

Contextualism means selectivity

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1. Explaining my motive

What you are now reading may be considered a sequel to *Invitation to contextualism*,¹ a paper I have primarily written to recommend a book by Diane Gillespie, *The Mind's We*.² For sorting out and commenting upon various theories in cognitive psychology, Gillespie borrows from Stephen C. Pepper (1891-1972) a classification of world hypotheses. There are four such theories he has identified as relatively adequate: formism, mechanism, contextualism, and organicism.³

Gillespie clearly speaks out in favor of contextualism, and I agree completely. In an attempt to help building an even stronger case for contextualism, I relied on her description⁴ of Pepper's theory of worldviews for making some further (meta)theoretical suggestions of my own from a semiotic perspective.

As I did not want to get side-tracked promoting *The Mind's We*, for *Invitation to contextualism* I committed "the purposive act" – as I have now learned that Pepper would eventually have come to call it – to leave my direct study of his work for later. I am glad I did, for I have subsequently found it, and continue to find it, difficult to follow, let alone apply, Pepper's more detailed categorization(s).⁵ My reading suggestion would no doubt have become much diluted, and suffered as a consequence.

In *Invitation to contextualism*, more or less on the fly I propose a reconfiguration of the four hypotheses outlined by Pepper. From Gillespie I had understood that for Pepper they have, say, equal weight, each with some inadequacies, and mutually exclusive. Instead, I start from contextualism and argue that the other three hypotheses/theories participate, with organicism making teleological sense, mechanism causal sense, and formism immanent sense (whatever that all means).

After having made – some – study of work by Pepper himself, I find that my overall framework resulting from reconfiguration still holds. Actually, I have become more convinced myself of its practical relevance.

At the time of writing *World Hypotheses*, that is, before 1942, it seems that Pepper did not yet have any idea how qualitatively different contextualism is *as a world hypothesis* from all three of his other candidates. His later book *Concept and Quality*,⁶ based on a series of lectures he gave during 1961, shows (some) signs of such recognition having taken (some) root in his mind. He falls short of developing it, though. Of course, you may disagree. For the purpose of discussion, then, here is a short report of my engagement with – some of – Pepper's work itself. According to Gillespie,

¹ *Invitation to contextualism: synthesis through irreducibility, and towards an emancipative politics of interdependency* (2015).

² *The Mind's We, Contextualism in Cognitive Psychology*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1992. I repeat, please read it yourself!

³ *World Hypotheses, A Study in Evidence*, University of California Press, 1948, originally published 1942.

⁴ *The Mind's We*, pp. 10-22.

⁵ For Gillespie's purpose with *The Mind's We*, I find that her choice to limit herself to only using his classification works very well indeed.

⁶ *Concept and Quality*, Open Court, 1966. His 1961 lectures were held on the Paul Carus Foundation.

Pepper's [...] *World Hypotheses* has been one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding assumptions that go into theories.⁷

Frankly, I did not know of it at all until recently, that is, when I read about it in *The Mind's We*.⁸ But after I had learned from Gillespie about it, from my interest in metatheory it was immediately clear to me that sooner or later I simply had to look into it.⁹ The more I do, though, the less – I feel that – I understand ...

2. An attempt at grasping Pepper's concept of contextualism

In his book with the same title Pepper calls "world hypotheses" theories that

deal with knowledge in an unrestricted way[, i.e.] they cannot reject anything as irrelevant.¹⁰

He targets four such theories, one of those being contextualism. Like all so-called world hypotheses, Pepper sees it rooted in – what he considers to be – common sense.¹¹ For contextualism, he argues for

the historic event [... as its] point of origin[, ...] or the root metaphor of this theory.¹²

What he means by "historic" is

the event alive in its present. [...] The real historic event, the event in its actuality, is when it is going on *now*, the dynamic dramatic active event. We may call it an "act," [...] but it is not an act conceived as alone or cut off that we mean; it is an act in and with its setting, an act in its context.¹³

Warning that for contextualism

[h]ow far one will carry a set of categories in detail is a more arbitrary matter than in any other relatively adequate world theory[.]¹⁴

Pepper proceeds:

The contextualistic categories are derived from what we may call the total given event.¹⁵

For contextualism,

⁷ *The Mind's We*, pp. 10-11.

