"That's Interesting" Murray S. Davis

Outline

1. Basic message: interesting theories deny audience assumptions
2. Not truth but interestingness.
3. Formulaic approach yields dull and uninteresting theories.
4. Subject of this paper: "synthetic a posteriori propositions" (cf. Kant)
5. What are the components of science he won't consider?
   - ° Findings – which confirm/disconfirm hypotheses
   - ° Clues – indicating ways to solve a problem
   - ° Aesthetic descriptions – refine perception
   - ° Analogies – render the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar
   - ° Models – simplify the integration of complex relationships
6. Definition 1: interesting = that which stands out from taken for granted routine propositions of everyday life
7. Figure : ground :: Interesting theories : taken for granted theoretical structure of everyday life.
8. Interesting theories stand in contrast to
   - ° Conventional wisdom
   - ° Proverb
   - ° Platitude
   - ° Maxim
   - ° Adage
   - ° Saying
   - ° Common-place
9. Look at the "standard rhetorical scheme" described on p. 312.
   - ° Here is the conventional wisdom (lit review)
   - ° Identify exception
   - ° Provide evidence in support of it
   - ° Tell audience practical implications
10. Common element in all interesting theories: radical distinction between seeming and being, between subject of phenomenology and the subject of ontology. What is accepted as X is really non-X.

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A. CHARACTERIZATION OF A SINGLE PHENOMENON

(i) *Organization*
   a. What seems to be disorganized is in reality organized
   b. What seems to be organized is in reality disorganized

(ii) *Composition*
   a. What seem to be different phenomena are in reality all really the same.
   b. What seems to be a single phenomenon is in reality several.

(iii) *Abstraction*
   a. What seems to be individual phenomenon is in reality holistic or collective or social.
   b. What seems to be holistic is in reality individualistic.

(iv) *Generalization*
   a. What seems to be local is in reality global and general.
   b. What seems to be general and global is in reality local.

(v) *Stabilization*
   a. What seems to be stable and unchanging is in reality changing.
   b. What seems to be unstable and changing is in reality stable and unchanging.

(vi) *Function*
   a. What seems to be functioning ineffectively as means to end in reality functions effectively.
   b. What seems to function effectively is in reality ineffective.

(vii) *Evaluation*
   a. What seems to be bad is in reality good.
   b. What seems to be good is in reality bad.

B. RELATIONS AMONG MULTIPLE PHENOMENA

(viii) *Co-relation*
   a. What seem to be independent are in reality interdependent.
   b. What seem to be interdependent are in reality independent.

(ix) *Co-existence*
   a. What seem able to co-exist in reality cannot.
   b. What seem unable to co-exist can in reality exist together.

(x) *Co-variation*
   a. What seems to be a positive co-variation is in reality a negative co-variation.
   b. What seems to be a negative co-variation is in reality a positive co-variation.

(xi) *Opposition*
   a. What seem to be nearly identical phenomena are in reality opposite phenomena.
   b. What seem to be opposite phenomena are in reality similar phenomena.

(xii) *Causation*
   a. What seems to be the independent phenomenon (cause) is in reality the dependent (effect) phenomenon.
   b. What seems to be the dependent phenomenon (effect) is in reality the independent (cause) phenomenon.