

Knowing and the Known: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science

Lecture 1: The Task and the Inheritance

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Inescapability

- * “Philosophy of science is about as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds.” -- Richard P. Feynman
- * but:
 - * as far as we know birds have no theory of “birdness”
 - * social scientists *do* have an implicit theory of science
 - * so do the various audiences with whom we communicate

My Goals

- ＊ stop the use of erroneous claims about “science” to shut down conversations
- ＊ provide a more adequate lexicon for discussing the epistemic status of our empirical claims
- ＊ clear up persistent misunderstandings that unfairly reinforce one flavor of science: *neopositivism*

What PoS Is

- * builds on, or follows after, science
- * aims to elucidate the *logic* of scientific inquiry
- * asks *how*, and sometimes *why*, science works:
accounting for the success of science
- * does *not* resolve questions of scientific fact

Methodology vs. Method

- * method: technique for gaining information
 - * counting, interviewing, reading
 - * data-collection; maybe some data-analysis
- * methodology: rationale for using particular methods to answer particular questions
 - * research design and status of empirical claims

Methodology vs. Method

- * social scientists generally lack the vocabulary for talking in depth about properly methodological questions
- * no widespread literacy in philosophy of inquiry
- * methods rather than methodology, *even among dissidents*
- * rejection of “methodology talk” by very critical scholars
- * as a result, *methodological* differences get reduced to issues of *method*

Consequences

- * “science” without any qualifiers
 - * unified logic of inference that assumes away all of the interesting philosophical questions
- * “explanation” = “accounting for variance”
 - * “ideational variables” vs. material interests
- * “mixed methods”
 - * as if case studies + large-n regression + a formal model were anything other than *incoherent*

The broad category

- * “science” = detached, impersonal knowing
- * *episteme*: general/factual/intellectual
 - * not technical or aesthetic or ethical
- * emphasis on the form of a knowledge-claim
- * *systematic, public, worldly*

Modes of Knowing

		non-evaluative	evaluative
non-expressive	Epistemic	Engineering	
expressive	Aesthetic	Ethical	

History

- * contemporary PoS reacts to two seminal articulations:
 - * Descartes, and “Cartesian anxiety”
 - * logical positivism (the Vienna Circle)
- * both of these are subsets of The European Enlightenment as a philosophical/cultural/political project
 - * “by Reason alone”
 - * the problem is, what do to with *empirical observation*?