

# Pragmatism and Survey Research

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## Abstract

abstract

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# 1 Introduction

## Abstract

Generally speaking, survey research is dominated by what might be called scientific cognitivism. The centrality of cognitivism is clearly evident in the dominant models of “the survey process” and the practices of “cognitive interviewing”. The “scientific” part is evident in the sort of language that dominates survey methodology, which routinely treats questionnaires as instruments of measurement and models interviewing on the experimental methods of the physical sciences.

Meanwhile a quiet revolution has been underway for the past several decades in the human sciences (including e.g. AI and neuroscience).

The “new sciences” - “cognitive” this or that - are generally speaking neither new nor particularly scientific. The only genuinely new element is computation. The emergence of a well-defined concept of computability in the first half of the 20th century did indeed mark a conceptual innovation of truly historic proportions. But the various “cognitive” sciences to which it gave rise, once scholars began to take a computational perspective on psychology, were not revolutionary; they only advanced an agenda that has its roots in the 17th century Enlightenment. Those “cognitive” sciences in which computation plays a central role seek to mathematicize the human, just as Galileo, Newton, and other Enlightenment scientists have sought to mathematicize nature.

The truly revolutionary movement is marked by the development of Pragmatism. Properly understood, Pragmatism doesn’t advance the agenda of the first Enlightenment; it turns it upside down.

Pragmatism liberates us from the tyranny of objective reality (Truth, etc.) without stranding us in a jejune relativism. It cheerfully accepts the existence of the real world and the constraints it imposes on us, but it rejects the notion that we can somehow find the Archimedean point of purchase that will allow us to prize apart the real from the apparent, the True from the False. It denies that there is any one true method, scientific or otherwise, that will lead us to the promised land of True Knowledge. It denies that we can learn to speak the one true language of nature, or that such a language even exists.

**Remark 1** *But it also denies, for all that, that we are condemned to ignorance and error. It insists that we can learn, that we can cope with each other and our environments in the ways that matter. Etc. TODO: state the positive case in a way that ties it back to our ordinary intuitions of truth, objectivity, etc.*

Up to now, however, the Pragmatist Enlightenment has had relatively little impact on survey research. Even the relatively small number of sr researchers who have tried (since at least the early 90s) to draw attention to the contextual and interactive aspects of survey interviewing have tended to accept the main commitments of the traditional cognitivist perspective. They tend to treat context and interactivity as important but essentially peripheral aspects of a “process” whose center remains firmly entangled by cognitivist and representationalist commitments: to mental entities and processes, the autonomy of language, the atomicity of words, representational semantics, and so forth.

The survey research literature shows distinct signs of a cargo-cult science mentality. A clear example is the use of the term “probe” in discussions of cognitive interviewing. The metaphor is obvious: a probe is a scientific instrument used to examine a specimen. So long as this is treated as nothing more than a metaphor there is no problem; but the “theory” of cognitive interviewing

tends to take it much farther. It takes the notion of a probe literally, and construes ordinary questions as scientific instruments designed to probe the cognitive architecture of responding subjects. The clear implication is that there is something distinctive about the “probes” used in cognitive interviewing, something that makes them scientific instruments, when in fact they are nothing more than ordinary discursive performances. Merely calling a follow-up question a “probe” does make it an instrument; still less does it make it “scientific”. To pretend otherwise is to engage in cargo-cult science. To put it another way: the cognitivist theory under which we are to treat some verbal performances as “probes” is the *only* justification we have for thinking they are scientific instruments. But it provides no means of distinguishing a set of such performances from any other discursive performance, no way of deciding what counts as a probe, other than its own theoretical claims. The logic is entirely circular.

#### Critical v. constructive

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First it provides an overview of contemporary Pragmatism, in order to give substance to the claim advanced above as to its revolutionary character. One way to do this is by contrasting it with its opposite number(s), so the result will be to expose and clarify the fundamental themes and commitments of representationalism and cognitivism, etc. This will sharpen some boundaries.

Once the background issues - theoretical, methodological, philosophical - are clear, the other task is to examine, at least in a preliminary manner, the implications of Pragmatism for Survey Research. What is on offer is a radical re-conceptualization of the entire enterprise. A move away from scientism toward a more properly (and appropriately) anthropological perspective.

Caveat: we are not talking here about merely methodological issues. It is not a question of doing the same thing, only better; of finding an innovative method that solves the old problems. What is suggested is rather a fundamental change in the way we conceive of the task, asking different questions, discarding the old questions as not useful or even very meaningful.

