Cappelen (2018) — "Summary of ch.7 Corollaries of Externalism: Inscrutability, Lack of Control, and Anti-Luminosity"

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Summarized ands commented by Shimpei Endo

In a nutshell...

The previous chapter (chapter 6) defends the externalistic conceptual engineering. This chapter (chapter 7) considers its consequences.

This chapter contains three parts. The first (and main) part (7.1-7.5) elaborates the externalist's conceptual engineering suggested in the previous chapter. An important principle of *Inscrutable-Lack of Control-Will Keep Trying* is introduced. The middle part (7.6) contrast Cappelen from Haslanger's project for the same goal. Haslanger is more descriptive and less revisionary than Cappelen. The final part (7.7) counterargues three possible objections.

Keywords: externalism, inscrutability, lack of control, anti-luminosity, Sally Haslanger

7.1 Elaborating the Austerity Framework

The previous chapter 6 has argued that there is no cookbook for successful revision. This echoes his favorite principle in this book:

> **Inscrutable–Lack of Control–Will Keep Trying**: The processes involved in conceptual engineering are for the most part *inscrutable*, and *we lack control of them*, but nonetheless we *will and should keep trying*. (p. 72, his emphasis)

Slightly unpacked, observe the following five slogans.

1. An epistemic point: Conceptual engineering often goes so messy that we cannot track.

2. A metaphysical point: Conceptual engineering is out of our control.

3. A psychological point: Conceptual engineers (will/must) never give up.

4. A theoretical point: As a collorary of the three above, nobody can hide from conceptual change.

5. An epistemic point (again!): Further, doing conceptual engineering is not lumious: you may do without knowing that you do.

7.2 Elaborations 1 and 2: 'Inscrutable' and 'Lack of Control'

Two factors – several aspects of the past and other agents– are working behind conceptual engineering being 'inscrutable' (a epistemic point) and 'lack of control' (a metaphysical point).

The past contains several aspects such as introdutory expressions (cf. stipulations), communicative chain, and sources of information in the past. Other people, especially experts, play a crucial task for conceptual engineering (cf. Burge and Putnam).

7.3 Elaboration 3: 'Will Keep Trying'

The previous two points would sound quite "bleak and pessimistic". But Cappelen is optimistic.

7.4 Elaboration 4: There Are No Safe Spaces Where We're in Control

7.5 Elaboration 5: Conceptual Engineering Not Luminous

7.6 A Sharp Contrast: Haslanger on Externalism and Amelioration

Cappelen and Haslanger (2012) share the same goal to make possible conceptual engineering (ameliorative projects) which are compatible with externalism. However, these two are very different.

Some points of agreement between Haslanger and the Austerity Framework   They agree on two aspects: revision (i.e. amelioration) as revelation and social scientists as reference-fixing experts.

7.6.2 A big point of disagreement between Haslanger and the Austerity Framework   Haslanger's project is ultimately *purely descriptive*. Her aim is to specify and reveal the extensions in reality. Externalism just assists this project for imposing normative considerations.

Cappelen is more *revisionary* so more radical than Haslanger.

For example, consider the concept 'marriage'.

7.7 Objections to the Austerity Framework

Objections include: (7.7.1) why not internalism then? (7.7.2) why does semantic value matter? (7.7.3) why not giving up conceptual engineering?

7.7.1 Objection 1: Isn't this just an argument for internalism?   Reply.

7.7.2 Objection 2: Why care about semantic values if they are inscrutable?   Reply.

7.7.3 Objection 3: Isn't this just a debunking project?   Some reasonably intereprets this book as actually claiming that conceptual engineering is impossible.

Reply. Notice that it is common for normative domains to be inscrutable and out of control. For instance, theorists, say, of theory of justice, often renew the theory without knowing how to implement.

Comments by me.

References

Cappelen, H. (2018). *Fixing Language: An Essay on Conceptual Engineering*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Haslanger, S. (2012). *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. Oxford University Press.