

About responding to newcomers.

Unedited posts from archives of CSG-L (see INTROCSG.NET):

Date: Fri Apr 07, 1995 5:54 am PST
Subject: Re: Hello darkness my old friend

I would love to see your post "Altogether now: its about Control" however, at this time approx. 11:06 Thurs. evening, it has not appeared. Is it possible you people are posting to separate groups that are supposed to cross-post? I admit to beginning to get a little frustrated with the missing pieces, here. Although I have little to say, as a lurker, it is bothersome.

And while I'm annoyed, I would like to post the question: have you applied your understanding of The Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.

Just a thought. Susan.

Date: Fri Apr 07, 1995 8:18 pm PST
Subject: Accuracy-control

[From Rick Marken (950407.0830)] >Susan Schweers (950407)

> I would love to see your post "Altogether now: its about Control"

Are you receiving posts from the CSG listserver or from UseNet? That post appeared yesterday (4/6) at both sites. Have you seen it yet?

> I admit to beginning to get a little frustrated with the missing pieces, here.

Blame it all on Gary Cziko, the net god;-) With gods like him (and Yahweh) is it any wonder that we've got all these atheists running around;-)

> have you applied your understanding of The Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.

I'm not sure how The Test would affect the severity of my controlling for accuracy, except to prove that I AM controlling for accuracy. If it's any consolation, I consider this a character flaw myself; I have been trying to reduce the gain of my "PCT accuracy" control system over the course of the last year (believe it or not). I am trying especially to be less severe with newcomers. I don't think I ever "lowered the boom" newcomers unless they come on with an "I know all about PCT; let me explain it to you" attitude and then proceed to confidently make one false claim after another about it. I would never "lower the boom" on you, for example. And if it ever seems like I am doing that, just scold me; I respond well to scolding. Just ask Mary Powers:-)

Best Rick

Date: Fri Apr 07, 1995 9:06 pm PST
Subject: Annoyed Newbie

From Dag Forssell (950407 0840) >Susan Fri Apr 07, 1995

>And while I'm annoyed, . . .

Susan, you express annoyance with the continuity and completeness of the posts sent to you from the listserver. I would suggest you send a message SET CSG-L DIGEST to the listserver (as shown in the monthly INTROCSG.NET):

To subscribe to the listserv version of CSGnet, and learn about options & commands, subscribers and archives, send a message to

LISTSERV@VMD.CSO.UIUC.EDU

Message: (Comments: Not part of your message)

Subscribe CSG-L	Firstname	Lastname	Institution	(Your OWN name)
help				(Basic introduction to commands)
info	refcard			(Comprehensive reference of commands)
****	set CSG-L	digest	****	(All CSG-L mail delivered once a day)
	set CSG-L	repro		(Get copy of your own postings)
	set CSG-L	ack		(Receive acknowledgements when posting)
	query	CSG-L		(Your mail status & options)
	review	CSG-L	countries	(Subscribers & addresses, by country)
	index	CSG-L		(List of archive files available to you)
	get	CSG-L	LOG9502B	(Get archive for second week of Feb 1995 --shown here as an example only).

This way you get one daily message from the listserver with all of the previous day's posts in order.

> I would like to post the question: have you applied your understanding of The Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.

What do you mean by interested? This is a serious group, discussing a new science of life. We do try to make good information available to Newbies, but as a Newbie, you have to do your part. Have you studied the monthly INTROCSG.NET? Have you taken action on suggestions in it to obtain the basic information on PCT? Have you obtained and studied the free PCT Introduction and Resource Guide, either from the WWW server, from my original posting while you were lurking, or by sending me a stamped envelope. Have you reviewed the PCTdemos and PCTtexts available from WWW or on disk?

Susan, I don't remember that you responded to Bill Powers post:

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Subject: What is Science. [WHAT_IS.SCI]
[From Bill Powers (950213.0845 MST)]
The rest of this is for both you and Susan Schweers
(950212 etc).
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If you are interested in PCT, want to participate and be taken seriously, you have to do due diligence. When you demonstrate a sincere interest by informing yourself, your participation will be worth your while and ours.

Best, Dag

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Date: Sat Apr 08, 1995 2:59 am PST
Subject: Re: Newbies and accuracy
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from Mary Powers 950407

Susan Schweers asks:

> Have you applied your understanding of the Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.