## 2 Survey Research

Field v. experimental science (Ryan, [“Replication in Field Biology”](#)), (Hurlbert, [“Pseudoreplication and the Design of Ecological Field Experiments”](#))

### 2.1 Survey Research Models

**Remark 2** *What is “Survey Research”? Two answers: research that uses surveys to collect (and construct) data, and research into the nature of surveys. First, each survey project studies something, or several things (each question being “about” something). Second, Survey Research as a kind of meta-discipline studies surveys; usually this goes by “Survey Methodology”.*

- Survey Research: production and collection of social science “data” (more accurately: *facta*, *mades*, rather than *data*, *givens*) by means of questions. Better: survey *based* research; research that *uses* survey techniques to enable study of a phenomenon. How then do we know that these techniques are appropriate for the object of study?
- Survey Methodology: study of the use of questions to produce and collect data

### 2.1.1 Standard Model

Laboratory model: based entirely on (bad) analogy to the physical sciences.

### 2.1.2 Extended Standard Model

XSM = SM plus interaction

## 2.2 Survey Methodology

Monism v. pluralism.

## 3 Pragmatism

Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

CS Peirce (CP5.402)

“Although the term pragmatism is frequently used to characterize some or other highly specific thesis or program, pragmatism is not and never was a school of thought unified around a distinctive doctrine.” talisse 1

“As a kind of naturalism, pragmatism is partly a thesis about the relation of philosophy to the natural sciences; consequently, one should expect pragmatists to engage the questions of the proper aims and methods of philosophy.” talisse 9

“In its most muscular form, the pragmatist thesis is that, once we understand properly the nature of philosophy, we will discover that there are no philosophical problems anyway.” talisse 9

Pragmatism integrates naturalism (science) and humanism:

“What makes each of these authors pragmatist is their emphasis on naturalistic and variously humanistic accounts of philosophical problems and solutions. One of the reasons as to the variety of pragmatisms is the variety of humanisms available to pragmatists.” talisse 5

### 3.1 Major Themes

Negative and positive.

- anti-foundationalism
- anti-representationalism

- normativity
- inferentialism
- expressivism
- cognitivism, mentalism
- naturalism
- evolution & statistics

“Quine’s corpus presents an ongoing development of a few key pragmatist and naturalist insights about science, language, and ontology, and an attempt to fit them together. Importantly, Quine proceeds by way of critical engagement with nonnaturalist critics and interlocutors....the case for pragmatism was to be made on a case-by-case basis, not by way of a comprehensive philosophical system.” Talisse intro p. 8-9

### 3.1.1 Sellars: Myth of the Given, Space of Reasons

#### 3.1.2 Sellars: Language Entries

This is the device that accounts for the relation of causal and rational orders. It is true that the world in some sense has a causal influence on our language performances, but that is not enough to account for the intelligibility of those performances. When we declare “That’s red” in the presence of red things, we do so “because” (in some sense) of those red things and their (causal) relation to us. This is what Sellars dubbed a “language entry” move. But that sort of causality cannot account for the conceptual content of our utterance.

#### 3.1.3 Brandom: From Sentience to Sapience

To say “That’s red” is to apply the *concept* “red”, and the subpersonal, causal relation between the presence of a red thing and our conceptually contentful utterance cannot account for this. It cannot account for our ability to apply the concept red *correctly*, to red things, not non-red things. After all, if the presence of red things caused us to say “That’s red”, then we would in fact say that hundreds or thousands of times a day. A causal model cannot account for four fundamental normative aspects of our behavior: the ability to lie, to err, to hedge (“It *seems* red”), and to remain silent.

Brandom’s Parrot: one of Brandom’s favored illustrative examples is a parrot trained to squawk “That’s red” in the presence of red things. This is an example of *sentience* rather than *sapience*. Brandom’s Parrot is not sapient; its performance does not count as conceptually contentful (rational), since it does not involve the application of concepts. This is where inferential semantics enter the picture: the content of “red” is essentially inferentially articulated. To count as a concept user the parrot must be capable of drawing inferences (either explicitly or implicitly) involving the concept “red”. For example, it must know that “That’s green” is incompatible with “That’s red”. Those inferences, in turn,

are only intelligible in terms of what Brandom (following Sellars) calls “the game of giving and asking for reasons”.

Question-based interviews: only intelligible as “language games”, denizens of the Space of Reasons.

