Two Problems with Qualitative Research

Qualitative research claims to be naturalistic inductive inquiry, where themes/categories are inductively derived from data

1.naturalistic inductive inquiry is generally considered to be an indefensible position in the philosophy of science

- It is called 'naïve inductivism'.

2.naïve inductivism and hermeneutics are generally considered to be contrary and incompatible views.

Is qualitative research simultaneously theory-free and theory-dependent inquiry? — it cannot be both.

Two Problems

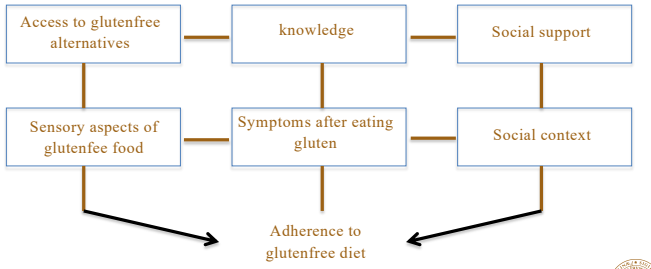
1. naturalistic inductive inquiry is generally considered to be an indefensible position in the philosophy of science, presented in textbooks under the label 'naïve inductivism'.
2. naïve inductivism and hermeneutics are generally considered to be contrary and incompatible views.

qualitative research is simultaneously theory-free and theory-dependent inquiry, but it cannot be both.

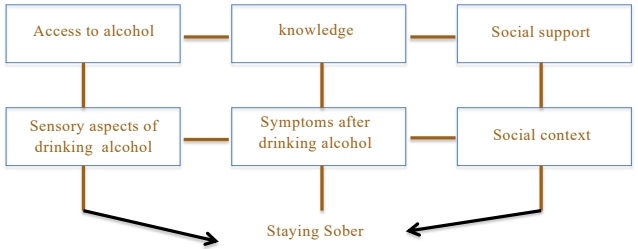
Discovering Themes?

Meaning unit	*condensed meaning unit description close to text*	*Condensed meaning unit Interpretation of underlying meaning*	*Sub-theme*	*Theme*
She kicks about and hits the care provider when she is putting shampoo in her hair // she tries to push the care providers away	Using physical violence when being dressed and washed	Fighting to defend her body zone against intrusion	Fighting to protect her personal space	Interaction as a process of respecting and invading each others privacy
When care providers are in her room she closes the door from the outside so that the care providers are locked in and she stays outside in the corridor	Closing the door between the care providers and herself	Marking a boundary against others		
The care provider knocks on her door, waits for an answer	*knocks on door, waits for answer*	*Asking permission and waiting for answer before entering room*	*Paying respect to physical space*	
…	…	…		
…	…	…		
…	…	…		

Deriving Kategories: Gluten intolerance

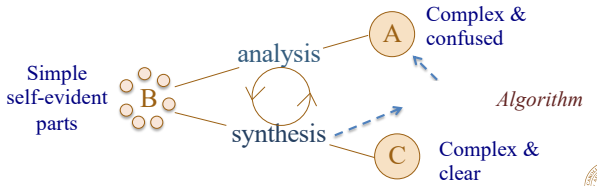


Deriving Kategories: Alcohol



Analytic/Hermeneutic Method

1. Divide the problem in as many parts as is needed to solve it *–Analysis*
2. Arrange the parts, simplest first and combine them into more complex wholes until they make up a coherent and clear whole *– Synthesis*



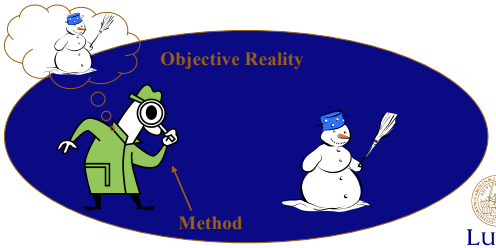
REALISM?

Generally: (most of) our words and thoughts refer to something that exists independently of those words and thoughts

Science reveals a discrepancy between the way we think about the world and what it really is

