

Propositions in Action  
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The debate about the nature of knowledge-how aims to capture both (1) whatever it is that's distinctively practical about an agent's state when they *know how to phi*, and (2) whatever it is that makes *being* in that state a kind of cognitive or epistemic achievement. These two elements of knowledge-how pull in two directions. Accounts that fare well by (1) allegedly *under-intellectualize knowledge-how*, and accounts that fare well by (2) allegedly *over-intellectualize knowledge-how*. So, the debate seems to be constrained by a Goldilocks problem: capture (1) and (2) by finding the just-right degree of intellect. Recent accounts of know-how have taken novel approaches to know-how in order to do exactly this (e.g., Löwenstein 2017 and 2020, Elzinga 2021, Habgood-Cooté 2019). These accounts try to find the right degree of intellect by specifying the role that propositional attitudes play in knowing-how, or in actions that manifest know-how.

David Löwenstein suggests that so long as our theorizing does not *reduce* know-how to a kind of propositional attitude, we do not over-intellectualize know-how. Benjamin Elzinga suggests that any appeal to propositional attitudes as necessary for knowing-how over-intellectualizes know-how. And Joshua Habgood-Cooté dismisses the worry about over-intellectualization as generally misguided. However, there has been no argument for, or principled explanation of, what it means to 'over-intellectualize' know-how, nor an argument to the effect that the worry is misguided. The task of determining whether an account is over- or under-intellectualized has fallen to our case-based intuitions (i.e., about whether only subjects who have *propositional* knowledge can have genuine know-how). In this paper, I show that we can do much better than rely on case-based intuitions. I propose and defend a notion of over-intellectualization that adjudicates the dispute about know-how.

I argue that recent accounts of know-how in general (and Löwenstein's and Elzinga's in particular) implicitly accept what I call 'internalism' about the nature of propositional attitudes. According to this internalism, *if* a proposition is relevant to an explanation of knowing-how, it is because it constitutes the structure of an agent's thought-in-action. I develop a Davidson-style (1991) argument to the effect that it is implausible that a proposition constitutes the structure of an agent's thought-in-action. A proposition is not an object "present to the mind" in all cases of action that manifests know-how. I conclude this argument with the observation that propositionally structured mental contents are not *necessary* for any account of what it means to act on one's know-how.

One should take this sub-conclusion as good news, because even if it *were* plausible that propositions structure the mental content that guides action, propositions would fail to do the explanatory work they were posited to do. The internalist about propositions confronts a vicious regress. The regress is one of application (inspired by Ryle 1946): it does not follow from an agent's having propositionally structured mental contents that the agent *acts* based on that content. To posit some structured mental state is to require an *application* (of some kind) of that mental state to the performance in question (see Small 2017). This is to say that a further explanation is needed: what bridges the gap between the agent's mental content and their performance of some action based on that content? Well, it can't be some further proposition—or propositionally structured mental content—or else the explanatory gap between proposition and action arises again.

I do not propose a bridge on the internalist's behalf because there is a better alternative to internalism. In conclusion I discuss what I call 'externalism' about propositions and show that it does not confront

internalism's shortcomings. It turns out that know-how is over-intellectualized *not* in virtue of appealing to propositions, but in virtue of accepting internalism about propositions in action.

## References

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