**Remark 3** *The fundamental mistake made by the Standard Model is failure to distinguish between distinct “orders of explanation”: the subpersonal, causal world, and the personal, discursive, rational world. Q&A-based interviewing lives in the latter, not the former. The notion that questions are stimuli that “cause” responses is fundamentally mistaken. Whatever causal relations may obtain between a question utterance and the ensuing response utterance are not relevant to the intelligibility of the game. Responses have reasons, not causes.*

**Remark 4** *An example would be useful here. Maybe “How old are you?” A correct response to this question is one that involves propositional commitments and entitlements. It does not involve any causal relationship to the question, still less to any “latent” age variable whose value is, say “27 years”. Crudely put, you know you’re 27 years old if you know that last year you were 26. More accurately, you know how to respond because you know the rules of the language game, which involves also counting years and birthdays. Consider how children learn their ages: they learn that certain verbal performances (e.g. “I’m four”) are correct, regardless of whether they understand what they mean, and they learn that every year they have a “birthday”, after which a different performance (“I’m five”) is correct.*

### 3.2 Normativity

The Space of Reasons is a normative space of reasons, not a natural (causal) space of laws.

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## 4 A Critique of the Theory of Cognitive Interviewing

### Abstract

## 5 Mensuration without Representation

### Abstract

Measurement pragmatism. No representation needed.

**Remark 5** *Micro-macro: temp as macro v. motion of molecules*

*Emergence: liquidity is an emergent property of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules; is temp an emergent property of moving molecules? It must be insofar as temp is a subjective property (hot, cold, etc.)*

*Supervenience: or is temperature something that supervenes on groups of molecules in motion?*

To measure is to characterize under a mathematical description. Instead of “measurement”, use the broader notion of mathematical description. So-called nominal measurement is not quantitative (nor is ordinal measurement); calling it measurement clashes with our intuition, which connects measurement with quantity or magnitude. But both do involve mathematical structure. Mathematics is the science of structure, not quantity.

Measurement claims are thus construed as claims about the structure of some state of affairs in the world. We express such claims in the vocabulary of mathematics (plus an empirical vocabulary involving a “dimension” such as length); a “valid” measurement is a claim expressing or describing a mathematical structure that corresponds accurately (correctly) to the way things are.

Observable v. unobservable: implicit causal relationship. Observable as proxy for unobservable. They must covary.

But this distinction is not simple. *Temperature sensation is observable, but sensation is distinct from the property in the world. When we measure temperature, we use proxy properties, such as the height of a column of mercury. So temperature is not observable in the required sense. That is, its mathematical structure is not directly observable. Contrast with measurement of length, which is directly observable. Or is it? To measure length we rely on the sensations involved in vision: we see that the measurand is twice the length of the unit instrument. But not really: we do not see length per se; rather, we see a stick and use the term “length” to express something about it, based on our experience with things in the world, namely one of the ways we can compare them. Which suggests that terms like “length” are expressive in Brandom’s sense: they allow us to say what we can only otherwise do. What we do is compare things; saying that a stick is 1 meter long just saves us the trouble of carrying out a comparison.*

*Alternatively we could express the same idea in terms of affordances: when we look at a stick, we do not see its length, but we do see (so to speak) one of its affordances: sticks afford lengthwise comparison. (cf. Gibson)*

*Furthermore, there is the problem of the Myth of the Given and need to explain how we go from merely responding to understanding. This too tends to subvert the observed/unobserved distinction, since we have to ask just what it is that is observed, and what it is to observe. We cannot rely on mere sensory input, since that leads to the Myth. Insofar as observation is a move in the Game of reasons, it is already “theoretical”, that is, conceptual, from the very start.*

*IOW, the observable/unobservable distinction is often conflated with the Given/theoretical distinction. Observables are no more given than unobservables are. But they are directly connected to the causal order. So it would be better to talk of the distinction between causal and rational orders instead of observables and unobservables. Or perhaps we should stick to vocabulary talk, and make a distinction between observation reports and other sorts of expressions. Some things afford observation reports, others do not.*

*Electrons are not observables; they do not afford observation reports. But they are causally related to things that do afford such reports. The job of theory is to articulate the hypothesized structure that accounts for such reports in terms of causal relations with electrons. This involves two of the three sorts of language moves: language entries (things affording observation reports), and language-language (theory). Language exits involve what we do, not theoretical predictions about what things in the world do, so the theory predicts future language-entry moves (observations).*

