

## Book Review

### Philosophical Representation: Studies in Attitudinal Instrumentalism

By Ori Simchen

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The goal of Ori Simchen's most recent book (Simchen, 2023) is to discuss his ideas regarding the terminology we employ when studying various subjects. In language, words are supposed to be representations of actual natural things. To explain nature in terms of language, one must have an understanding of language and word usage. This is referred to as theoretical representation in philosophy of language. For instance, science creates a theoretical representation of gold using the atomic number 79 of the chemical element Au as its symbol. However, must the element gold be a fact in and of itself for it to be such absolute knowledge that it cannot be replaced by any other representation? It is clear that when gold is shown in economics as something that would affect monetary systems, the field of study is expanded more than when gold is represented as Au. However, Simchen does not seek to support any other understanding of gold than that afforded by chemistry in his current book. He wants to use the book to rationally explain how the gold, or anything else that has been studied by humans, should be represented (pp. x-xii). Put differently, what basis is there for accepting that the only identification that can account for the gold is the theoretical identification of Au with atomic number 79? (p. 17).

There are a total of seven chapters in the book. In Chapter 1, Simchen presents a comprehensive examination of philosophical explanation. Through this overview, Simchen aims to persuade readers that the ultimate purpose of the theoretical term in philosophy is to provide an explanation, not to explore the possibility that there is more than one reality underlying the concept being denoted by the term. The second chapter identifies the flaws in attitudinal realism and demonstrates how they do not negatively impact attitudinal instrumentalism. In relation to philosophical matters, Chapter 3 delves into the interpretation of semantics through the lens of attitudinal instrumentalism. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between semantics and everyday language, with a particular focus on the

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utilization of language that exhibits attributes associated with belief reports. Simchen presents a concern in Chapter 5 regarding the realist interpretation of propositions, which he argues is grounded in the metaphysics of verbal communication and therefore contradictory to practical language usage. The author discusses the significant matter of theoretical representations pertaining to mental content in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 places significant emphasis on the notion that Wittgenstein's rule-following can be comprehended more effectively when viewed in the context of his attitudinal instrumentalism.

According to Simchen, "attitudinal realism" is the name given to the type of thinking model which considers the fact that objects in nature exist (for example, the abovementioned model of understanding of gold as theoretically represented by Au), and that people must adopt an appropriate method of thinking to reflect these natural realities by utilizing language that accurately captures them. However, another way of thinking is known as "attitudinal instrumentalism," which is the belief that using words to explain natural phenomena is only a means of comprehension (pp. 1-3). Simchen observes that one of the primary issues with interpretations of necessity that are frequently connected to the metaphysics of modality is that they pose a challenge to the realist path of interpretation. The assumption that there is a reality of necessity and possibility that transcends the language of an event is the source of the difficulty. Simchen mentions the victory of Richard Nixon in the 1968 US presidential election as an example. We may properly allude to the possibility that Nixon did not win the election. As an illustration, we may argue that Nixon might not have won the election. We must acknowledge that the event that Nixon lost exists in a possible world if we accept that the necessity of the event/possibility of the event genuinely exists in a possible world in which the event is occurring. But when one looks at how language is used in this actual world, it becomes clear that the individual discussing such a possibility does not necessarily have the mindset to accept that the event might actually happen. In conclusion, expressing a hypothetical condition of affairs through language does not equate to characterizing it as a realist's interpretation of the reality that includes such occurrences. Thus, one could argue that language users' attitudes are irreconcilable with realist attitudes (pp. 22-30).

The point raised above is in line with Simchen's most recent stance. In other words, he takes into consideration the well-known problem that water in the real world is the chemical compound  $H_2O$ , whereas water use in the twin world is the chemical compound XYZ. Whereas the hypothetical twin in the possible world thinks the assertion "Water is  $H_2O$ " is untrue, his twin in the real world thinks that water just is the chemical compound  $H_2O$ . Different attitudes of belief can be derived from the same term, and different conclusions about truth can be made from the same belief statement (Simchen, 2022). This explanation may be compared to a discussion of the benefits of instrumentalist interpretation methodologies, as it may be argued that in order to prevent issues, the differences should not initially be viewed from a realist perspective of the possible worlds (pp. 95-98).

