November 7, 2018

Week 11 Notes

Normativity, Modality, and Intentionality

1. The topic for this week lists 3 phenomena, kinds of concepts, and vocabulary expressing them that have traditionally been problematic and puzzling for empiricists and naturalists both.

Say why. Recall target and base vocabularies and empiricist and naturalist core programs of analytic philosophy. (Pragmatism will be addressed later, (7) below.)

One of the Big Ideas of *Between Saying and Doing* is in two parts: that

1. There are unobvious connections between normativity and modality, epitomized in Sellars’s dark remark that “modality is a transposed language of norms.”

Also the sort of phenomenon Grice points to: “She should (ought to) be here by now,” can express either a prediction of something that follows necessarily [cf. Kant’s usage] from something else. (“She phoned to say she was leaving her place an hour ago,”) or a norm (“She promised to be here by now.”)

Kant on Notwendigkeit having two species: natural necessity and practical necessity.

Why? Because these are the two things that outrun descriptive experience for Hume:

Lawfulness of regularities and the “ought” that goes beyond “is.”

And

1. Understanding those connections will explicate *intentionality*, and in particular reatures of it that are potentially puzzling to pragmatists, namely the specifically *representational* dimension of intentionality.
2. To introduce that Big Idea, it helps to remind ourselves about another one:

A version of Kant’s idea of the *categories*.

1. This is the idea that in addition to vocabularies/concepts whose principle expressive job it is to describe and explain (two sides of one coin according to Sellars: “the descriptive and explanatory resources of the language advance hand in hand”)—and in that sense, *make explicit*—ordinary empirical goings-on, there are concepts whose distinctive expressive job it is to make explicit otherwise implicit features of the *framework* of practices that makes empirical description and explanation possible.
2. This idea of categories has essentially no contemporary fans.

So it represents a big divide in philosophical approaches.

Why? Because it has been thought of in *epistemological* (shading into ontological) terms, rather than semantic, indeed specifically *expressive* terms.

Specifically, people have focused on the idea of categorial concepts as *a priori* and indeed *innate*, hence not the result of experience. Yet they are supposed to tell us something about how the world is and must be. This violates strong empiricist commitments that we find out *everything* about how things are via experience.

But on the view I have developed out of Sellars, it is not that we somehow already have these concepts before we begin the business of empirical experience.

Rather, in having such sapient, conceptually articulated experiences, we learn how to do everything we need to learn how to do to in order to use such concepts. We just need to be taught to hook up those capacities to the use of new words.

The use of those words is *elaborated from* what we can already do. And it is *explicative* or *expressive* of structural features of discursiveness as such. (So: LX)

Those structural features are relations of consequence and incompatibility, which articulate the *determinateness* of the concepts expressed by OED vocabulary.

1. This thought is made more definite by the claim that *logical* vocabulary plays this role (not Kant’s view), and that both alethic *modal* and deontic *normative* vocabulary does. (He certainly thought the first, and perhaps the second.)
2. In connection with (especially) **modality**: the key vocabulary here is *not* the sentential operators of *necessity* and *possibility* that classical modal logics codify. It is subjunctively significant conditionals with ranges of subjunctive robustness, codifying nonmonotonic implication relations (and the inferences they structure and govern).
3. For we can take on board the inferentialist insight that what makes ***description*** possible, rather than mere ***labeling*** or responsive classification (Sellars) is the application of concepts (as opposed to labels), which are distinguished by being “situated in a space of implications” (and incompatibilities). These are relations of *material* consequence and incompatibility.
4. It is because this is what is distinctive of *description* that ***explanation*** is essentially involved. (Sellars: “the descriptive and explanatory resources of the language advance hand in hand.”) Explanation is exploiting-exploring the space of implications and incompatibilities.
5. It is essential to this enterprise that those relations admit *subjunctive* employment. That is, that besides *assertion* and *actual* commitments (whose entitlements are always potentially at issue) there are attitudes of *supposition* in which one explores *possible* commitments. Explanations are essentially, and not just accidentally, subjunctively robust. It does *not* follow that they must invoke *laws* = statements of what is *necessary*. What one needs is subjunctively robust relations.
6. The relations of consequence and incompatibility are *nonmonotonic*: adding further premises can not only *add* further consequences and incompatibilities, but can *infirm* implications and *cure* or *resolve* incompatibilities.