*This is quite different from e.g. defining SES in terms of occupation, etc. Such definitions are conceptual and do not involve causal relations. Occupation does not cause SES; it is involved in what SES means (inferentially), rather than what it is or how it came to be. So defining it is not not about discovering the nature of something in the world. Contrast definition of electron: it must answer to the way things are in the causal order. Our notion of SES must only answer to the way things are in the normative order, which is our order, our way of doing things, the way we cope. If it's useful, we use it; if not, we try other definitions. There is no question of its truth or accurate representation of something in the world. It's a piece of methodological pragmatism: its only purpose is to explain our doings. No metaphysics here, and also no (genuine) measurement. Putative measurements of SES should be treated as methodological conveniences, not as claims about the true state of affairs in the world. Claims that may help us cope or decide what to do, or even predict what will happen. Not because we've measured some fact in the causal order, but because we know something about norms, and norms have a kind of predictive power. We know what ought to be the case; whether things in fact will turn out that way is a different matter.*

*SES measures as descriptions, which do not necessarily entail predictions. Compare studies primate sociality.*

*Evolution, selective pressures, etc. Primate anthropologists want to discover selection pressures, not “causes” or the ordinary type. That is causality in evolution is different than causality in physics. Evolutionary causality v. nomological causality. SES measures as a way of getting at “selection pressures” that result in social change, etc.*

*“We can use the kinds of methods described here to test hypotheses about the selective forces that shape behavioral strategies and to construct comparisons across individuals, groups, or taxa.” (Silk et al. p. 223)*

## 5.1 Previous Work

*“Paraphrasing N.R. Campbell (Final Report, p.340), we may say that measurement, in the broadest sense, is defined as the assignment of numerals to objects and events according to rules.” (Stevens, “On the Theory of Scales of Measurement”, p. 677)*

*“[M]eaningful measurement is possible only if enough is known about the attribute so as to justify its logical operationalization into prescriptions from which a measurement instrument can be developed.” (Sijtsma, “Psychological measurement between physics and statistics”, p. 787)*

*I would rather say the measurement is possible only if we have a theory of description that allows us to make predictions involving measurable (observable) phenomena.*

## 5.2 Model Theory

*Truth and consequences and measurement claims.*

*Relevance of MT: (valid) measurement is all about representation, reference, truth, and validity. (Although a pragmatist might argue it is about what works rather than what corresponds to reality.) Tarski’s semantic theory of truth and model-theoretic account of consequence together form the pinnacle of this approach.*

*Tarski (Convention T and model theory) as the pinnacle of representational accounts of truth and consequences.*

*Relevance to measurement? We want to know if our measurement claims are truth, and if the inferences we make involving such claims are valid.*

*Measurement claims reduce to mathematical claims plus empirical claims. The mathematical part of this accounts for structure.*

*Model theory: to prove a logical consequence relation between a set of statements  $\Gamma$  and a statement  $A$ , first translate them from the formal calculus to the language of ordinary theory (e.g. Group Theory), and then prove the resulting theorems using the informal techniques of the ordinary theory.*

*Is something similar involved in “proving” an empirical measurement claim (which is a theory)? One difference is goals: the goal of MT is to show that the formal calculus is “good”. Science isn’t too worried about formal calculi, but it would presumably be a good thing if we could express scientific theories formally and thereby enable formal (automated) reasoning about them. But we don’t normally express measurement claims in a formal calculus. Indeed, since measurement claims necessarily involve an empirical component (e.g. units of measure involving empirical properties, that is properties of things in the world), to do so would require formalizing such empirical notions, thus draining them of their empirical content).*

## 5.3 Measurement as assignment of numbers

*“Paraphrasing N.R. Campbell (Final Report, p.340), we may say that measurement, in the broadest sense, is defined as the assignment of numerals to objects and events according to rules.” (Stevens, 1946, p.677).*

*This can't be entirely correct. What we assign is not a numeral but a location or position in a mathematical structure. E.g. to assign '3' to a quantity is not to attach a free-standing "numeral" to it, but to assign it a place in the structure of integers.*

*So each scale type corresponds to a class of mathematical structures.*

*Nominal: sets? But sets are partially ordered.*

*Ordinal: sets? But sets also give us intervals?*

*A nominal scale seems to involve set membership (characteristic functions) at least. But if we can measure the size (cardinality) of a set we end up with order and intervals. So it looks like we must stipulate that these mathematical properties are not to be ascribed to the measurands. Thus nominal measurement involves a partial mapping to sets, or rather a mapping to a set structure that does not admit of ordering or intervals. Hmmm.*