⁸ It is highly unlikely I could have known about it before, but subsequently forgot. Anything concerning context would surely have stuck. For example, in 1991 I wrote in Dutch a paper that I later translated into English as *Multicontextual paradigm for object orientation: a development of information modeling toward fifth behavioral form*. From that developed a book, *Metapattern: context and time in information models* (Addison-Wesley, 2001).

⁹ I have previously written several papers exhibiting that particular interest, among others *Information metatheory* (in: *PrimaVera*, working paper 2003-12, Amsterdam University, 2003) and *Ontology for interdependency: steps to an ecology of information management* (in: *PrimaVera*, working paper 2007-05, Amsterdam University, 2007).

¹⁰ *World Hypotheses*, p. 1.

¹¹ Diane Gillespie kindly made available to me Pepper's essay *Middle-Sized Facts* (in: *Studies in the Nature of Facts*, University of California, Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 14, 1932, pp. 3-28):

Middle-sized facts offer a source for the categories of world theories.

Pepper later preferred – the term – common sense fact (*World Hypotheses*, p. 39).

¹² *World Hypotheses*, p. 232.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

change is categorical and not derivative in any degree at all.¹⁶

In harmony with *change*, the other of

[t]he ineradicable contextualistic categories may [...] be said to be [...] *novelty*.¹⁷

However, as Pepper suggests, in

events of the sort with which we are acquainted in the present epoch of our universe, these ineradicable categories are exhibited as details within other categories which it is convenient to place first [...]: *quality* and *texture*.¹⁸

The events of our epoch seem to exhibit a structure which may be regarded as relatively uniform, and the basic concepts for this structure may be taken as *quality* and *texture*.¹⁹

Pepper effectively repositions

change and *novelty* [...] as the fundamental presuppositions of this theory.²⁰

Then, from

quality and texture as the basic categories of contextualism[,]²¹

Pepper admits to the difficulty of explaining them:

[T]he quality of a given event is its intuited wholeness or total character; the texture is the details and relations which make up that character or quality. The two are not separable, [... i.e. t]here is no such thing as a textureless quality or a qualityless texture.²²

From chapter X in *World Hypotheses* I have drawn up a list of categories that Pepper identifies for contextualism; see figure 1.

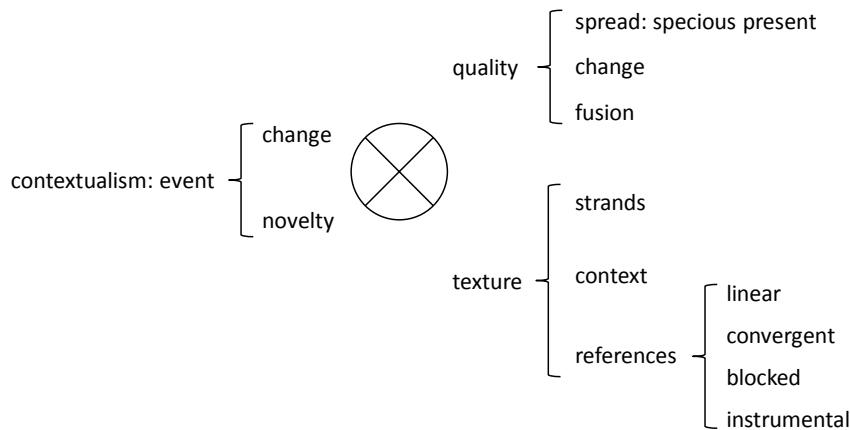


figure 1: Pepper's categorical scheme for contextualism.

Indeed, I do get increasingly lost. I 'feel' being led around in circles. For example, Pepper argues that

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 234.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 235.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 236.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 235-236.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 236.

²² *Ibid*, p. 238.

by way of definition we may say that whatever directly contributes to the quality of a texture may be regarded as a strand, whereas whatever indirectly contributes to it will be regarded as context.²³

Especially when offering a definition, it pays to be careful. For Pepper, is texture-quality the same as event-quality? If yes, apparently texture, too, is qualified by contextualism's qualitative categories with, in turn, a texture, and so on. If not, why call it quality in the first place, and not just texture?²⁴

One of my impressions from Pepper's meandering explanations is that he reserves "quality" as the heading of a general description of a phenomenon (event). Then, "texture" provides the heading of a more detailed description of that same phenomenon.

A related impression of mine is that the description-of-quality is mainly organistic in character,²⁵ and the description-of-texture mainly mechanistic. However, expression is only possible formistically.