Nevertheless, if the latter model is correct, then it may be argued that grammatical norms also seem to be a natural law attributed to human mental processes including language representation. If this were the case, natural laws would likewise apply to grammar in mind and language expression, or that the kinds of linguistic norms that are given are at least offered for the sake of human understanding to explain natural phenomena. It is evident that when people use language to describe anything in nature, the usage of language will adhere to the rules of the specific language in which the phrase is being used. It often adheres to certain predictable patterns. However, Wittgenstein's assertion regarding rule-following alleviates concerns about the existence of an external reality beyond those rules. This perspective allows Simchen to recognize that the realist stance was essentially fabricating a belief in something existing beyond the coherence of those patterns (pp. 109-112).

Simchen contends that there are more advantages to supporting his conception of the new "metaphilosophical instrumentalism" methodology, which is to refrain from interpreting language in a way that makes its representations of natural objects coincide with their actual existence. Compared to the previous attitudinal realism scheme, this new methodology has additional advantages (pp. 93-95). Simchen further argues that this innovative approach has the benefit of accounting for Jerry A. Fodor's idea of the foundation of attitudes in the representational theory of mind. Fodor would respond that there is an inherent connection between the mental representations that a person is thinking and expressing as the very utterance and the connection between, say, one's belief that the universe began at the Big Bang and one's utterance that it did. However, Fodor's answer begs the question of what sort of relationship—if any—exists at all between a person's language use and their mental representation. The limitations of realist theory, which underpin this explanatory puzzle, prompt Fodor to speculate that language is associated with a particular nature that is accompanied by the views of people who think the universe functions in that manner. However, accepting the instrumentalist approach eliminates the need to establish natural phenomena and the difficulty of attempting to make any linkages between statements and people's subjective opinions. It would help us to see that language use is universal if we could comprehend how it is employed in the attitudinal instrumentalism methodology. Thus, we benefit from attitudinal instrumentalism (pp. 101–103).

One of the issues I myself had as a child was my inquisitiveness, which occasionally made me wonder if a word I knew was really defined to mean that it would be the most correct term to describe the natural object to which the phrase is referring. For instance, the definition of a 'dog' that we know from human experience typically refers to an animal with the ability to bark and that people consider to be a devoted house pet. There were moments in my early years when I questioned if the term 'dog' accurately described the kind of animal that everyone else and I believed it to be. And when the scientific term *canis lupus familiaris* was adopted by biological science to refer to dogs, the debate about what was truly true about dogs was reinstated. This is due to the fact that, to me or to anyone else, comprehending what is often

referred to as dogs and *canis lupus familiaris* seems to create completely different attitudes. But this issue vanished right away after reading and comprehending Simchen's viewpoints. This is because the doubt problem stems from the worry that the meaning of the term 'dog' might not actually come from the reality that we previously believed to exist outside of human language. Furthermore, humans will believe that there is a single term that describes the foundation of a single reality of the natural item that exists in and of itself. Simchen's new principle removes the challenges associated with such issues. This is due to the instrumentalist viewpoint, which holds that words are merely instruments for communicating ideas; they do not imply the existence of a reality that exists outside of language and that a word truly represents that reality.

Another point which is also interesting, according to my own opinion, is about what it would be for Simchen to develop his discussion of instrumentalism with the other issues in his two previous books which were about intentionality and metasemantics (Simchen, 2012; Simchen, 2017). If we are not to worry about the real nature of intentionality when we use the word 'intentionality' to talk about it, then could it be that it is the very fact itself that we can talk and think about things is the instrumental attitude that we have and call it our intentionality?

Simchen's book is highly up to date for metaphilosophical studies in analytical philosophy. This book encompasses a vast array of philosophical subjects, such as philosophy of language, metasemantics, the metaphysics of cognitive attitudes, and philosophical methodology.

## References

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