*Ordinal scales involve order without difference. Again that makes it hard to think of ordinal measurement as involving mapping to sets. Lattice theory?*

*Does it make sense to think of a mapping to a logical rather than a mathematical structure?*

*Better: we take set theory a little bit at a time. Start with the basic axioms, then define preorders, posets, etc. So we can treat something as a poset without introducing cardinal and ordinal numbers (I think).*

*In any case, the upshot is that (representational) measurement postulates a mathematical structure to the measurand.*

*Michell's concern with whether or not a variable or construct is in fact quantitative can be restated in structural terms. Quantitative properties etc. (in the world) have mathematical structure. Or, to say that something is measurable is to say that it has a particular kind of structure.*

*Validity "how well the measured variable represents the attribute being measured" comes out as referential fidelity. Measurement of something that lacks the requisite mathematical structure will then lack referential fidelity. Referential fidelity is broad enough to cover both accuracy and precision of measurement.*

#### **5.4 Validity as assessment of correctness**

*I.e. to assess something as correct or incorrect is to measure it against a norm. In the case of e.g. temperature measurement, the norm is the "true" temperature of the sample being measured.*

*Relevance: validity involves normativity and a kind of measurement against (usually unstated) norms or "true" standards, which may be (idealized) methods, etc.*

*Thus referential fidelity as correctness of representation.*

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# 6 Deflating Validity

### Abstract

*Semantic and metaphysical deflationism works as well for validity as it does for truth and reference.*

**Remark 6** *Deflationism seems to depend essentially on some form of expressivism. Or maybe they amount to the same thing?*

## 6.1 Validity, Reliability, Error

**Remark 7** *What is the point of worrying about validity? Is it something in the world that we are trying to discover? Then we're trying to find "the right description of the world" (Putnam). Or is it a concept, so that validity talk is about conceptual analysis and definition?*

*Or: we try to find the right description, and validity talk is part of how we decide that we have found it.*

**Remark 8** *Why do psychometricians and the like worry so about validity?*

*Hypothesis: when they say "validity", what they're really interested in is scientific legitimacy. Effectively, to say that a test (etc.) is valid is to say that it is in fact scientific. That's the practical import of the concept of validity for them.*

*Unpack this. Expose the assumptions and implications.*

*key concepts:*

- *validity treated as a special kind of property - of what?*
- *constructs*

- (latent) variables
- indicators

“validity” as code for:

- legitimacy
- vindication
- credibility
- proof (good premises + valid inference)

**Remark 9** On the idea that validity something (a property, etc.) that we look for in scientific theories in order to distinguish good ones from bad: see Putnam on fact/value distinction. We use value judgments - simplicity, parsimony, etc. - in every aspect of science (thought), esp. in weeding out bad theories. For there is no external or objective criterion of acceptability for theories to which we can appeal, nor is there any such criterion that does not involve value judgments.

**Remark 10** So along with the fact/value distinction, and the analytic/synthetic distinction, the internal/external distinction also collapses? Or do we just exclude the notion of external? No; we need to retain the idea of an external world that is independent of us and to which some of our judgments are answerable. We don't get to just make stuff up and call it true (correct) for at least some of our claims. There is no external absolute authority that can decide for us which theories are true, or rather which we should endorse, but that does not mean there is no external world that is authoritative for some of our sayings. But isn't that trying to have it both ways? How can our theories answer to the world if we cannot appeal to the world or some other external authority to sort them out? See Brandom.

Related issue: what counts as evidence? How do we decide? What are we doing when we decide that something counts as strong (weak) evidence in support of a theory? What are the criteria of adequacy for an account of evidence?

## 6.2 RCT and Self-validation

See Cartwright on RCT as self-validating. This seems to mean that RCTs are valid by construction.

This nicely parallels industrial QA notions of guaranteeing quality by designing a production process that prevents defects.

What's the logic here? Is self-validation really possible? How can a process validate itself - isn't the very idea inherently circular? Or rather, don't we land in a regress? After all, if the idea is to specify a process that yields validity, how do we know that that process is itself valid?