Here I want first i) to see *Travis and Dancy* as brothers-in-arms, and then ii) to understand both of them as noticing what are in fact features or consequences of the nonmonotonicity of reasoning. The reasoning to from evidence and to consequences of truth conditions (thought of as individually nec & jointly suf) in Travis’s case, and the implications and incompatibilities involved in applying *principles* in Dancy’s case.

1. The result is **the modal and normative Kant-Sellars theses**: modal and normative concepts are *implicit in* OED concepts, in the sense that in being able to use OED vocabulary, one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do to deploy modal and normative concepts.

On normativity (since I talked about modality in (2e) to (2i) above:

1. Kant’s normative turn, again. Hegel, Frege contra psychologism, Wittgenstein & Kripkenstein, Sellars.
2. Hattiangadi, Glüer, and Wikforrss’s arguments against the normativity of meaning. What they are missing (context of assessment, not just context of deliberation, hence *social*-perspectival dimension of normativity).

From Hlobil “Anti-Normativism Evaluated”:

The two most important arguments anti-normativists have  
presented are what I call the argument from constitution and the argument  
from guidance.5 The argument from constitution goes like this (Glüer and  
Wikforss, 2009a, pp. 48-52): According to normativism, following particular  
norms is constitutive of having contentful mental states. Hence, we cannot  
violate these norms without ceasing to have contentful mental states, unless we  
are in mitigating circumstances. But norms that we cannot violate unless we  
are in mitigating circumstances are not genuinely normative. So normativism  
fails.

The argument from guidance goes like this (Glüer and Wikforss, 2009a, pp.  
55-63): Normativists hold that every contentful state or act is the result of, or  
an instance of, the subject following a norm; the norm must guide the subject.  
But in order to follow a norm, the subject must have been in a dierent, and  
temporally prior, contentful state. Thus, a vicious regress ensues. A variant  
of this argument says that in order to create norms that could constitute facts  
about contentful acts and states, one needs some prior contentful acts or states

They miss social articulation of normativity.

Norm can also be in play because of the dimension of *assessment*.

One is bound by the norm in being subject to assessment as to the correctness of what one does, whether one is satisfying the norm or not, and whether one is in fact *guided* in following the norm.

Rehearse the three dimensions of the truth modal: truth, assertion as taking-true, and truth conditions. It is the attitude that matters here. MIE divides it: acknowledging/attributing. They miss the second dimension.

Scholastic maxim: “When faced with a contradiction, make a distinction.”

But they also think the *only* normativity involved is what is the sense of “correctness” that is assessed when we ask about *truth*. Justification and rationality are not, for them, semantic matters, but epistemic ones. Fix the meanings by truth conditions, and then one can be a rational choice theorist about the subsequent notion of norms of rationality.

So the idea that our understanding of *those* norms should suffice for *semantic* norms is methodologically the reverse of their approach.

1. Anti-Rat rant:

This is a view according to which normativity only enters *after* semantics, in assessing justification or rationality.

Rational choice theory presupposes meanings.

("Failure is not an option." )

1. Rationality assumption (Davidson, Dennett) and two conceptions of intentional explanations.

On intentionality:

1. Pragmatism about Semantics, in a series of nested claims:

P1] A founding idea of pragmatism is that the most fundamental kind of intentionality (in the sense of directedness towards objects) is the practical involvement with objects exhibited by a sentient creature dealing skillfully with its world.

P2] The most basic form of such activity is a Test–Operate–Test–Exit (TOTE) cycle of perception, performance, assessment of the results of the performance, and further performance—that is, a process or practice consisting of an open-ended sequence of feedback-governed performances.

P3] Feedback-governed practices are ‘thick’, in the sense of essentially involving objects, events, and worldly states of affairs. Bits of the world are incorporated in such practices, in the exercise of such abilities.

P4] The specifically semantic intentionality displayed in language-use, engaging in discursive practices, deploying an autonomous vocabulary, should be understood both as a development of and as a special case of the sort of basic practical intentionality exhibited already by the kind of feedback-governed transactions mentioned in the first three theses.