By applying the Test do you mean are old-timers aware that some Newbies feel shut out by a lack of simple explanations of what we are talking about, and that we criticize their efforts to get in on the conversation?

This is because the group has three purposes. It serves as a means for a small and widely scattered group of people to continue a discussion that's been going on for 4 1/2 years. This is fairly informal, but it does assume an acquaintance with the subject. It serves as a Virtual Institute, with people who are hundreds of miles apart, and who haven't even met, doing some research projects together. Finally, it is a public forum, which anyone who happens across it is welcome to join.

What a Newbie may not realize is that new Newbies keep coming along. Initially their questions about PCT were answered, patiently and at length. This got to be pretty repetitive, tiresome and time-consuming. Since the questions tend to be pretty similar, we began a monthly posting of an introduction, including resource material and a bibliography. This is by way of telling Newbies that the answers to a lot of their questions have been written down already, please take the time to read some of this material, and then ask your questions about whatever you disagree with, don't understand, or don't find covered in the books.

As for a "rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea" - what would you prefer? Sloppy generalizations? The aim of PCT is to put the behavioral, social and life sciences on as solid a footing as chemistry and physics. Severe accuracy is the name of the game.

The potholes developing in the Infobahn are not of our making.

Mary P.

Date: Sat Apr 08, 1995 3:20 am PST
Subject: Re: Newbies and accuracy

[From Oded Maler (950407) - again]

Mary Powers 950407:

Susan Schweers asks:

- >> Have you applied your understanding of the Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.
- > As for a "rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea" - what would you prefer? Sloppy generalizations? The aim of PCT is to put the behavioral, social and life sciences on as solid a footing as chemistry and physics. Severe accuracy is the name of the game.

I would call it ("controlling for accuracy") as a futile attempt to create in the minds of others the **exact** perceptual variables that the "oldie" has. This is useless because in order to reach the same variables one has, at least, to go through the same development as the "oldie" (including the adoption and then the rejection of the silly beliefs of experimental psychology). It is silly because it also assumes the same meaning of words and is based on some very coarse classification of the world: there are pre-PCT people who devote most of their time to S-R psychology and PCT people who don't do **that** terrible thing anymore.

But it's fun.

--Oded

Date: Sat Apr 08, 1995 4:03 pm PST

Re: Hello darkness my old friend

[Bill Leach 08 Apr 1995 17:25:32]

>Message timestamp: [Susan Schweers 06 Apr 1995 23:10:57 -0400]

> And while I'm annoyed, I would like to post the question: have you applied your understanding of The Test to your responses to Newbies on the group? I see a rather severe controlling for accuracy to the original idea, at the expense of participation by persons who show up interested.

I am a relative Newbie as I have only been active for around a year now.

If a person on CSG-L really IS interested in PCT and wants to learn something about PCT then accuracy is essential. In my short time of watching and participating in the net I have observed:

"People insisting that "so and so's" school or theory encompasses PCT many times."

"PCT is "really such and such" but just using different terms."

"PCT must have "xyz" added to explain "abc" phenomenon."

"Oh this is great! Just what I have been looking for... A formal explanation for how perception controls behaviors -- wonderful."

"PCT does not deal with the 'big questions'."

It appears to be virtually certain that the ONLY theory that encompasses PCT is Control Theory.

All of the theories that "seems as though they are 'like' PCT" differ at their most fundamental level -- the level that few of their practitioners consider.

The vast majority of the 'phenomenon' that I have heard proposed as examples of "things needing an explanation in PCT" either are explained in PCT or are shown as irrelevant to understanding behavior.

Then there is a large group that "decides that they understand PCT" and "use it" to justify their existing beliefs concerning behavior. Thus, they 'banter about' PCT sounding phrases to explain examples of phenomenon that ARE NOT examples of a control system in operation.

Finally, there has been a large number of people that wanted to use PCT to explain or justify some philosophy or philosophical position. They have generally either decided that PCT supported their position (ignoring statements to the contrary) or just quietly disappeared.

I personally realize now that the long time PCTers have been seeing these and variations for many years. While it is easy to criticize the "hard core" PCTers for being 'unyielding' with Newbies it is also not too hard to recognize that the 'old timers' have seen the same distortions, the same missing of the essential points thousands of times.