### 6.3 Deflation

*How can we get out of this mess? One way is to deflate the notion of validity, just deny that it is a substantive property. When we claim that a result is valid etc. what we are really saying is that we endorse it, approve of it, etc. It's an expressive device. Compare the semantic deflationist's idea that calling something true amounts to endorsing or approving of it.*

*So if we discard the notion of validity (since it does no real work), don't we find ourselves lacking something essential? Well, we just need a vocabulary that allows us to say explicitly the sorts of things we find it useful to be able to express with respect to a study or qx technique. For example: credibility, utility, legitimacy, vindication, justification, etc.*

**Remark 11** *The notion of validity seems to be connected to the problem of deciding which theories we should endorse. What are the criteria of adequacy for any notion (or theory) of validity? Or: what are the requirements that should be met by any purported explanation of validity? Both particular cases and the general idea. Tarski gives us something like this for logical validity; what about "validity" as the term is used by psychometricians, test theorists, etc.?*

*Contrast: claims of validity for a case, v. explanation of what validity is.*

*The objection will no doubt be that we need some kind of standard, which is just to say that we want to measure this something (validity, credibility, whatever). Implicit in all this is the notion that there is some "objective" fact of the matter to which our study/technique/etc. is answerable. A study is valid iff - what? If it meets some definite "objective" criteria. Methodological criteria, conditions of validity, etc. In the psychometrics and testing tradition this appeal to external authority is expressed as something along the lines of "measures what it purports to measure". Which is only meaningful insofar as a) there is actually something there to measure, and b) it is in fact susceptible to measurement.*

*And usually this is expressed in statistical terms. But that dog won't hunt either - you cannot get to validity via statistics. All you can do is measure central tendencies and variance - not enough to establish validity, which is a substantive notion. (analysis elsewhere).*

*To say that sth is valid is just to say that it is admirable (Peirce?), or perhaps that it is virtuous, that it has the virtues we prize.*

## 7 The Deontic Scorekeeping Model of Discursive Practice and Survey Research

### Abstract

*Why the deontic scorekeeping model is preferable to others, esp. the cognitive model.*

**Remark 12** *It's a model of discursive, that is rational, practice. Contrast this with most models on offer which tend to focus on subpersonal processes; hence the prevalence of talk about "the survey process", the "response process", etc.*

## 8 A Quality Assurance Model for Survey Research

*Abstract*

*abstract*

## 9 Causality and the Space of Reasons

*Abstract*

*abstract*

Abell, "[Narrative Explanation](#)"

Crane and Brewer, "[Mental Causation](#)"

Gross, "[A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms](#)"

Jackson, "[Mental Causation](#)"

Lowe, "[The Causal Autonomy of the Mental](#)"

Lowe, "[Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and the Problem of Mental Causation](#)"

C. MacDonald and G. MacDonald, "[Mental Causes and Explanation of Action](#)"

Menzies and Price, "[Causation as a Secondary Quality](#)"

Morris, "[Causes of Behaviour](#)"

Williamson, "[The Broadness of the Mental](#)"

## 10 Vocabularies

*Measurement as description. Description v. evaluation. Price on naturalisms. The bifurcation thesis.*

## 11 Conflation of Causal and Logical Relations

## 12 Fact-Value

*Messick, for one, conflates two kinds of fact/value distinction. The Kantian idea that we structure our own experience (etc.), Sellars' Myth of the Given, and etc. - such stuff shows how there is no data that is "objective" and given i.e. "data is theory-laden".*

*So facts involve what Putnam calls "epistemic values".*

*Messick confuses epistemic and ethical values. He seems to think that although we cannot arrive at value-free facts, this is because brute facts are always packaged with ethical values. The idea seems to be that ethical values are something separate from facts but always attached to them somehow. Whereas the real problem is that there is no genuine distinction between fact and (epistemic) value. Facts express (as it were) our epistemic values.*



Messick's confusion is clear in his distinction between the scientific and social "roles" of validity - as if the social (value-laden) aspect of (Messickian) validity is something distinct from the science. "[I]t is fundamental that score validation is an empirical evaluation of the meaning and consequences of measurement. As such, validation combines scientific inquiry with rational argument to justify (or nullify) score interpretation and use." (p. 742) But "scientific inquiry" and "rational argument" are not two distinct things that can be combined. They are the same thing, at least conceptually. If there is a difference here, it is sociological - science as a way of conduction oneself, etc.

Messickian validity boils down to some notion of empirical support for theoretical explanations. For him "evidential basis" seems to correspond to "real" science, and "consequential basis" to "rational argument".

