of the "theory-theory." The New Realism has had an effect on my own brand of behaviorism, one that treats mental terms as referring to different behavioral design properties (Thompson 1987; in press). For those unwilling to admit to behaviorism, a New New Realism might offer a way of talking about psychological states without locating them within the person or speaking of them as behavioral causes.

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