

Re: The Identity Theory of Mind

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From: Paul Bramscher (*brams006_nospam_at_tc.umn.edu*)

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Lester Zick wrote:

> *On Tue, 28 Sep 2004 10:17:46 -0300, "Sergio Navega"*
> *<snavega@intelliwise.com> in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:*
>
>
>> *"Lester Zick" <lesterDELzick@worldnet.att.net> escreveu na mensagem*
>> *news:4155e080.19588644@netnews.att.net...*
>
>
> *[. . .]*
>
>
>>> *I routinely pose this question once a year so I might as well do it*
>>> *here. Can you name any philosopher apart from Aristotle and the*
>>> *syllogism who contributed anything to the history of ideas and*
>>> *science that was demonstrably true and definitively correct?*
>>
>> *That's quite an interesting question. There's obviously those*
>> *philosophers who made "definitively correct" contributions to*
>> *logic, arithmetic and other such things, but they would, in*
>> *this case, be called mathematicians. Or one could cite so many*
>> *philosophers who introduced insightful ideas on the structure*
>> *and evolution of communication among humans, but they would,*
>> *in this case, be called linguists. Or then those who found a*
>> *way to speculate about some things of an empirical nature,*
>> *but they would be called scientists.*
>>
>> *That's the problem with philosophers. When they come up with*
>> *something that has an empirically strong side, they aren't*
>> *seen as philosophers anymore, they are scientists or*
>> *mathematicians, or linguists, etc. I believe that philosophers'*
>> *task should be to elaborate their abstract thoughts without*
>> *being "limited" by reality (and that's why I criticize*
>> *philosophies which try to *restrict* empirical work, such*
>> *as the ones which try to conceive normative practices).*
>>
>> *What philosophers do is to provide "abstract thought patterns"*

>>that can be suggestive or even **analogically useful** to
>>scientists. A scientist may be positively influenced by such
>>thought patterns, up to a point where he/she (the scientist)
>>may come up with an interesting hypothesis to be empirically
>>tested. The "origins" of this hypothesis may well be the "mental
>>diversions" of someone else. But what's really important is not
>>the origins, but the nature of the results obtained by its
>>serious application. I'm not fond of discussing highly philosophical
>>themes, but I really appreciate the vast number of insights that
>>often come from the minds of philosophers.

>
>

> Okay, Sergio. Extremely well analyzed. However, I would like to add
> that I have yet to see any scientific advance specifically prompted by
> some philosopher's philosophy, and I think that is the philosophers'
> problem and responsibility. It's not just about problematic daydreams.

>

> In Aristotle's case the syllogism was prompted by the specific desire
> and need to have some way to reason about ideas. In my case the
> philosophy was and is intended to produce a vision of a scientific
> metaphysics, some specific idea of how reality works in general such
> that it could and does yield what we see and know outside and in and
> does so in strict mechanical terms.

>

> Regards – Lester

Thank goodness for empirical positivism. ;–)

There is one way that philosophers might attempt to advance science, though not theories. And this is following up on Popper's definition of scientific statements as being those which are falsifiable.

There are clearly (at least) two ways to falsify any statement. One is to point out a contradiction in terms, an internal contradiction such that the hypothesis as claimed is self-contradictory. Less strong, philosophers might dicussion necessary conclusions from the hypothesis (external to it, but necessarily implied) which are in some way contradictory with one another, or with the original hypothesis.

The other, generally the realm of other scientists, is to produce a physical/empirical counter-example to the claim.

This would be philosopher-as-theory-demolitionist. Questioning assumptions is a valid means to advancing science, and perhaps actually the preferred method.