"[B]oth meaning and values are integral to the concept of validity..." (p. 747). The problem here is that the contrast with value is fact, not meaning.

"Meaning" is not something that can be empirically "validated".

### 13 Word-World

One problem with e.g. Messick is fuzziness about the relation of language to world. Ditto for any notion of "measuring a concept".

Re: validity: is it supposed to be a property of things in the world, or just a concept? Per Messick, validity is "associated with" score interpretation and use. This would seem to imply that it is a matter of language (concepts). But the language is just sloppy; "score interpretation" might (should) refer to how we take a score to relate to some fact in the world, in which case the question is just what is validity-in-the-world.

In any case, Messick's whole discussion is muddled on this point; it is rarely clear when he is talking about facts, concepts, or the relation between the two. Is a "construct" supposed to be something in the world or a concept the describes some aspect of the world?

Construct v. "indicators".

Compare positivist notions of observational language v. theoretical language. So-called indicators are (I understand) supposed to be empirical observables. Their relation to the construct is (must be) a matter of theory; but then is that theoretical (conceptual) structure to be taken as a mirror of reality, such that the construct is a real (albeit "hidden") bit of the world and its relations to the indicators are real relations in the world?

### 14 Hypothetical Entities

Putnam, Brandom, etc. - if the existence of (some) hypotheticals makes no difference in the way things are then we can just discard them. As Putnam puts it, "Would mathematics work one bit less well if these funny objects stopped existing? Those who posit "abstract entities" to account for the success of mathematics do not claim that we (or any other things in the empirical world) interact

*with the abstract entities. But if any entities do not interact with us or with the empirical world at all, then doesn't it follow that everything would be the same if they didn't exist?" (Collapse, p. 33)*

*This points out another problem with e.g. latent variables, namely that they are supposed to have causal powers, but, insofar as they are abstract at least, they have no connection to the empirical world and so cannot cause anything. The counterargument would presumably be that hidden does not necessarily mean abstract. But in that case they must have a location in space-time, even if we don't know what it is. But this just leads to more problems: where are hidden psychological processes supposed to occur? It can't be the brain, since they are (by stipulation) psychological, not neurological.*

*So it seems we have no choice but to treat postulation of hidden stuff as a matter of Brandomian methodological pragmatism: useful, but without ontological consequences. "Constructs" may be useful for explaining observable indicators, but they don't really exist in any meaningful sense. But the usual story goes the other way around: indicators are useful because they are how we get constructs.*

## **15 Personal v. Subpersonal**

*Reasons v. causes*

## **16 Spaces**

### **16.1 Natural space of causes**

### **16.2 Discursive space of reasons**

## **17 Notes**

### **17.1 Evolution**

*Instead of "the QA process", the proper object of investigation is the local evolution of discourse.*

*EM studies local produced order. It may come up with a structural description. But locally produced order is the outcome of an essentially evolutionary process - the mutual adaptation of the participants to each other and the context. Also, any such model may not (probably will not) generalize. But what does generalize is the evolutionary mechanism itself, just like in biology.*

*Rational selection as the mechanism of the evolution of discursive performances. What accounts for the deontic attitudes we adopt regarding performances? Brandom's account describes the architecture of such posturings and the significances the institute. But it does not really address the logic of discourse as an evolutionary process.*

*The idea is that Brandom provides an account of discourse qua rational action. Different attitudes are endorsed or undertaken for reasons - that is the source or ground of the intelligibility*

*of discursive practice. So if we view the unfolding of discourse as being governed by the logic of evolution, we can treat Brandom's sort of rational pragmatism as the selection mechanism that accounts for why some attitudes (meanings) survive (are endorsed) and others do not. Meanings that survive must fit into the space of reasons - they must be assertable and justifiable, even if the participants are unable to explicitly articulate this. This makes the evolution of discourse intelligible as a rational process, rather than a natural process. Responses to questions are not explicable as effects caused by "true values" or the like; this would make them fundamentally non-rational. Or to borrow a bon mot from Garfinkel, this would make respondents "rational dopes".*

*Similar language: "negotiation", e.g. "...I suggest that the content of talk indicates that im-posed hierarchies are continually re-negotiated..." Negotiation as rational evolution?*

*The "true score" and other orthodox models account for sentience, not sapience.*

## 17.2 Verum Factum

*Cartesianism (spectator; etc.) inspection, discovery, certainty, foundationism (external foundation grounding knowledge) v.*

