

Review of: "On the Meaning of Psychological Concepts: Is There Still a Need for Psychological Concepts in the Empirical Sciences?"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This manuscript is concerned with psychological concepts of wide interpretations, the most mentioned was introspection, others were perception, thinking, memory, imagination, hallucination, illusion and depression. All referring to internal processes that only the observer knows something about.

The author criticised "empirical psychologists and cognitive scientists" for treating such concepts as "only words without explanation power."

Based on the concept of identity, the main conclusion was that psychological concepts are necessary to understand the psychological states of people other than the observer and animal behavior but not in relation to external behavior or use of language.

"The concept of identity, which some philosophers have a vague understanding of" is popular nowadays in relation to claiming gender rights. The author mentioned that the concept of identity depends on self-evaluation but not on external action, thus the choice in itself weighs in to support the conclusions of the manuscript.

<https://writing.champlain.edu/2020/08/17/understanding-the-concept-of-identity/>

The thesis of the manuscript is reminiscent of the Solvay Conferences of physics (1911-1948),

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solvay_Conference

where the duality between scientific realism (physicalism) and instrumentalism evolved. The result was the wide acceptance of instrumentalism and the relativity of reality, including Einstein's theories of relativity. The manuscript adopts the position of instrumentalism without citing its most significant successes in psychology.

Two key psychological concepts were conspicuously absent: Self-evaluation and consciousness. Self-evaluation or self-assessment is widely and successfully used for measuring many psychological dimensions, such as personality, orientation, motivation and diagnostics. Introspection defines a wide spectrum of self examination which includes self-evaluation but too general to describe its usefulness. The success of self-evaluation in predicting behavior is undeniable. The second word is consciousness, although mentioned twice but not in the context of consciousness research. There is a lot of interest in the field of Artificial Intelligence in the concept of consciousness. Consciousness is an important psychological concept which should have been included in a generalizing investigation such as this.

Why psychological concepts are still needed in the sciences? Because many concepts point to motivational phenomena,

motivation is a dynamic phenomenon not well understood by some cognicists. Introspection is a foggy cognitive description of essentially motivational phenomena, a cognitive+motivational model should clear the fogginess.

Motivation was mentioned as a psychological concept: "as people being unaware of processes influencing their motivation and behavior" (Eysenck 2012), and implicitly as animals probably perform the same psychological processes of humans. "Furthermore, psychological phenomena clearly exist, such as introspection and memory, and a sane person believes that other people and many animals also have psychological processes and states. Thus, psychological concepts are not meaningless because they refer to existing psychological phenomena. Wittgenstein's analysis of psychological concepts is thus not true."

A model of animal behavior can possibly provide measurement scales where the reliability and resolution can be assessed quantitatively. Bugelski and Alampay's (1961) experiment of showing pictures of either animals or humans prior to ambiguous blobs is an example of a well known type of animal motivation called priming, except it also contains cognition. Ethology is a good example of success in predicting behavior with respect to implicit model of cognitive+motivational dynamic. A structured model of behavior which includes cognition as well as motivation could well be the entry point to defining psychological concepts and quantifying reliability.

Therefore I find the author is fighting last century's war; the usefulness of some psychological concepts as prediction and explanatory instruments is proven beyond reasonable doubt, yet the choice of more difficult concepts as above illustrates the size of the problems ahead. My review includes comments to point out a promising direction of investigation; the direction of referencing behavioral models combining cognitive and motivational aspects.

The manuscript is well written in good English, obviously the author did a lot of deep introspection! I believe it should be published as is.