

Week 5 Notes on Perception and Action  
(Observation and Agency, Language Entries and Language Exits)

Part One: Entries

Intro:

After discussion of scorekeeping last time, have a view of linguistic practitioners as taking up positions in a normative space.

Those positions are normative statuses of commitment and entitlement to commitments.

Their contentfulness is articulated by relations of material consequence and incompatibility that they stand in to one another.

Two-sorted normative metavocabulary of commitment and entitlement (which can be mapped onto one employing instead responsibility and authority—Hegel’s “dependence” and “independence”) generates two sorts of consequence relation (commitment-preserving and *prima facie* entitlement-preserving) and a notion of incompatibility.

In addition, we can look upstream, to reasons (of the two kinds) for a claim and also downstream, to consequence (of the two kinds) of a claim, that is, to what it is a reason for. Incompatibilities (which can be treated as symmetric) codify reasons *against*.

Entries and Exits (Sellars “Some Reflections on Language Games”)  
Hyperinferentialism, Strong Inferentialism, and Weak Inferentialism

1. Observation reports (“Konstatierungen”), two senses of “non-inferential” (one good, one bad=MoG).
2. Theoretical entities defined. They differ only epistemologically not ontologically from observable ones.
3. Two-ply account: RDRDs plus concept-application.

Q: What is observable?

A: Mu mesons, Toltec potshards, normative states of affairs and meanings. (McD agrees, indeed insists, that meanings are both normative and immediately perceivable, but does not accept the two-ply account of why and how.) Perceptibility of normative states of affairs (see Part Two below) is one of the features that most recommends the two-ply account to me.

4. Justificatory Internalism and Externalism about Perceptual Knowledge.

The critique of the Myth of the Given says that one must already have concepts in order to make observations—agreeing with rationalists on this point, and turning the empiricist order of explanation on its head. But then how does one acquire concepts?

Tell my story of normative statuses as social statuses, and how young ones come into the linguistic community.

5. Reliability and Reliabilism.

The reliability inference. This is a second-personal conception, not a first-personal one. Reliabilism is an epistemological view, an externalist one. But its soft underbelly is its implicit semantics. For it wants to replace concern with justification (hence inference) *globally* by concern with reliable belief-forming mechanisms. But how are we to understand the *contents* or *meanings* of the beliefs (claims, judgments)? *That*, we inferentialists claim, requires “situation in a space of implications (and incompatibilities).”

Problem with reliabilism is its implicit conception of meaning.

This is a general issue. Substantive theories of rationality, accounts of what a “good reason” is, paradigmatically in terms of “reliable belief-forming mechanism” or maximization of expected utility, presuppose the contents of options, outcomes, and choices (actions). (Complain about slogan “Failure is not an option.”)

Barn-façade county.

This example is supposed to show the concept-relativity of reliability assessments. They are not purely matters of objective, naturalistic fact.

Compare: Chomsky-Dennett point about RDRDs in Skinnerian behaviorism.

6. Phenomenology as otiose? (“No Experience Necessary”) Superblindsight and chicken-sexers.

McD: conceptually articulated perceptual experiences between causal antecedents and perceptual judgments.

McD does avoid Myth of the Given, because PEs are conceptually articulated, require language. Conceptual articulation requires *de re* senses, demonstrative concepts (*that* color/shape).

7. Two views of the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy: Kant and Hegel

8. “Looks”-talk and secondary qualities (on the my version of Evans).

9. The pragmatist approach, in terms of what one must be able to *do*, looks to doings as publically available. It has a behaviorist resonance, even though a) it specifies doings in normative terms and ii) it is happy to postulate “unobservables.” What is right about the impression of behaviorism is that at no point is it insisting on *self-consciousness* as a necessary condition. Rödl is the prophet here, but McD, Thompson, Boyle, and Kimhi (for instance) are fully on board. I agree with their descriptions of the explanatory target, but aspire to say much more about the internal fine-structure of self-consciousness than they do, to de-mystify it and show how it is so much as possible. (McD learned from LW to be skeptical of “how-possible” questions, taking them almost always to be symptoms of bewitchment by a picture one must be disabused of.)

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## Part Two: Exits

11. Triad of Intentional States: Belief, Desire, Intention, related by practical reasoning.

Davidson: Do the work of intention with just belief and desire ( $BD \rightarrow I$ )

Really, “pro-attitudes,” including normative ones, is his genus for desire.

And he found he does, in fact, need intentions (“Pure Intending”).

Me: Can’t one do something intentionally but for no reason? (McD’s example: idly swinging walking-stick in the meadow to knock the heads off daisies).

The connection between practical reasoning and practical commitments is global, not local. That is, there could not be intentions (what one is attributing would not be intentions) unless there were practical reasoning (one must attribute intentions in a context in which one also attributes practical reasoning). But there is no connection that need hold in every case.

BB: Do the work of desire with belief and intention ( $BI \rightarrow D$ )

Q:  $DI \rightarrow B$ ?

Grandy: Do the work of B with D ( $D \rightarrow B$ ).

Belief that p is the second-order desire that one’s first-order desires be p-consistent.

Boring, plausible view is that one needs all three.

12. Parallel with language entries:

Rational will (Kant) is the capacity to respond to acknowledgement of practical commitments by altering something objective. This is exactly parallel to the capacity to observe, which is the capacity to respond to an objective state of affairs by acknowledging a commitment. Normative attitudes of acknowledging and attributing commitments are items in the causal order. They are like the umpire’s *calling* strikes. The normative statuses (*being* a strike, throwing a strike, striking out) are products of such attitudes.

13. A new kind of expressivism about norms: a rationalist, rather than an empiricist version.

What is expressed is not pro- or anti-attitudes (“Boo”/“Hurrah”). That is the expressivism of Hume. It is the Romantic expressivism of Herder and Charles Morris (and Ayer and Stevenson, ancestors of Blackburn and Gibbard, who are post Frege-Geach point).

What is expressed is *inferential commitments*: commitment to patterns of practical reasoning.

Both halves of this are different from the thought motivating classical metaethical expressivism. First of all, it is *commitments* that are expressed. These are already normative, not merely emotive. (How can that be? Isn’t that circular? Not if normative statuses are understood as social statuses, as constituted by normative attitudes: cf. reciprocal recognition.) Second, these are specifically *inferential* commitments. But they are commitments to patterns of *practical* inference (implication). Those are bits of reasoning whose conclusions are *practical commitments*: commitments to *do* something.

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Supplementary Materials:

SRLG

“Sellars Two-Ply...”

NIKPESQ

List of the papers John and I exchange on perception:

“Knowledge and the Internal”

“Knowledge the Social Articulation of the Space of Reasons” [?]

Perception and Rational Constraint

K&I Revisited

“Noninferential Knowledge, Perceptual Experience and Secondary Qualities”