

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

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The article presents a highly relevant issue in the field of research in Psychology. An issue that harkens back to the idea of what Science is and how knowledge is produced. Concepts in Psychology, just like in other sciences, are useful models in explaining phenomena. Often, we don't have direct access to the phenomenon itself, but only to its manifestation in the concrete world. From this manifestation, we can "model" the phenomenon. For example, Rutherford couldn't directly observe an atom. However, based on the characteristics of the phenomenon observed in his experiment of bombarding a gold foil with alpha particles, he could infer its structure. Similarly, we don't have direct access to psychological phenomena, but only to their manifestation in the concrete world (in the production of knowledge, arts, behaviors, etc.). This is where the importance of formulating concepts that "model" the psychological phenomenon, which manifests in some "product" in the concrete world, comes into play. However, there is a difference between natural sciences (like Rutherford's example) and cognitive sciences: researchers in cognitive sciences can experience the psychological phenomena they study themselves. Hence the importance of introspection as a method of data collection. I agree with the limitations pointed out by the author, and thus, it's important that perhaps introspection (such as the "thinking aloud" method) is combined with other data collection strategies. After all, another problem arises: potential biases stemming from the researcher's subjectivity. If, for instance, I'm investigating how a person recalls a past event, I inevitably think about how I myself recall things. The way each individual perceives the phenomenon can be different (as aptly pointed out at a certain point in the text).

To me, this sentence encapsulates the significance of the raised question: "If people are aware of the outcomes of psychological processes, but unaware of the processes themselves, then how can it be that empirical psychologists and cognitive scientists are aware of the processes?"