These impressions of course go counter to Pepper's idea that – those four – world hypotheses are mutually exclusive. I believe it is first of all his framework that has to give. In fact, in his later work Pepper does not any longer put it forward as such, i.e. as framework. He does not explicitly retract it, either, adding at least to *my* confusion.

3. Pepper's purposive turn

After publishing *World Hypotheses* Pepper must have grown unhappy with – his concept of – contextualism. That much may be concluded from *Concept and Quality*. In that later book, as Pepper writes in its introductory chapter,

[w]hat follows is proposed as a new world hypothesis—or possibly a rather radical revision of an older one—contextualism.²⁶

For that purpose, he identifies

a new root metaphor[. . . .]An analysis of the root metaphor generates the categories of the [world] hypothesis. The adequacy of the hypothesis then depends on the capacity of the categories to render interpretations of the features of our world with precision and unrestricted scope.²⁷

The particular "root metaphor" Pepper subsequently applies in *Concept and Quality*

is that of the purposive act[.]²⁸

Schopenhauer (1788-1860) already took the *world* for will, and – as I would say, not representation as the translation into English of the German word *Vorstellung*, but – sign. Combining Schopenhauer's orientation with Peirce's (1839-1914) on triadic semiosis, I have also developed what Pepper no doubt would have called a world hypothesis: subjective

²³ *Ibid*, p. 246.

²⁴ In *The Mind's We* (p. 18), Gillespie adroitly avoids elaborating upon quality and texture as contextualism's categories. She proceeds by almost immediately referring to proponents of "contextualism [...] as a worldview in psychology."

²⁵ For organicism, in *World Hypotheses* Pepper lists seven categories, out of those positioning (p. 283) *organic whole* [... as] the pivotal point of the system[.]

²⁶ *Concept and Quality*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

situationism.²⁹ Its metamodel is the semiotic ennead, as shown in figure 2.³⁰ Taking the nine elements for categories in Pepper’s theoretical sense,³¹ the ennead displays what should be taken as irreducible relationships between them. Please note that *behavior* is one of the elements. As such, behavior is irreducibly related to *all* of the ennead’s other elements, including *motive*. That is, behavior is motivated. And motive is behavioral. I therefore agree with Pepper to attribute critical importance to “the purposive act” which I consider equivalent with an instance of motivated behavior.

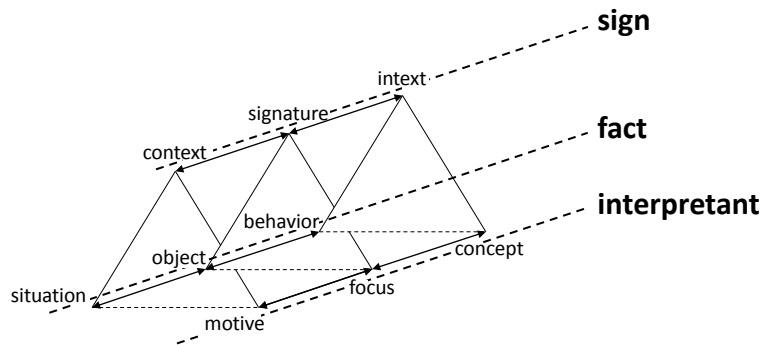


figure 2: semiotic ennead as metamodel.

Starting from “the purposive act” as “a root-metaphor,” Pepper continues to suggest categories for

the structural character of purposive activity[, allowing] that all interpretations be made in terms derivable from this structural character.³²

How, then, is it possible that the semiotic ennead – developed about forty years later, albeit without any knowledge of Pepper’s work, but now clearly recognized as definitely sharing its “root” – entails structurally arranged elements quite different from the categories Pepper arrives at earlier in *Concept and Quality*? Or is the whole idea of “root metaphor” overrated? Anyway, whereas I point at the ennead and say that it shows how motivationism (then, also read: purposivism) irreducibly implies situationism and contextualism – it is just a matter of the particular dimension chosen for emphasis –, Pepper announces

a new world hypothesis [for which] some of its categories [...] are inconsistent with principles usually regarded as distinctive of contextualism.³³

It explains why he claims to have come up with an *additional* world hypothesis, rather than with “a rather radical revision of [...] contextualism.” Subjective situationism, however, is contextualistic through and through. What he experiences as a departure from contextualism leads him to coin a different name: selectivism.³⁴

²⁹ P.E. Wisse, *Semiosis & Sign Exchange: design for a subjective situationism* (Information Dynamics, 2002).