What understanding that I have is directly due to the unwavering dedication to exacting expression (primarily Rick Marken). He almost hounded me on point after nitpicking point but it is precisely his determination that I not get by with sloppy terminology and loose meaning that helped me.

The essential concept of PCT is so simple (at least to someone already familiar with engineered control systems theory) that it nearly seems silly -- at first.

The essence is that you perceive (consciously or unconsciously). Some perceptions have an INTERNAL reference value (a 'desired' state or level). Your behavior IS caused by the existence of a difference between the reference and the perception. Exactly WHAT your behavior may consist of is a function of what you have learned will reduce the error or even random attempts at control to reduce the error.

Some of the more 'shocking' ideas that 'fall out of PCT' (though not necessarily uniquely):

You control (or at least attempt to control) what YOU perceive and not necessarily "what really is".

You can not actually KNOW what "really is".

Everyone of us IS a control system including the "dispassionate observer".

"Groups" do not act, only individuals act.

We will quite literally defy all logic and rational thinking in support of a very strongly held belief.

PCT is morally neutral, it does not support or deny any particular belief system.

Most of the "Big Questions" are irrelevant to behavior but PCT usually identifies complete sets of issues that few will recognize as central to the so called Big Question.

-bill

Date: Sat Apr 08, 1995 9:21 pm PST
Subject: Re: Newbies and accuracy

<[Bill Leach 950408.19:41 U.S. Eastern Time Zone]
>[Oded Maler (950407) - again]

> I would call it ("controlling for accuracy") as a futile attempt to create in the minds of others the *exact* perceptual variables that the "oldie" has. This is useless because in order to reach the same variables one has, at least, to go through the same development as the "oldie" (including the adoption and then the rejection of the silly beliefs of experimental psychology).

Of course you are entitled to call it whatever you wish. However, it most certainly is the insistence upon accuracy and precision that does enable one to begin to "get PCT". Not that I may necessarily be an excellent example of a student of PCT but at least I am new at it and thus my memory for my own unique experience with PCT may be of use to others.

One thing about my background might make my own experience a bit different from that of many others is that I absolutely accepted, believed, understood and had extensive experience with the idea that an engineered control system "controls what it perceives". That is, the idea of talking about a "Temperature controller" controlling NOT temperature but rather its' PERCEPTION of temperature did not strike me as strange in the least. I was already quite used to the idea that engineered control systems only control what we want them to control when the input function really does measure 'the thing that we want the system to control'.

Even with that sort of background however, there were still several "stages" to my experience. The first was the "AH!" realization that Bill Powers was indeed equating the 'behavioral system' of living things to control systems in exactly the same way that Control Theory applies to engineered control systems.

The second "AH!" arrived while reading B:CP and realizing that he also intended that the control system concept could account for the very complex behavior of humans -- including 'thinking.'

The "AH!s" kept coming as I began to question how PCT could explain various "observed" behavior and that much of what is thought to be "abnormal" behavior may well not be abnormal at all. Additionally, realizing that much of what most people might consider to be surprising about behavior is no more than a natural consequence of control system operation.

THE AH! hit when I began to understand that all of these ideas apply to myself -- I too am a control system, controlling my own perception. That PCT tells ME that controlling my own perceptions is the ONLY thing that I do or can do. Someone else may affect my perceptions but they can NOT control them nor can I control theirs. I say this in the very precise meaning of the term control. Another may be able to keep me from controlling my perceptions but they are NOT then controlling my perceptions -- they are still controlling their own perceptions which happen to include an environmental disturbance that overwhelms my ability to control.

> It is silly because it also assumes the same meaning of words and is based on some very coarse classification of the world: there are pre-PCT people who devote most of their time to S-R psychology and PCT people who don't do **that** terrible thing anymore.

Were the people throughout the years that have attempted to measure the distance between the Earth and the Sun silly because their estimates were not ultimately accurate? How about the people that studied the properties of radioactive materials and often "identified" the wrong nuclide?

It is by trying to explain or relate a PCT principle to some example (real world or otherwise) AND having the PCT Police "demand" precision of expression that one learns PCT. It is NOT enough to understand control theory mathematically nor even engineered control systems operation (as I did). One quite literally MUST doggedly attempt to relate what one "knows" about behavior to PCT principles IN A FORUM OF PCTers that do not allow ambiguous or sloppy assertions go unchallenged and then honestly look for and examine inconsistencies.

-bill