November 5, 2024

Handout for Meeting 9

Empirical and Historical Dimensions of Pragmatically Specified Reason Relations

I. The Empirical Dimension of Pragmatic Reason Relations

Four different ways of understanding **'fact-stating'**, **'descriptive'**, or '**representational'** uses:

1. Declarative-assertional uses,
2. Descriptive uses,
3. Empirical descriptive uses,
4. Empirical descriptive uses in the narrow, relatively discourse-independent sense.

Nested Kinds of Use	**Contrasts with**	**Defined by**
Declaratives Most General Fact-Stating	Imperatives, Interrogatives	'Situation in space of implications' Assertible. Can be premises and conclusions of inferences Embeddable in conditionals and negations Truth-Evaluable
Descriptions (Fact-Stating)	Prescriptions	Normative direction of fit is word to world
Empirical Descriptions (Fact-Stating)	Fictional Descriptions Statements in Legal Vocabulary	1) Normative governance of describings by describeds 2) Subjunctive tracking of describeds by describings
Narrowly Empirical Descriptions (Fact-Stating)	Broadly Empirical Descriptions (Fact-Stating)	Subjunctive tracking not necessarily mediated by tokenings of linguistic expressions

II. The Historical Dimension of Pragmatic Reason Relations

1. Our interest is in the *process* whereby the reason relations discursive practitioners in a community practically *take* or *treat as* holding objectively change and develop over time, so as better to instantiate the Hlobil isomorphism. We are interested in seeing what can be said *from within a pragmatic MV* about *progress* toward that goal of isomorphism at the level of reason relations, and what *processes* can be expected to secure such progress.
Unchecked Retrospective Authority Challenge: Here the big challenge is that purely *retrospective* criteria of progress are too easy to satisfy. It seems as though we could *always* tell a story that came out with later in our past/history being better, even if we have to invent new, fluid criteria of adequacy, such as pleasingness to God.

Here are two, perhaps surprising, responses to that challenge:

2. Technology:

In the case of *empirical* concepts, as in (I), we can discipline assessments of *theoretical* progress by the relatively independent assessments of *technological* progress. Here I am suggesting a novel account of the *functional* division of labor between the two. It depends on **defining 'technological progress' in a way that appeals essentially to *pro*spective assessments**. This is a distinctive constellation of authority and responsibility by past and present assessors, which ensures that the present-and-future is *genuinely responsible to* the past, not merely exercising its interpretive authority over it—which is the Unchecked Retrospective Authority Challenge above. Here the key is to pick out *technological progress* as essentially *pro*spectively assessable: Aristotle could tell that we are *much* better than the folks of his time at moving people and heavy things quickly and for great distances, that we can demolish things (make big holes in the ground) and build big things that his folks could not.

3. Recollective Rationality:

a) Diachronic structure of recognition, for case of judges. (Judges chain novel text.)
b) Recollective rationality, giving reasons in the form of a rehearsal of the lessons of old commitments. Rationalizing by offering a retrospective rational reconstruction. Describing an *expressively progressive* trajectory through precedential antecedent commitments-entitlements.
c) Two notions of determinateness: Kantian-Fregean and Hegelian.
d) Understanding "expressively progressive" in terms of explicitation paths. Rejiggering the reason relations to make visible a trajectory from some past constellation of commitments to the currently endorsed one that is an explicitation path relative to those reason relations. That is, each step consists just of acknowledging explicitly, as a premise, something that was already *implicit*, in the literal sense of being *implied by* the premises available at the previous step.