³⁰ Copied from figure 4.5.2 in *Semiosis & Sign Exchange*.

³¹ As extensively documented in *Semiosis & Sign Exchange*, what may be called subjective situationism’s main ‘categories’ are taken from the semiotic triad for which C.S. Peirce assumed sign, object, and interpretation for its irreducibly related elements. These elements reappear as the ennead’s three dimensions. Elaborating upon Peirce’s unspecified concept of ground, I have fitted each dimension annex main category with three elements annex subcategories. In the process, fact has been substituted for object as one of the dimensions (with object remaining one of now nine elements altogether).

³² *Concept and Quality*, p. 15.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 18.

4. Towards situational theories

In *Concept and Quality*, it seems that on the one hand Pepper wants – to appear – to remain true to his “root-metaphor theory” as put forward in *World Hypotheses*. Before, he argues that world hypotheses are autonomous, [and therefore] they are mutually exclusive.³⁵

Although he does not openly admit it in *Concept and Quality*, on the other hand I find it obvious that later he favors a particular theory. Of course, it is the one he exclusively explains from root metaphor to categories, and so on. Contrary to his earlier statement about different theories being more or less on a par, he positions his “further contribution”³⁶ as encompassing other theories.³⁷ For

[the purposive] act is [...] possibly the most highly organized activity in the world of which we have any conceivable evidence. It is the act associated with intelligence. And so it entails the features of the organism which performs the act. If we concentrate attention on this act, we are not likely to miss important features in cosmic structure and process. For other activities and structures are likely to be simplifications of this. We can learn about them by a sort of subtraction[.]³⁸

In fact, the formal expression of relationships between theories with more or less explanatory power is straightforward. Below, I shall have more to say about scope and precision, but suppose that the metamodel of the theory known as allowing for the most elaborate both scope and precision exhibits n elements (here, also read: categories). Then, every subset entails a more limited theory. There are 2^n such subsets, of course in various degrees of relevance and consistency.³⁹

Pepper seems to overlook that purpose serves a ... purpose.⁴⁰ From the perspective of the purposeful actor, it supplies her with necessary and sufficient ground for what Pepper identifies as “simplifications.” It sets a limit for relevant theory, Rather than a world hypothesis, whatever theory is always a hypothesis for a particular purpose. Recognizing purposeful behavior, there is actually only a single world hypothesis required in the sense of aiming at a wider scope. All it needs to assume is dynamic variety in purposes. That is precisely what subjective situationism supplies, its axioms structurally exhibited by a (meta)model: semiotic ennead.

³⁵ *World Hypotheses*, p. 104.

³⁶ *Concept and Quality*, p. 1.

³⁷ At the time of writing *World Hypotheses* Pepper already seemed to have a clue of that possibility (p. 105):

It is not to be denied [...] that the root metaphor of one theory may merge with that of another, and eventually all may come harmoniously together. But this idea itself is a principle derived from *one* world theory[.]

³⁸ *Concept and Quality*, p. 17.

³⁹ See *Dia-enneadic framework for information concepts* (2003) for this argument applied to enneadic semiotics. The dynamics of semiosis, including sign exchange, are covered by two interacting enneads. Such a dia-enneadic model of dynamics equals a set of 18 elements. Its so-called power set contains 2^{18} elements, numbering the subsets (including the original set).

⁴⁰ Pepper does treat “values” at some length, see chapter 15 in *Concept and Quality*. To me, it seems like juggling the concepts of purpose, quality, and something like higher purpose or norm (p. 560):

In or world view, the range of values may extend through all cosmic levels, and there may be a qualitative gradation of felt values from just above non-normative qualities to the intensely qualified positive and negative values of purposive action.

Again, I really have no idea what he means. Why doesn't Pepper apply selectivism to what he identifies as “the range of values”? That would mean subdividing that range until se(lection)s are left, i.e. scopes for each of which value may be explained with relevant rigor, or precision.

For myself, I relate value with motive. Being intrinsic to motive, its range is evident. Taken as such, any discussion of value as it is traditionally ... valued, is immediately besides that point.

