

Epistemology of Cognitive Orientation (Epistemic Paradigms)

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Abstract:

Cognitive orientation in the human and social sciences is fundamentally defined by the goals science seeks to achieve. These goals are rooted in philosophical and empirical premises, bounded by conceptual frameworks that must be primarily ethical and only secondarily cognitive.

Addressing scientific issues and problems in social science carries a unique weight, characterized by the need for epistemological caution in both its theoretical and practical application. This caution is non-negotiable because the subject matter is intimately linked to the humanity of the individual and the scale of functional and cognitive imbalance that incorrect interpretations could unleash. Errors might stem from a flawed understanding of a phenomenon's

cumulative development or a mistaken view of its necessary future state (i.e., its proper qualitative treatment).

A historical review of social science theory and knowledge reveals a pattern of guided haste in practically steering social phenomena, often through social engineering designed to serve the economic objectives of industrial society. This history vividly illustrates the magnitude of the epistemic deviations that have been, and regrettably continue to be, practiced in the field of theorizing within the social sciences.

Keywords: Cognitive Orientation, science seeks, epistemic paradigme.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social sciences have long been connected to the value of human existence in society. These disciplines respond to the logic of human comfort in their social reality, as opposed to a set of laws that regulate human life and its continuity. This continuity is linked to the necessity of a social engineering connected to the cognitive guidance of a theoretical framework that has attempted to interpret social reality in accordance with the demands of scientific thought. This framework tries to reconcile human material needs on the one hand, and the human sense of self on the other, using culture and religion as a framing factor in their tumultuous lives. Consequently, a number of intellectual orientations emerged, characterized by their cognitive formation, meaning the scientific and theoretical accumulations that express a particular intellectual specificity, and which have attempted to answer the question: What frames human life and preserves its continuity?

1. Core Characteristics of Cognitive Orientatio

The efficacy of the social sciences has consistently been tied to their **grounding in social reality**. This implies the application of these disciplines to the dynamic of **social change**. Consequently, the value of a given research hypothesis is directly linked to its proximity to this conceptualization, as we endeavor through this epistemological orientation to understand social reality in its continuity and transition :

1.1prortotype

Theories in the social and human sciences are linked to a cognitive construct that simulates the specificity of the studied phenomenon. Theorists in these sciences attempt to provide an initial diagnosis that is closely tied to the researcher's personal convictions or an effort to interpret this social reality with a particular vision. At this stage, researchers also try to establish a set of conceptual frameworks that form these intellectual conceptions or models, through which we have a partial diagnosis of the phenomenon under study.. (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1970)

1.2legitimacy

In their search for a prototype, a scholar typically endeavors to formulate a set of empirical observations that validate their hypotheses and research claims. The proximity of these hypotheses to social reality imbues the epistemological framework with legitimacy. This allows the researcher to demonstrate the validity of their conceptualization, which in turn bestows upon them their value as a social agent seeking solutions to societal problems across various domains. (Popper, 1959)

1.3 Temporality and Durability

The interconnectedness of social reality with human needs for development and environmental adaptation compels us to consider a crucial epistemological dilemma: should we seek permanent

levels of analysis intended to orient human beings toward stability, or should we instead accommodate human change, thereby constructing analytical frameworks that are contingent on time and place? This very dialectic has created a schism within the theoretical and conceptual paradigms of the human and social sciences, a schism that has given rise to two fundamental variables: durability and change (Archer, 1995)

II. The Cognitive Orientation at the Level of Societal Goals

Our understanding of the nature of **theoretical orientations** in the social sciences is most closely linked to the nature of both general (societal) and specific (individual) goals. Within each epistemological orientation, scholars have attempted to articulate a specific model. Theorists have striven to interpret social reality from the perspective of:

2.1 individualism

Individualism in societies is intrinsically linked to the value of the individual's existence in social life. This has led thinkers and philosophers to debate whether the individual is a primary determinant of social life. Consequently, psychological schools of thought emerged, seeking to connect the general social context and reality to the individual's psyche, particularly the conscious and unconscious systems. The school of psychoanalysis, for instance, attempted to study the individual as a psychological construct by highlighting the role of behavior in interpreting social, historical, and economic phenomena. (Reich, 1970)

To understand the subjectivity of the individual, we must deconstruct the human being. This means that phenomena are understood in their constituent parts, and by this, we refer to the study of the granular aspects of human existence. Through this process, we come to understand behavioral outcomes that, in turn, typically shape collective action.