P5] One cannot understand the two poles of specifically semantic or discursive intentionality—knowing and acting subjects and the objects they know of and act on, their representing activities and the objects and objective states of affairs they represent—independently of the semantic intentional relations they stand in to one another, and then somehow bolt together those ways of understanding the relata to understand those relations between them. One must rather start with an understanding of the thick, essentially world-involving practices engaged in and abilities exercised, and abstract from or dissect out of that an understanding of the two poles of the semantic intentional relations those practices and abilities institute or establish.

1. Dewey:

Here are some representative passages from the late *Experience and Nature* (1925; reprinted in *John Dewey: The Later Works 1925–1953*, Jo Ann Boydston (ed.) (Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), vol. 1): [By contrast to the traditional view:] Subjective and objective distinguished as factors in a regulated effort at modification of the environing world have an intelligible meaning. (p. 185)  
We begin by noting that ‘‘experience’’ is what James called a double-barrelled word. Like its congeners, life and history, it includes what men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also how men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine—in short, processes of experiencing. ‘‘Experience’’ denotes the planted field, the sowed seeds, the reaped harvests, the changes of night and day, spring and autumn, wet and dry, heat and cold, that are observed, feared, longed for; it also denotes the one who plants and reaps, who works and rejoices, hopes, fears, plans, invokes magic or chemistry to aid him, who is downcast or triumphant.  
It is ‘‘double-barrelled’’ in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and  
material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality. ‘‘Thing’’ and ‘‘thought,’’ as James says in the same connection, are single-barrelled; they refer to products discriminated by reflection out of primary experience. (p.19)  
I still believe that on theoretical, as distinct from historical, grounds there is much to be said in favor of using ‘‘experience’’ to designate the inclusive subject-matter which characteristically ‘‘modern’’ (post-medieval) philosophy breaks up into the dualisms of subject and object, mind and the world, psychological and physical. (p. 362)  
The value of experience for the philosopher is that it serves as a constant reminder of something which is neither exclusive and isolated subject or object, matter or mind, nor yet one plus the other. The fact of integration in life is a basic fact, and until its recognition becomes habitual, unconscious and pervasive, we need a word like experience to remind us of it, and to keep before thought the distortions that occur when the integration is ignored or denied. (p. 385)

1. Plan:

Kantian synthesis and integration

Doing that (practical attitudes) can be described in both normative and modal terms (taking two claims/properties to be alethically incompatible).

How that is representational (fox/dog).

Both normative government and subjunctive sensitivity.

Bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism.

Objective idealism.

1. The expressive roles characteristic of *normative* and *modal* vocabularies:   
   Each of these vocabularies should be seen as LX for, as elaborated from and explicitating of, various features essential to every autonomous discursive practice.

The features of discursive practice from which the normative vocabulary of commitment and entitlement is elaborated and which it makes explicit are different from those from which the modal vocabulary of necessity and possibility are elaborated and made explicit. But they are intimately related. What I want to claim now is that those features correspond, respectively, to the *subjective* and the *objective* poles of intentional relations

The basic idea is that normative vocabulary makes explicit important features of what knowing and acting subjects *do* when they deploy a vocabulary, when they *use* expressions so as to *say* something. And modal vocabulary makes explicit important correlative features both of what is *said* and of the objective world that is talked *about*.

1. The account of feedback loops of perception-and-performance normatively governed by relations of material inference and incompatibility [in the toy “acid” example] is a pragmatic version of Kant’s account of synthesizing a *transcendental* unity of apperception.

It shows (as I discuss below in (16)) how the norms of consequence and incompatibility implicit in our use of terms can both be i) normatively governed by and ii) subjunctively sensitive to the actual modal relations of consequence and incompatibility.

1. In drawing inferences and ‘repelling’ incompatibilities, one is taking oneself to stand in representational relations to objects that one is talking *about*. A commitment to *A*’s being a dog does *not* entail a commitment to *B*’s being a mammal. But it *does* entail a commitment to *A*’s being a mammal. Drawing the inference from a dog-judgment to a mammal-judgment *is* taking it that the two judgments represent one and the same object. Again, the judgment that *A* is a dog is not incompatible with the judgment that *B* is a fox. It *is* incompatible with the judgment that *A* is a fox. Taking a dog-judgment to be incompatible with a fox-judgment *is* taking them to refer to or represent an object, the *one* object to which incompatible properties are being attributed by the two claims.