So, there is metatheory to explain making the cut, and theory for proceeding ‘inside’ it. Such interchange may be repeated, which might then be labeled iteration. Or, one cut may lead to another, and so on, until there is scope for precision.⁴¹

When selectivism is a metatheory to posit selectivity, it cannot at the same time be applied as the theory for explaining the result of the selection in question. Pepper, then, takes his productive clue in a counterproductive direction. Yes, with selectivism he suggests a world hypothesis in that it helps to recognize that purpose involves selection. If such selection would go indefinitely, however, the execution part of the purposive act would never occur. In fact, it is reasonable to assume further that the result of a selection (scope) is determined for habitual acts by the availability of a ‘theory’ for acting with relevant precision. In principle, then, each purpose may carry its own theory, i.e. correspondingly local.⁴² Pepper, though, insists on covering theoretical purposeful variety with selectivism as a single theory. The range of concepts – in that capacity also referring to “subjects” – he attempts to apply selectivism to in *Concept and Quality* is really impressive, if not daunting. Where he is making good sense, which of course he often does, I find it is not due to guidance from - his concept of – selectivism, but despite it. At least, I admit I cannot follow him. The only theory of everything that I find is consistent with the assumption of “the purposive act” is that everything may be taken for theorizing.

The gist of metatheory should not be so much that an act is purposive. Rather, it is that the actor may *change* purpose, thereby being able to perform a *variety* of acts, and *learning* in the process adding to variety of his purposes, and so on.

In his later work, Pepper seems on the brink of such dynamic relativism. Yet, he turns around, more or less retracing the philosophical tradition of limiting attention to a single act, only. That way, *Concept and Quality* is an impressive display of accumulated learning, but thinly veiled naïve realism nonetheless. Pepper fails to accept that after making a selection, you should not pretend you are still dealing with the whole world. Instead, you should then proceed on the basis of the particular selection, i.e. as if acting in just a specific part of the world. For that, continuing to apply a theory not geared towards that part is most likely even harmful. And one selection follows another, and so on.

5. Purpose and sign

Above, I have intersected a diagram of the semiotic ennead, see figure 1, in order to help positioning selectivism as proposed by Pepper. As drawn, the ennead entails three dimensions in parallel. Along each dimension, three elements occupy relative positions⁴³ and thus are structurally related. The dimensional parallelism suggests structural correspondence, as follows:

⁴¹ I have designed a language for ordering variety on a contextualistic principle, Metapattern. The method for using it productively involves shifting perspective from metatheory to theory. Metapattern is extensively documented; for English-language literature, see the website of the author: <http://www.informationdynamics.nl/pwisse/>.

⁴² Gillespie makes it clear (*The Mind's We*, p. 20) that she appreciates the “tolerance” implied in recognizing several world hypotheses, as Pepper explicitly does in his book with that title. This tolerance transfers, and is thereby strengthened, to contextualism as giving rise to situational theories. In *Invitation to contextualism* I mentioned Niels Bohr’s principle of complementarity as an example that ‘even’ in physics theories are taken as situational.

⁴³ In terms of a particular node, along one and the same dimension it can participate in different configurations as – part of – different elements.

sign: context- signature – intext
(f)act: situation – object – behavior
interpretation: motive – focus – concept.

Taking semiotics seriously in the Peircean sense means that there is no going around sign. It irreducibly mediates.

As an extension of Peirce's triad, the ennead more clearly implies structure. The structured sign mediates between fact and interpretant for which corresponding structures along their respective dimensions are assumed. Of course, expressing those structures requires sign, too. In other words, there is no immediate 'access' to either fact or interpretant. Even calling it a fact of life, requires doubt (talk about sign, which is where Descartes chose to draw a line).

What Peirce accomplishes with his triad is to include sign in a system of irreducible elements, acknowledging that *no* independent, outside vantage point exists for describing – what he calls – object and/or interpretant on ground. Pepper, though, still seems to adhere to – the possibility of – value-free, unreflexive, et cetera description. For he distinguishes

two descriptions—the qualitative and the conceptual[,]⁴⁴

whereas semiotically there are three, i.e. including describing sign (with sign ...). Pepper's "two descriptions" refer to "inner feelings" and "outer behavior," respectively.⁴⁵ The former is what Pepper calls "quality," and the latter "concept," hence *Concept and Quality* as the title for his later book.

I would say that the ennead's interpretative dimension meets Pepper's demand for "an introspective qualitative description," while the (f)actual dimension serves the purpose of "a behavioristic objective description."⁴⁶ If so, I find it confusing that Pepper identifies concept with behavior. What the ennead suggests is their correspondence *across* dimensions, which is something ... qualitatively different.