*Verum Factum, geneological/historical, following growth/development, not certainty but ???; no foundationism, no privileged vocab, no external source of authority*

*Critical notions: authority. For evidence etc. key idea is authority - the only kind of authority is the kind we assent to. So the question is what do we treat as authoritative and why, rather than how can we discover the One True external foundational source of authority and learn to speak its language*

*Critical notions: vocabulary. Regardless of what there is, we can only talk about it by using vocabs.*

*Relevance to SR: we make our truths, by engaging in dialog with respondents in order to teach/train them to understand what we want. In other words we work to make our scorecards converge. We can never be sure that researchers and respondents understand each other, have the same interpretations of qx text, etc. But we can do what nature does in evolution and learning: institute a cyclic process of experiment, feedback, and correction. This is operational even at the most simple and basic level of communication. So we can use this fact to our advantage.*

*Communication interactions as not essentially different from processes of evolution and learning. Evolutionary process tend to coordinate organism and environment; learning processes adapt the learner to the task environment, etc. Any discursive exchange - even simple greetings, etc. - does the same sort of thing: coordinate and mutually adjust the parties to the exchange.*

## 17.3 Rational Evidence

*Evidence-Based Rational SR*

*RCT: isolate the causal factor that links Treatment to Outcome*

*The mistake made by orthodox SR (shown by its vocab of measurement, error, etc.) is that it confuses the space of causes and the space of reasons.*

*In RCT, we observe a stimulus followed by a response (T followed by O) and postulate a causal relation. In SR, we observe a Q performance followed by a R performance. In fact this is an idealization since Q and R cannot be isolated - they are both joint performances. Ignore that for now; the point is that what makes them intelligible as performances is the space of reasons, not causes. That is, as discursive episodes they are essentially rational in a way the T-O trials are not. By definition, "rational" means involving concepts. Stimulus-response does not involve concepts and so is not rational in this favored sense. The natural world may be lawful, but it is not rational.*

*So SR should abandon the orthodox vocab of measurment, etc. in favor of one involving rationality. What would "evidence-based" mean, then? Not the kind of evidence involve in natural science, since such evidence does not involve concepts and thus meaning. Instead evidence inescapably involves meaning and understanding. What counts as evidence is what we count as a rational explanation or story. And this necessarily involves the perspective of the participants - it is their rationality, their giving and asking for reasons, that provides the observational basis of evidence.*

*One consequence: Qx does not involve measurement. SR can use stats to statistically measure the collected data, but that is quite separate from whether the data measure anything. So you can say that x% of resondents pick option X, but that does not mean that you have measured the distribution of "true values" of some latent variable. What you have measure is a distribution of deontic scores, or discursive postures. There is no warrant for claiming that each member of the x% means the same thing by picking X.*

#### **17.4 Misc**

- 1. What is a question? Better: what counts as a question, what is it to ask a question?*
- 2. Ditto for answer.*
- Q and A as parts of a whole (holistic view)*
- Q token v. Q performance, etc.*

#### **17.5 Erotetic Discursive Practice**

*EDP as production of data rather than discovery of truth*

#### **17.6 Replication**

*Goal is replication. Compare: blood work, e.g. measuring cholesterol. The measuring apparatus reacts to the sample, not the other way around. For EDP, respondent reacts to the question, so the question is analogous to the blood sample. The response is a kind of measurement of the question, not the other way around.*

*Replicability means same setup, same experimental conditions; in EDP this means replication of conceptual structure, which is accomplished by the dialog preceding the question. Traditionally, "ask the same question"; in practice this is impossible, since what counts is not the question text but respondent's grasp of the sense. So the "experimental setup" should be viewed as the work of*

*teaching the respondent what the sense of the question is. Survey interviewing is essentially interventionist, but this is not necessarily a bad thing, since lab experiments are too - they "intervene" to set up experimental "initial conditions". The difference is that setting up initial conditions ("same meaning") in question asking means tutoring the respondent.*

### 17.7 Myths and Mythologies

- *The Myth of Question Independence says that the meaning of a question is independent of context. But the meaning of a question is always dependent on what came before it.*
- *Myth of Autonomy. Interviewer and Respondent.*
- *Myth of Error*

### 17.8 Dopes

*Garfinkel's dopes - cultural, judgmental, psychological*

*Dehumanization. Orthodox Survey Research (OSR) dehumanizes participants. The R is a sampling unit. The mythology of OSR measurement treats the human R as a natural object to be measured rather than a person.*

## Appendices

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