2.2 collectivism

Collectivism is associated with the concept of a social system of meaning. This implies that individuals in a social reality agree upon laws that ensure their collectivity. In social theories, collective behavior is studied to understand the social characteristics that allow us to comprehend human nature, from which we can then deduce the laws and foundations for understanding social phenomena. (Lévi-Strauss, 1969)

3. The Cognitive Level and the Characteristics of Thought

Our understanding of the transformations within the social sciences is tied to a fundamental epistemological dilemma: does social reality itself produce theory, or is it the concepts that scholars derive from a specific intellectual accumulation that give science its epistemic efficacy? This question has given rise to a set of cognitive orientations that have attempted to interpret social phenomena along two fundamental trajectories:

3.1 The Naturalist Approach

This approach postulates that social science should be intimately connected to the inherent particularity of the individual and the group within their authentic context. It implies that every society possesses its own unique perspective for managing its daily affairs, thereby developing a distinct history and an autonomous economic vision. Consequently, the adherents of this naturalist perspective have striven to interpret societies and behaviors based on everyday life, remaining separate from any external or alien cultural and economic influences. (Bourdieu, 1990)

3.2 The Guided Approach

This approach posits that the individual and the group exist in a state of social and economic anomie, lacking a clear sense of purpose or direction. Consequently, they are in need of a normative or economic orienting framework, which is provided by a set of institutions embodying the characteristics of this approach. The behavior of individuals is then interpreted solely through the logic of these guiding institutions. (Berger, 1966)

4. The Epistemological Nature and Identity of the Social Sciences

Our understanding of the nature and genesis of epistemological orientations in the human and social sciences is entirely linked to the concept of subjectivity vs. objectivity in social science. The central question is whether we are dealing with sciences that are tied to the locality of human existence (addressing specific problems in a particular society) or with general problems connected to the broader goals of science. The latter would require us to approach issues from a universal perspective, using conceptual frameworks built upon a set of axioms. These axioms are then applied to social reality, allowing us to construct universal models for human understanding

4.1 Subjective Knowledge

Subjective knowledge is tied to the unique challenges of each society. This leads us to view science as a particular construct, one that creates a body of knowledge whose very conditions must align with the specific moral imperative of these societies. This brings us back to a fundamental feature of science: comprehension. When we define comprehension, we are talking about specific societal content. This directly leads to the production of sciences containing a diverse epistemological richness, as we began from tacit knowledge. It is this tacit knowledge that allows us to deduce scientific laws, thereby ensuring the distinct cumulative nature of our understanding. (Polanyi M. , 1966)

4.2 Objective Knowledge

The connection between the sciences and the aims of science leads us to an epistemological challenge: are there universal cognitive criteria for science? Here, we must return to a fundamental concept in science, which is postulates. By this, we mean the necessity of a set of laws that all

peoples share, irrespective of their time and place. This is due to the immutability of science and the variability of reality. Consequently, we must fit this reality into a framework of fixed variables, without regard for the epistemological conditions of social and psychological change. (Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 1949)

5. The Specificity of Ideas in Understanding the Epistemological Identity of the Social Sciences

The application of ideas in any science has always been intrinsically linked to the necessity of an empirical domain to contain them. By this, we mean that reality is the field that houses a theory and bestows upon it its epistemological and practical validity. Social scientists have striven to ground their hypothetical ideas in social reality to provide an answer to its cognitive and systemic transformations. As a result, various intellectual movements have emerged within the discipline, seeking to comprehend its practical and applied shortcomings

5.1 internal Specificity (The Unity of the Idea)

Ideas are typically linked by a methodological unity that expresses the particularity of each intellectual tradition. This implies that we must approach the nature of each school of thought based on the shared ideas and terminology it carries. Therefore, it is essential to consider the epistemological coherence of each theory, which scholars have defined as a set of general terms that the researcher employs when formulating a specific theory or intellectual tradition. (Wittgenstein, 2009)

5.2 External Factors

External factors are elements that contradict the ideas proposed by a given intellectual orientation. These contradictions are often observed in the context of social transformations, which can challenge the tenets of a theoretical framework and lead it to a stage of obsolescence—rendering its ideas impossible to apply to the new reality. (Lyotard, 1984)

5.3 Organization

This term refers to the conceptualizations put forth by scholars, which are required to be logical and, therefore, applicable. The strength of this theoretical approach can be considered in its proximity to reality and its ability to diagnose the pressing issues of contemporary human societies. (Flyvbjerg, 2001)

6. The Utopia of Epistemological Ideas

Our definition of epistemological orientations as movements fundamentally linked to the duality of scientific and societal goals compels us to seek analytical frameworks that align social reality with the duality of reality and method. This suggests that the closer an intellectual paradigm is to reality, the more it reaches a stage of epistemological and practical maturity. We will explore a

number of these orientations, which have sought to validate their research premises and guide the reality of societies toward an overarching objective that defines the epistemological structure of each paradigm. Among these are idealist, interpretive, and pragmatic perspectives. This type of epistemological orientation is tied to the challenges of science itself, namely the search for an initial diagnosis of the technical problems of science at the methodological level. Consequently, each intellectual tradition attempts to bestow upon itself methodological legitimacy in an effort to find a comprehensive answer to its. research topic (Mannheim, 1936)

The idealist current derives its epistemological strength from the idea of a holistic understanding of social structures. This means that the more we comprehend the contradictions, problems, and challenges facing social constructions and systems, the more clarity we gain in our overall understanding. Thus, the holistic understanding of phenomena is one of the key characteristics of the idealist current