I agree with Pepper that

the two kinds of reports are wedded together[,]⁴⁷

but they *always* involve sign for ... reporting. Awareness of the inevitable mediation of sign helps to give direction to an analysis of Pepper's subsequent categories for selectivism. In fact, there is no ... sign at all of such awareness with Pepper. Over and over, he points out that quality and concept merely pertain to different descriptions of

exactly the same actual process.⁴⁸

In such "identity" is "where qualities and concepts meet."⁴⁹ In terms of semiosis, there is no identity across dimensions. Semiosis is ... process. Correspondence indicates qualitative transfers from and to motivational control.

It is quite another matter 'just' to explain the control mechanism, that is, by some parallel report. For such an explanation still leaves unexplained "the purposive act" as it proceeds through its semiotic phases. Hinting at the latter, Pepper seems actually to be aiming at the former:

⁴⁴ *Concept and Quality*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-93.

The bifurcation of nature into conceptual system and qualitative experience meet here at this point.⁵⁰

What I see differently is that “conceptual system” and “qualitative experience” both refer to the interpretative dimension. For – I find that – a concept is cognitive. And what happens is not “meeting,” but, say, conversion. A motivated concept is put *into* situated behavior. Rather than concept and quality, I would prefer using the words object and subject. I admit, it is not very original, but especially quality is too vague for ... words. Then again, I might have missed Pepper’s ... purpose altogether. Anyway, I do agree that not just in bifurcation, but in general in recognition of variety

we shall find [...] not a source of division in our knowledge, but the very instrument for its comprehensive unification[,]⁵¹

where I see “unification” as in interdependency. And where producing a sign is behavior, too. It is therefore always motivated, that is, with Pepper’s preferred term, it is produced with a purpose. Indeed, *every* sign is a request for compliance.⁵² On the contrary, Pepper’s concept of language is kept totally unrelated to purpose, which I find remarkable:⁵³

[L]anguages are conventional and conceptual and symbolic. They refer to things descriptively.⁵⁴

And with two languages, one for describing quality and another for concept,

[t]hey are definitely only two sets of symbols presumably referring to identical matters of fact. The duality comes from the two sets of descriptive symbols only. But what is referred to is one. There is an identity of meaning for the two symbolic descriptions.⁵⁵

Then, what does “meaning” ... mean for Pepper? When quality and concept are basically identical, why did he make the distinction? Looking at Pepper’s two lists of largely parallel categories, one for “qualitative categories” and another for “conceptual categories,”⁵⁶ I am increasingly unsure about catching his drift. See figure 3 for my digest of selectivism’s categorical scheme. Try to compare it with figure 1. Actually, there is no telling how Pepper sees they are related, or not. For selectivism, he even does not document any derivation. He just comes up with his scheme, about its origin the reader can only guess.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See *Semiosis & Sign Exchange*.

⁵³ In *Concept and Quality*, Pepper devotes chapter 9, *On Perceiving Persons*, to an article published shortly before by John L. Austin. Soon after, the book *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard University Press, 1999, reprint second edition 1975, originally published 1962) by Austin would appear. That was too late for Pepper to take into account for his 1961 lectures. However, it took until 1966 for *Concept and Quality* to get published. Enough time, I would say, for Pepper to add a postscript ... But then, for consistency he would have had to overhaul all of the lectures. Well, he did not, so much is clear. Maybe he never learned about Austin’s subsequent book. I discussed it at some length in *Semiosis & Sign Exchange*, chapter 9, *Austin’s unhappy illocution*.

Still, elsewhere in *Concept and Quality* Pepper expands on his lectures? For example on p. 128 it says

This reply was written in 1961. In 1963, [...]

referring to a book that appeared that later year.

⁵⁴ *Concept and Quality*, p. 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

⁵⁷ What do I think? The (sub)categories of contextualism’s texture reappear as further (sub)categories of selectivism’s quality. For quality, Pepper expands what he considers eligible for introspective reporting. The stump that is thereby left of texture, is filled by what Pepper in the meantime has discovered as positive about experimental psychology.

