

go, published both in Italian and Polish, represents in the field of ethical reflection on man a very creative contribution, not just in Polish philosophy, but also in a wider, at least Europe-wide context. In short, the book is a successful exposition of one of the variants of contemporary Christian personalism in ethics.

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Jason Stanley. *Know How*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Published as paperback in 2013.

Jason Stanley's *Know How* discusses the problem of the difference between "knowledge that" and "knowledge how," which was developed with particular care by Gilbert Ryle in the second chapter of *The Concept of Mind*. According to Ryle, there are two kinds of knowledge, which cannot be reduced one to another, because "we never speak of a person believing or opining how, and though it is proper to ask for the grounds or reasons for someone's acceptance of a proposition, this question cannot be asked of someone's skill at cards or prudence in investments."¹ Stanley's thesis, put forward already in the "Introduction" to his book, is the following: "knowing how to do something is the same as knowing a fact. It follows that learning how to do something is learning the fact" (vii).

The book contains eight chapters, and from the outset argues against Ryle's thesis that there is a difference between "knowing that" and "knowing how." In the first chapter, Stanley attempts to show that Ryle's own argumentation with respect to the aforementioned distinction fails to hold up. It presupposes a verificationist conception of meaning, according to which a term is assumed to have a meaning just when it is possible to verify whether there is something denoted by that term. In Stanley's opinion, this theory is broadly wrong, but even if we abstract from this fact, we would have to acknowledge that Ryle's line of argumentation is still not convincing.

Ryle argues that denying the special character of "knowing why" results

1. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinsons University Library, 1949), 28.

in an infinite regress. His conclusion is based on two premises (of which the first is especially important):

Premise 1: The intellectualist view entails that “for any operation to be intelligently executed,” there must be some prior consideration of a proposition.

Premise 2: “The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid” (12).

The argumentation runs as follows:

- (i) the intellectualist is committed to the view that each intelligent action is preceded by a prior act of considering a proposition (which is an action since it can be executed intelligently or stupidly) [from Premise 1];
- (ii) such an action itself requires a prior consideration, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Stanley argues that Premise 1 is implausible because it supposes that “any intelligent action must be preceded by a distinct action of avowing to oneself a maxim or a rule. But it is just manifestly absurd that all intelligent actions are preceded by distinct actions of self-avowals of propositions. If anything can count as a datum of phenomenology, it is that we often act intelligently without first avowing to ourselves any maxims or rules” (14).

Stanley concludes that Ryle subscribes to an unjustified metaphysical distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how,” as he assumes that “knowing how” can be manifested without there being any prior mental act whatsoever, whereas “knowing that” necessarily requires a prior mental act:

Ryle is operating with a metaphysical picture of “knowing how,” according to which one’s know how just is constituted by the fact that when one is so situated, one acts thus. On Ryle’s picture of action, intentional actions are not the effects of inner categorical causes. Thus, his picture of “knowing how” coheres with his conception of intentional action. One consideration here is that Ryle’s metaphysical picture is widely regarded as implausible, as it involves ungrounded dispositions—that is, the possession of dispositions without any categorical basis. But that is not in fact the crucial point. The decisive point is rather this: that if this picture is plausible for knowing

how, then, given the phenomenology of action, it is no less plausible for knowing that. (17)

Stanley shows that the functionalist model of belief is similar to Ryle's: "to believe that *p*" in the functionalist model means the same as "to have the disposition to acting that satisfies our desires in the world in which *p* is true." If this conception is true, a manifestation of belief is a manifestation of a dispositional state in the same way as a manifestation of someone's "knowledge how" is a manifestation of a dispositional state. In short, if we assume that manifestations of propositional knowledge are effects of intrinsic categorial causes, then we should accept that the same occurs in cases of "knowing how." This is why it does not really make much sense to propose further attempts at improving the argumentation, according to which identifying "knowledge that" with "knowledge how" leads to a regress. Stanley concludes that one cannot justify the thesis that acting rationally requires prior intelligent acting, which in turn involves contemplating the contents of these reasons, for if it turns out that there is actually no such contemplation going on, then the regress argument has failed.

In Chapter 2, Stanley analyzes so called "knowledge-wh," i.e., sentences of the form "John knows whether Mary came to the party," "John knows why Obama won," "Hannah knows who Obama is," "Hannah knows what she is pointing at," "Hannah knows how to vote," etc. In Stanley's opinion, the standard approach should be such that the abovementioned sentences ascribe something to the subject in the same way as sentences of the "knowing how" type do. The author points out that these sentences have rarely been analyzed by philosophers. The only exceptions are sentences of the "knowing who" and "knowing what" types, in which ascriptions of knowledge to the subject are combined with his/her ability to formulate particular thoughts about things or species. Stanley considers many different attempts to analyze these sentences by means of various theories involving (nested) questions. Of these, he presents C. L. Hamblin's theory, in which the question is treated as a set of alternative possible answers, together with the theories of Lauri Karttunen, of Jeroen Groenendijk and Martin Stokhof, and of Jonathan Schaffer. Schaffer states that "knowing-wh" refers not only to relations between persons and things, but requires us to also take into account the question itself, as the third member of the relation. Stanley then recapitulates the considerations of this chapter thus: "what it is to know wh- Φ at a world is to stand in the propositional knowledge relation to the answer to the relevant question at that world" (70).