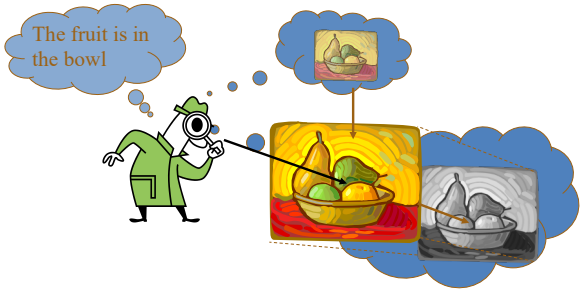
Justified True Belief

About objective reality



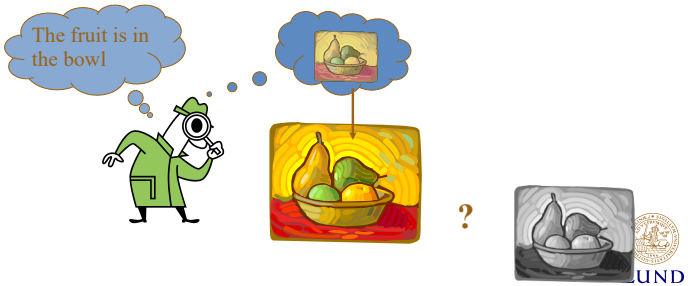
Extreme Anti-realism

- Our words and thoughts constitute/construe reality – postmodernism/constructivism



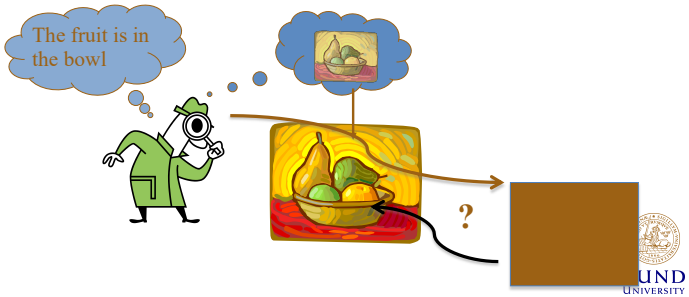
Moderate Anti-realism

- We have no clear conception of how our words and thoughts relate to reality (invites instrumentalism)



Instrumentalism (reality is s 'black box')

- All we can know is what kind of output we get from a given input



Two kinds of arguments against realism

- Contradict realism and deny reality
  - There is no such thing as an objective mind-independent reality – Idealism and Postmodernism
    - »Based on sceptical arguments - knowledge impossible
    - »We can't know — therefore we know there is no reality
- Accept reality (or remain neutral) but claim realism is a confused philosophical thesis
  - We can't know words refer, or accurately describe
  - Internal realism (Putnam) and Natural Ontological Attitude (A. Fine)

Scientific Realism

- Science can gain knowledge about objective reality
  - Not about "unobservables"
    - » empiricist challenge
  - The theory-dependence of method makes any claim to knowledge relative to a paradigm–whose validity cannot be objectively established.
    - » Incommensurability challenge
  - No, knowledge is socially constructed
    - » post-modern challenge

Structural Scientific Realism

- Science not only contains theoretical terms about "unobservables" but also claims about the relationship between terms
  - Scientific theories are bound up in a structure
- The content of theoretical terms may vary historically but the structure remains
- The structure of Scientific Knowledge "fits" to the objective reality even when particular terms do not.

The empiricist challenge

- Theories usually contain theoretical terms about "unobservables"
  - "Force", "Subconscious", "Dark Matter", "Substratum"
- Two theories about the same thing differ in so far as they postulate different types of "unobservables"
  - E.g. "space-time" and "Gravity"
- The underdetermination thesis
  - Observations are always compatible with more than one theory
    - » For any theory T there will always be another empirically equivalent theory T*
- No set of observational data can justify the truth about the "unobservables" (≈mind-independent entities)
- Consequently: a theory is only an instrument for prediction

The Rational Reconstruction Program

- Reduce talk of unobservables (metaphysical nonsense) to talk of observables (Scientific)
  - Electrons have negative charge ≈ electrons will attract/repel other particles

Reply to empiricist challenge

- Theories that appear empirically equivalent may not always stay equivalent
  - when auxilliary hypotheses are made explicit, "small theories" are judged in light of "total sciences" – Scientific Paradigms
  - technical development extend our senses to provide more empirical evidence about what used to be "unobservable"
- Challenge presupposes the *evidential indistinguishability thesis (EIT) : there can be no evidence which rationally distinguishes between two empirically equivalent total sciences*
  - But have there ever been such total sciences?

Postmodern challenge

- Knowledge is socially constructed
  - Does not represent what things are really like
  - Represents what things look to us

Quietism

- We *sense* that there is a heady metaphysical thesis at stake in these debates over realism- question on a par with the issues Kant first raised about the status of nature. But after a point, when every attempt to say just what the issue is has come up empty, we have no real choice but to conclude that despite all the wonderful, suggestive imagery, there is ultimately nothing in the neighborhood to discuss (Gideon Rosen : 1994: 279).

Realism begs the question?

- Fine: Realism strikes realists as better because they already presuppose that realism is true
- Abductive response: Realism is the only theory that can explain the success of science
  - Science is successful
  - Realism best explains success of science
  - Therefore realism is true
    - » Or: therefore it is rational to be a realist