

Re: Epistemology 201: The Science of Science

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.physics/2005-02/1127.html>

From: Albert (*albertwagner_at_cox.net*)

Date: 02/02/05

Date: Wed, 02 Feb 2005 11:13:56 -0600

Lester Zick wrote:

> *On Tue, 01 Feb 2005 19:18:17 -0600, Albert <albertwagner@cox.net> in*

> *comp.ai.philosophy wrote:*

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>

>>*Lester Zick wrote:*

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>>>*On Tue, 1 Feb 2005 05:53:19 +0000 (UTC), Neil W Rickert*

>>>*<rickert+nn@cs.niu.edu> in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:*

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>>>>*"Jason" <jasonstevensNOSPAM@free.net.nz> writes:*

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>>>>[. . .]

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>>>>>*Since mathematics has evolved along-side science and plays a large part in*

>>>>>*describing and predicting how the world works, then as a formal system goes, it*

>>>>>*seems to be on the money as far as capturing something about the world.*

>>>>>

>>>>>*That's your opinion. As a mathematician, I have a different*

>>>>>*opinion. I consider it important that mathematics is not about the*

>>>>>*world. Roughly speaking, mathematics is about what would happen if*

>>>>>*reality did not intrude. We discover a lot about reality by seeing*

>>>>>*how it differs from the mathematical ideal.*

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>>>>>*If mathematics is not about the real world, what is it about? If it is*

>>>>>*about the tautological elaboration of axioms, to what do the axioms*

>>>>>*belong if not the real world and to what does the elaboration of the*

>>>>>*axioms belong if not the real world? I don't see any way to defend*

>>>>>*your contention that math is not about the real world. Especially*

>>>>>*without any alternative definition for reality to which mathematics*

>>>>>*belongs that isn't about the real world, whatever it is taken to mean.*

>>>>>

>>I have to agree with Neil, here. Mathematics is about the real
>>world only when and only to the the extent that it is used to
>>describe real world relationships. i.e. it is only coincidentally
>>about reality.
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>
> The problem, Albert, is we have no way to decide what those real world
> relationships are.

I thought that was what the Scientific Method was all about. Of course, mathematicians aren't performing mathematics when they are doing experiments.

> Neil has no criterion that I'm aware of. Is logic
> about the real world? I would have to say so. So there's no way in my
> estimation to say that tautologies are not about the real world.
>
> I think what Neil means is that mathematics occurs in the in-here
> as opposed to the out-there. But that still makes it part of the real
> world as far as I'm concerned. Far too many mathematicians get
> stuck in mystical mumbo-jumbo trying to figure out just exactly
> where mathematical objects are if they aren't in the real world.

True. It's spooky dedicating your life to the study of abstractions totally unrelated to the real. That's why mathematics is now trying to subsume all of Science to their particular discipline.

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"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it."
-- George Orwell as Syme in "1984"