In the third chapter of the book (“PRO and the Representation of First-Person Thought”), Stanley analyzes a subclass of sentences with nested questions: namely sentences with infinitival phrases such as, for example, “to hit a ball hard” (instead of “hits a ball hard”). These sentences include an unpronounced element that many linguists call “PRO” in the subject position of a nested sentence, so that they contain infinitival rather than finite clauses. As Stanley states, his aim in this chapter is not just to show that knowing how to do something is a kind of propositional knowledge. He is also trying to show something more: namely, that such an analysis of “knowing how to do something” corresponds to the way in which ascriptions expressing “knowing how” are made in current English. Here, Stanley analyzes a number of theories in which “PRO” is treated as the “subject of infinitival clauses.” We can observe that “PRO” occurs not only in nested questions, but also in sentences of the type “John knows who PRO to hit a ball to,” where it is construed as co-referential with “John”—i.e., as the subject of such sentences.

In Chapter 4 (“Ways of Thinking”), Stanley examines the Fregean approach to the analysis of knowledge. He tries to demystify certain ways of thinking about things, in the sense of how things get to be represented, and he tries to justify including these ways in our talk about the contents of thought. Next, he tries to show that the thesis that the contents of thought include ways of thinking entails the thesis concerning the behavioral neutrality of propositional knowledge (“even entertaining certain thoughts is not behaviorally inert, but entails the possession of dispositions,” 98).

Chapter 5 (“Knowledge How”) concerns two “remaining elements of the analysis of the practical knowledge:” namely, “*modality* associated with infinitival embedded questions and the distinctive *mention-some* reading of infinitival questions” (111). In this chapter, Stanley first analyzes certain kinds of modality, especially legal and epistemic modality.

[T]he fact that modal force associated with infinitives in constructions such as [“Hannah knows how to swim”] is what we have called an “ability” or “dispositional” modal does not entail that it is governed by the exact same modal parameter that governs explicit ability modals, like “is able to.” . . . The reason that I have called it an ability modal is that the modal parameter, like the modal parameter associated with “is able to,” . . . involve[s] capacities of agent. But . . . there are clear differences between the range of worlds relevant for determining the modal base of an explicit use of “is able to” and the range of worlds relevant for the modalities associated with infinitives. (114)

Next, Stanley advances the semantic distinction between *mention-some* and *mention-all* reading and, in the third part of the chapter, tries to sketch an account of the relation between knowing how to do something, ability, and skilled action.

Practical ways of thinking . . . are necessary to explain the acquisition of skill on the basis of knowledge of facts, which are true propositions. . . . That the acquisition of a skill is due to the learning of a fact explains why certain acts constitute exercises of skill, rather than reflex. A particular action of catching a fly ball is a skilled action, rather than reflex, because it is guided by knowledge of how to catch a fly ball. (130)

Chapter 6 concerns ways of ascribing “knowledge how.” Stanley states that his theory of the nature of “knowledge how” was developed on the basis of an examination of the relevant features of ascriptions of it. Nevertheless, the discussion of this invites two objections. The first is empirical in nature, and concerns the problem of different kinds of ascription of “knowledge how” in different languages (i.e., cases where it differs from English). The second objection is more fundamental, and concerns the question of why natural-language ascriptions of knowing how to do something are relevant at all to an inquiry into the nature of “knowledge how”? In this chapter, Stanley examines these objections.

In Chapter 7, the aim of the author is “to show that what we know so far about the cognitive science of skilled action is consistent with my views about the nature of knowing how” (150). Stanley argues that one can identify the concept of procedural knowledge in cognitive science with the conception of knowledge elaborated by him. Subsequently, he analyzes and rejects an argument for the thesis that all knowledge is declarative. This argument is based on the assumption that all propositional knowledge can be verbalized. Stanley also rejects arguments that employ epistemic principles that concern propositional knowledge with the aim of showing that “knowledge how” is not propositional. And besides this, he examines the claims of proponents of the thesis that “knowledge how” is non-conceptual, finding that their approach entails difficulties with respect to the propositional nature of “knowledge how.”

Finally, Chapter 8 confronts the main theses of the book with the classical theory of knowledge, and with Edmund Gettier’s arguments. Gettier argued that the definition of knowledge requires something more than justified true belief. According to Stanley, the case of “knowledge-wh” is a special one: for this kind of knowledge, the truth of the information

involved, supplemented by the pragmatics of situation, will suffice. "It is because the pragmatics of situations in which we ascribe knowledge-wh often places the focus on true belief, rather than justification" (181). On the other hand, it is debatable whether, in this case, one can talk about knowledge or should only talk about true information. Such questions, concerned with the denotation of the term "knowledge" and its meanings, are bound to recur for anyone engaged in an attentive reading of Stanley's book.

Without doubt, Stanley's work presents a diligent analysis of "knowledge how," viewed as a variety of "knowledge that." Stanley's criticism of Ryle's dispositionalism is, in my opinion, the main value of this book. However, it must be said that the book fails to offer any positive account where the question of knowledge is concerned. One wonders whether knowledge, reduced to a collection of pieces of information linguistically expressed, still deserves the name "knowledge." In my opinion, at least, Stanley gives no unambiguous answer in this respect, leaving the reader with a definite feeling of dissatisfaction. After having been led along a difficult path, the reader finds no solution at its end.

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