**The triangulation that consists in acknowledging material incompatibilities and inferences is, in a nutshell, how the *normative* demand for a *rational* unity of apperception (judgments) makes intelligible *representational* purport: what it is to take or treat judgments in practice as representing or being about objects**.

1. Two senses of ‘incompatible:

The first point I want to emphasize is that these are clearly *different* notions of incompatibility. It is *impossible* for one and the same *object* to have incompatible *properties* at the same time. But it is merely *impermissible* for one and the same *subject* to have incompatible *commitments* at the same time. We *can* undertake such commitments. It is not impossible to do so. Indeed, we do it all the time—albeit usually involuntarily.

1. It is an essential individuating feature of the metaphysical categorical sortal metaconcept object that objects have the metaproperty of *modally* repelling incompatibilities.

It is an essential individuating feature of the metaphysical categorical sortal metaconcept subject that subjects have the metaproperty of *normatively* repelling incompatibilities.

1. Here is the key point. By engaging in the practice of rectifying commitments, subjects are at once *both*

* taking or treating the *commitments* involved as incompatible in the *normative* sense of obliging them to do something about that collision,

*and*

* taking or treating two *states of affairs* regarding *objects* as incompatible in the *modal* sense that it is impossible for both to obtain.

These are, I repeat, quite different senses of ‘incompatible’.

But **in practically acknowledging an obligation to rectify or repair a set of commitments, one is doing something that can be specified not just by using one or the other vocabulary, but, crucially, by using *both*.**

That it *can* be specified in both ways, both in normative terms and in modal terms, is what it is for the vocabulary whose use is being rectified to have semantic intentional *content*, for its deployment to count as *representing objects* and *saying of* them *that* they are objectively thus-and-so, **for it to be the kind of *process* that establishes representational *relations***.

Representational semantic normativity is implicit in the fact that rectifying one’s commitments so as to eliminate *acknowledged* incompatibilities among them (discursive updating) is at once *both* treating two *commitments* as incompatible in the *normative* sense of obliging subjects to *do* something, *and* treating two *properties* as incompatible in the objective *modal* sense.

1. First, I argued that a suitably chosen normative (deontic) vocabulary (of commitment and entitlement) can serve as a sufficient pragmatic metavocabulary for alethic modal vocabulary. That is, we can explain what one must *do* in order to be deploying the objective modal notion of incompatibility in terms of the normatively specifiable notion of claimings that are incompatible just in case *commitment* to one rules out *entitlement* to the other.  
   2. Second, I showed how the notion of incompatibility introduced that way can be used as the basis of a *semantic* metavocabulary, in terms of which we can define both *logical* and *modal* operators, and also represent important aspects of the contents of non-logical concepts.  
   3. Third, I argued for what I called the ‘‘Kant–Sellars theses’’ (which constitute the first half of the complex resultant expressive property of vocabularies I called ‘‘universal LX-ness’’): as is the case with logical vocabulary, practices-or-abilities PV-sufficient to deploy both alethic modal and deontic normative vocabulary can be algorithmically elaborated from practices PV-necessary for deploying any autonomous vocabulary.  
   4. Fourth (which is the other half of the universal LX-ness of these vocabularies), I pointed out that normative and modal vocabularies each make explicit (a matter of the VP-sufficiency of a vocabulary to specify practices-or-abilities) important aspects implicit in (PVnecessary for) the use of any autonomous vocabulary.

5. Finally, those complementary aspects made explicit by normative and modal vocabulary correspond to the subjective and objective poles of the intentional nexus between what discursive practitioners *do*, their activity of claiming, and the objects, properties, and facts that they thereby count as *saying* something *about*.

This shows what is required for *practical* intentionality to develop into *discursive* intentionality. And it exhibits discursive intentionality as a particular kind of *pragmatically mediated semantic* relation.

1. Relations between norms governing our use of concepts, articulated by relations of consequence and incompatibility on the deontic normative side, and alethic modal relations of consequence and incompatibility (subjunctively robust conditionals) exhibit **normative government**:

Modal relations serve as *normative standards for the assessment of the correctness* of norms governing our conceptions.

Norms are *subjunctively sensitive to* modal relations: what really follows from what and is incompatible with what.

1. Bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism.
2. Objective idealism.

Reciprocal sense-dependence of normative relations and modal ones.

Assertion—fact.

Inference (reasoning, explanation)—law or subjunctive robustness.

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