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The language of research and the importance of the tacit dimension

PESGB annual conference, New College Oxford, 1-3 April 2011

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Research

- (1) A practice which (adults) have to learn how to do
 - *phronesis*

- (2) a form of learning, directed at the object of research, the world
 - finding more out about the world

Skills training requirements for research students: joint statement by the research councils/AHRB (2001)

- A - Research Skills and Techniques
- B - Research Environment
- C - Research Management
- D - Personal Effectiveness
- E - Communication Skills
- F - Networking and Teamworking
- G - Career Management

“Skills Agenda”

Stephen Rowland

- lowest common denominator problem

Diana Leonard – leads to infantilisation

And amounts to external interference

- skills for other employers' interests
- top-down imposition and autonomy problem

Rowland, Frank Furedi – misguided Realists

Competence and 'skills' (knowledge practices)

- **Realism** (ontologically distinct entities):
X is a skill, Y is not a skill

- **Irrealism:**

{A has skill X} = {A is skilled at doing X}

{A is competent at conducting lab work}
= {A is skilled at conducting lab work}

{A is skilled at conducting lab work}
= {A has lab work skills}

Michael Polanyi

Tacit dimension/component

knowing vs learning

articulated/codified vs inarticulate/practical knowledge
(Robert Kirk – “raw feeling”/qualia as pre-linguistic
– ineffable because too rich – even if mundane)

focal (explicit) vs subsidiary (implicit) awareness

explicit vs hidden (soln to new problem)

(2) The object of research

Two sorts of research:

- i) Finding out more of the same (much social science, market research, etc.....)
- ii) Discovery of new type of knowledge

Immanuel Kant:

Phenomenal vs Noumenal

Things-as-they-appear vs Things-in-themselves

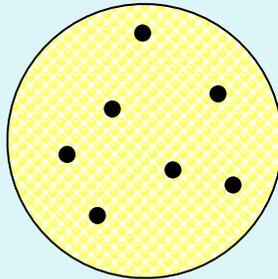
(the ineffable as mystical, other-worldly)

Hegel and Peter Strawson apply Occam's Razor

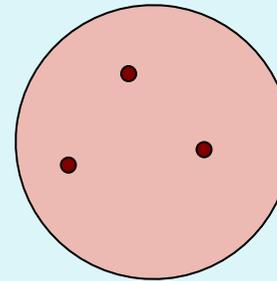
Graham Priest – the “torn boundary” at the limit

The Limits of Thought

The set of people

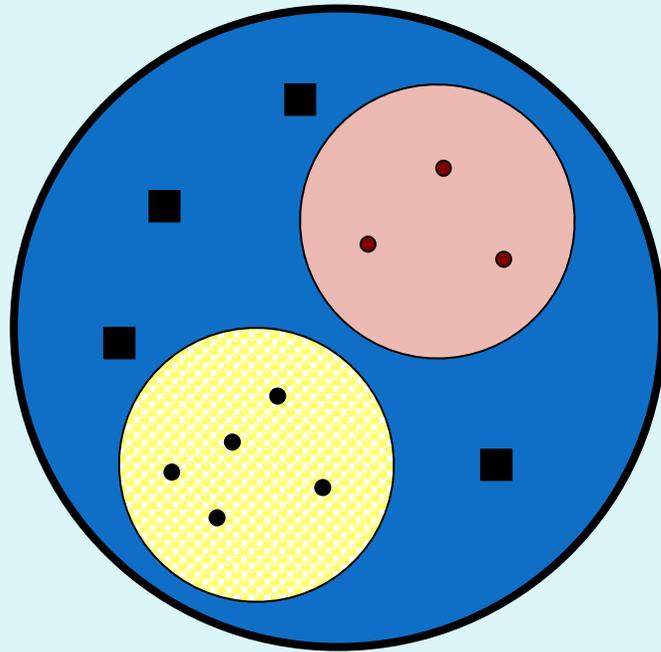


The set of bicycles



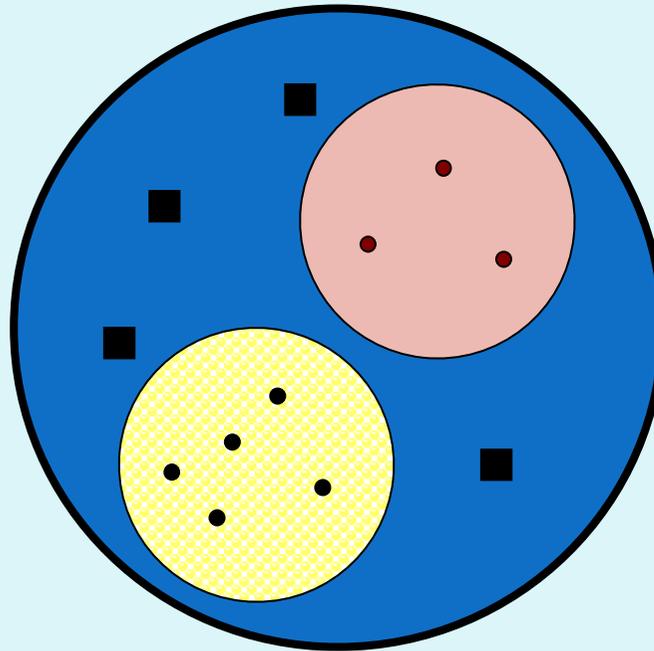
The Limits of Thought

The set of all
entities



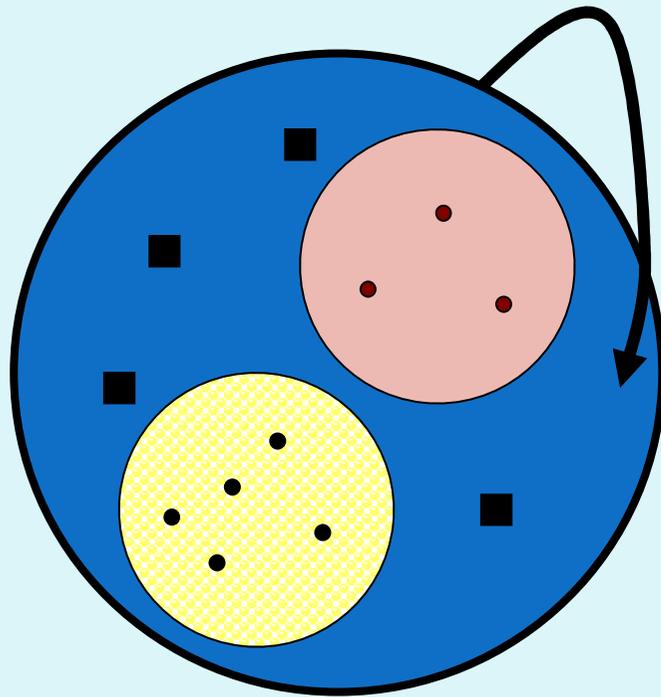
The Limits of Thought

The set of all
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