Could it be that Pepper himself never stopped struggling?⁵⁸ No, I don't really feel enlightened when he argues that

the qualitative categories refer to qualitative properties of the world, the conceptual categories to conceptual properties.⁵⁹

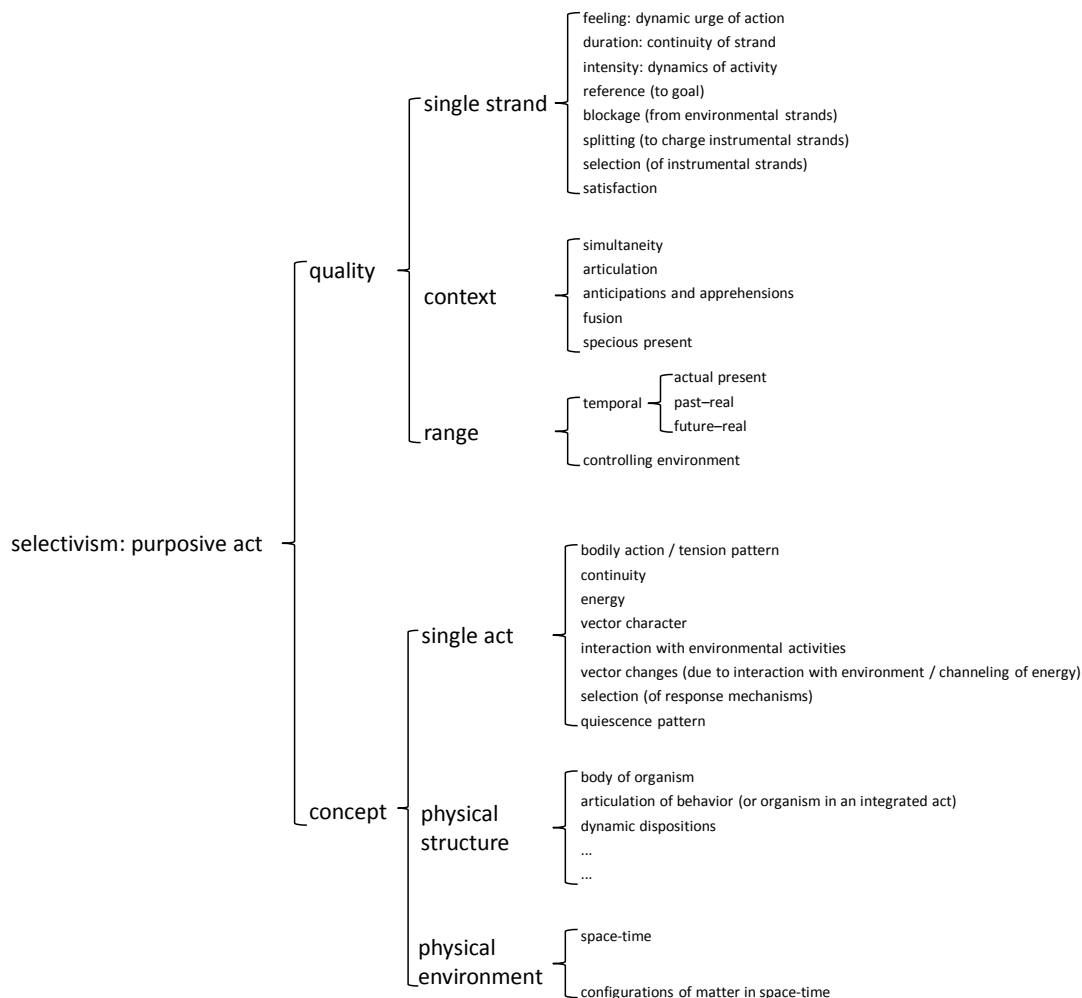


figure 3: Pepper's categorical scheme for selectivism.

⁵⁸ Returning to *World Hypotheses*, Pepper is seen as already having trouble to specify context (p. 246):

[W]e may say that whatever contributes to the texture may be regarded as a strand, whereas whatever indirectly contributes to it will be regarded as context.

Why call a world theory contextualism when what is supposed to be its critically important concept, i.e. context, is treated in such a secondary fashion? Now, substitute sign for texture, and signature for strand. Then I agree with the following paraphrase (p. 248):

[C]ontext, [sign], and [signature] are relative to one another[.]

with corresponding structures configured from mutually relative elements along the other two enneadic dimensions. It is not that (p. 250)

the support of every [sign] lies in its context,

but, rather, that every sign includes context. And it is not such "support," but the context that (p. 250)

is as extensive as you wish, but you never reach the end of it.

Well, there must practically be an "end of it," otherwise behavior(al event) et cetera would suffer. Context is assumed to "end" at a horizon.

In *Concept and Quality* Pepper has moved context from texture (as one his two main categories of contextualism) to quality (as the other main category of his earlier contextualism, and now of his selectivism; in the process, he seems to have substituted concept for texture).