6.2 Characteristics of Social Structures

6.2.1 Scientific Measurement

Our understanding of various social and psychological problems leads us to a fundamental idea: we must quantify and structure the information we derive from the initial diagnosis of a studied phenomenon. This process, in turn, allows for the measurement of social and psychological phenomena by situating them within a specific time and place. This confinement facilitates their diagnosis, and the complexity of the task is directly related to the inherent simplicity or. Complexity of the phenomenon itself (Stevens, 1946)

6.2.2 Thought Experiment

A thought experiment is a conceptual framework presented by a researcher in the form of provisional hypotheses. Its purpose is to provide a preliminary diagnosis until social reality can offer a definitive and, ideally, final answer in its own due course. (Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 2017)

6.2.3 Synthesizing Results

element is considered one of the most important core tenets of the idealist current: to achieve ideal outcomes that are intrinsically linked to the perfect measurement of the phenomenon under study. (Hegel, 1807)

8. The Hermeneutics of Ideas

8.1 The Interpretive Identity

The epistemological orientation of science has been characterized by a set of technical criteria that gave rise to its quantitative orientation. This, in turn, caused the social sciences to lose sight of their primary subject matter: humanity and subjective phenomena. Subsequently, a significant movement emerged in the field of sociology, advocating for the return of the social sciences to their core focus on the human being. This approach called for interpreting social reality on its own terms by applying a deep, micro-level analysis to social and psychological phenomena, explaining them through direct social causes. Furthermore, it emphasized the use of qualitative methods to formulate context-dependent principles that account for the variables of specific time and place. (Dilthey, Introduction to the Human Sciences, 1883)

8.2 Characteristics of Hermeneutics

8.2.1 Historical Verification

The interpretive approach in social theories is concerned with revealing the authentic origins of human knowledge, which have been distorted by mathematical positivism. This orientation advocates for a return to the epistemological roots of the "real human," one who has not been corrupted by urban transformations and colonialist tendencies. (Dilthey, Introduction to the Human Sciences, 1883)

8.2.2 Errors of Science

Science, by adhering to rigid research postulates, aimed to create a static discipline that was not subject to the dynamic shifts of laws in their systemic and functional transformations. As a result, science made a series of errors and conceptual gaps, having tied itself to the legitimacy of both industrial and colonial societies. (Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1962)

8.2.3 Return to Ethical Value as a Theoretical Reference

An observer of the evolution of theorizing in the social sciences will note that positivist thought sought to eliminate the social and cultural component as a fundamental element in the process of theorization. For this reason, the interpretive approach attempted to restore the social sciences to their true identity, which is that the discipline's point of origin is the human as an ethical and valuable being, and its endpoint is the human being and their historical and civilizational value. (Dilthey, Introduction to the Human Sciences, 1883)

9. The Pragmatism of Ideas

9.1 The Pragmatic Identity of Science

The pragmatic approach is an expression of the outcomes of economic positivist thought, which has programmed the Western mind around the idea that the ends justify the means. It posits that individual interest is the foundation of human civilizational progress, as it serves as the true

motivator for individuals in a world of economic complexity. By "ends," we mean a departure from the goals of the collective conscience and the enactment of social laws whose purpose is to prioritize individual over collective interest. This has ultimately nullified the idea of a collective conscience, leading to a shift toward finality and pragmatism as the basis for societal framing. (Habermas, 1987)

9.1.1 Ideological and Economic Function

The concept of pragmatism is linked to orienting economic goals and society toward a belief in the harnessing and exploitation of societal energies for an economic objective. This gave rise to ideologies, which we define as mechanisms of thought directed toward serving economic interests, and from there, individual interests. (ADORNO, 2002)

9.1.2 Utilitarianism

The term utilitarianism expresses the outcomes of the industrial system and the shift toward an exaggerated emphasis on individual utility at the expense of collective utility. This means that social mechanisms ought to guide individuals to an extreme prioritization of utility over rights, with social reality being framed by utility. Thus, a person's internal principle becomes the achievement of personal gain. This has, in turn, built a practical and theoretical foundation for the idea of social and civilizational egoism. (Polanyi K. , 2001)

III. CONCLUSION

The Cognitive Orientation in the social sciences has passed through precise stages of epistemological and field investigation, largely due to variances in the intellectual and philosophical premises adopted by individual scholars. This process was further complicated by a degree of self-orientation, tied to the personal lives and ideologies of the scientists themselves, which heavily influenced the interpretation of their ideas.

The epistemological formations underpinning the characteristics of cognitive thought have often been marked by imbalances. These disruptions largely resulted from the intellectual centralism associated with *intellectual colonization*—a phenomenon deeply linked to *material colonization*. This centralism fostered a quest for existential and cognitive justifications for the prevailing social reality.

Consequently, the cognitive engineering of these sciences became radically intertwined with social engineering. This link stemmed from an attempt to understand human nature and steer it toward a culture of industrialization and the perfectionist frameworks that humanity sought to achieve, utilizing a mode of thinking that connected ends with means.

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