⁵⁹ *Concept and Quality*, p. 34

It has a rather circular ring to it. Actually, I also don't have a clue

what is meant by an identity theory as a solution of the problem. On the identity theory, the problem ceases to be a mind-matter problem and becomes a quality-concept problem. Not a problem of two kinds of entities with incompatible properties, but a problem of qualitative actuality and various symbolic descriptions of it. [...] The identity theory resolves what would otherwise be a continuing problem in our world theory—the problem of how to relate the conceptual categories in physical language with the qualitative categories in phenomenal language.⁶⁰

How is that different? Assuming identity, yes, different descriptions are possible, for example one from a (more) organistic perspective, and another from a (more) mechanistic perspective.⁶¹ Substitute phenomenal for organistic and physical for mechanistic. So, I also fail to see how Pepper's later selectivism really differs from his earlier contextualism.

6. Focus of variety is variety of focus

The title of this final section is a conagram, a sign construct I have learned about from John D. Haynes.⁶² I find it helps to set of interpretative dynamics, so typical of semiosis. To me, without a semiotic framework there is no possibility of understanding what is involved with a purposive act.

Pepper devotes most of *Concept and Quality* to apply selectivism to

a number of the most critical subjects for interpretation. These will not only test the adequacy of the proposed world theory, they will also offer a more and more detailed account of the world interpreted through this particular set of categories.⁶³

Account, yes, test, not really.⁶⁴ Pepper is trying to explain “subjects” in the categorical terms of selectivism, like a template. Then, only what passes for selectivistic shows:

In my enthusiasm of the moment in actively developing this theory, I think selectivism is more adequate than the traditional views. But that remains to be seen.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

⁶¹ See also *Multiple axiomatization in information management* (in: *PrimaVera*, working paper 2002-6, Amsterdam University, 2002).

⁶² I have also written an invitation to conagrammar, see *Anatomy of Conagrammar* (2003).

⁶³ *Concept and Quality*, p. 35. I refrain from comments on the remainder of *Concept and Quality*. For my metatheoretical interest, I have concentrated on his chapter 2, *A Root Metaphor and its Categories* (pp. 15-34).

⁶⁴ As I see it, Pepper still attempts to bridge what is radically different. My feeling is that he wants to keep traditional concepts, but fit them with his new explanation, much like a reformulation of philosophy. If so, he does not recognize that concepts change in the process. Yes, I am referring to John Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, originally published in 1920.

Please note that I have not, repeat, not carefully studied *Concept and Quality* from chapter 4 onwards; there are sixteen chapters altogether. In order to be able to understand his attempts at exhibition, I would first of all have had to master at least Pepper's categorial scheme for selectivism (and going through those elaborate further chapters also didn't help, on the contrary). From this paper it should be clear that I already failed in that respect. I doubt whether anyone, Pepper himself included, has ever come to comprehensively, say, get it.

Of course, Pepper's chapters where he discusses “critical subjects” do contain much that is of interest. My point here is that through those discussions he far from convinces me of selectivism as he practices it. He uses it to argue for divisions that I find don't matter for metatheory. For example, Pepper identifies art with quality, and science with concept. It is all motivated, isn't it?

⁶⁵ *Concept and Quality*, p. 94.

It might have been Pepper's key mistake to assume one level of theory. He has identified a host of categories accordingly. Lacking a rigorous metatheory, which instead should be minimalist,⁶⁶ clear principles cannot be illustrated and applied.

I would say that especially a so-called world theory should be limited to a metatheory, i.e. a general theory recursively allowing for, and in a sense generative of, several (more) specific theories. That is where contextualism displays its particular strength, taking context (corresponding with motive and situation) seriously. For a factual theory pertains to a particular situational object. i.e. some – type of – object behaving in some – type of – situation.⁶⁷ It might be called selectivism, too, but to a large extent Pepper's version then seems to miss for "the purposive act" the context- annex situation-generative quality of motive. Exemplary of contextualism's selectivity is the enneadic element focus. Shifting focus stands for differential selectivity, a clear evolutionary advantage.

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⁶⁶ Otherwise it would obstruct interchangeably applying theory. Metatheory, in practice that is contextualism, is only for getting relevant scope with precision, and theory for getting precision within scope. That will take some tuning. Wherever variety remains ambiguous, further scoping is required in order to productively apply theory. At least, that is how a designer works modeling with Metapattern.

⁶⁷ Considering facts, this makes contextualist axioms constituting a prefactual theory.