

KNOWING AND THE KNOWN:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
LECTURE 5: REFLEXIVITY, AND THE SUMMARY

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Beyond Instrumentality

- * knowledge expresses a set of values...
- * ...but that set itself is socially determined
 - * “language-game” names the epistemic status, but not the content
 - * “form of life” points to social foundations, but does not unpack them

The View from Somewhere

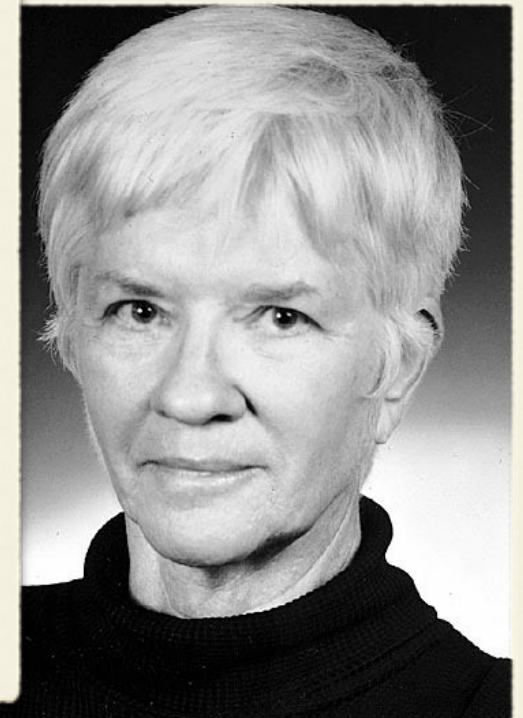
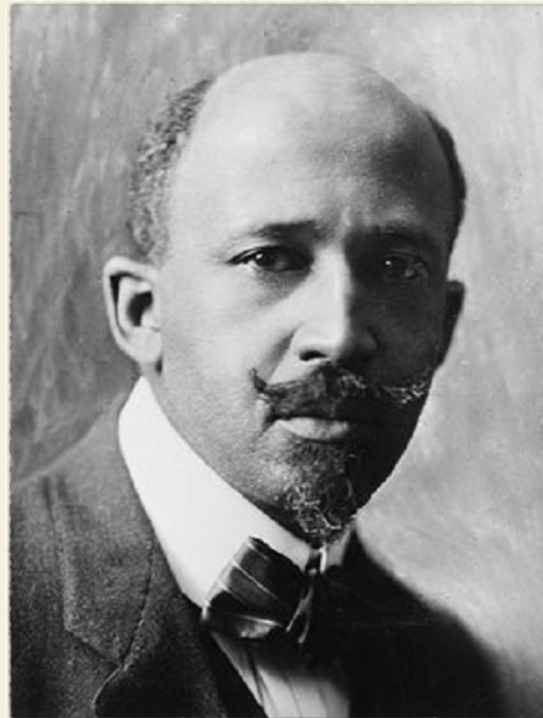
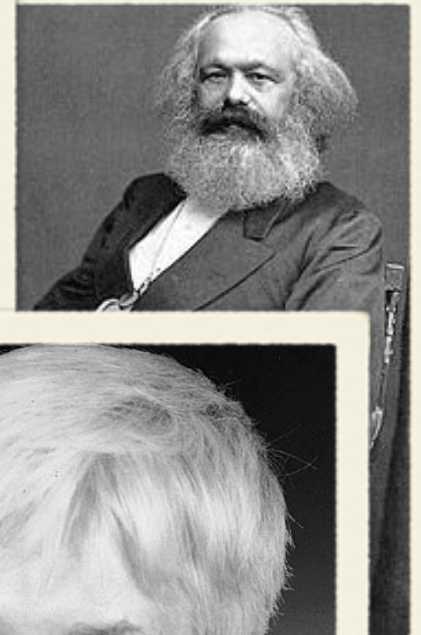
- * vocabulary and syntax express perspective
- * perspective in turn is codified experience
- * no neutral language or point of view:
 - * a *sociological* proposition, not just a philosophical one
 - * scientific knowledge connected to the *broader social order*, not just to research practices

Hegemony and Distortion

- * “objectivity effect” of shared assumptions
 - * similarity of social origin affects scientific knowledge
 - * likewise, similarity of experience based on gender, race, etc.
- * we aren’t aware of the things we miss
 - * “warranted assertability” -- but whose warrants?
 - * different assumptions appear *irrelevant*
- * can’t be neutral with respect to the social order

Critical Knowledge

- * places to start:
 - * workers
 - * intellectuals
 - * women
 - * racial minorities
- * common thread is *marginality*



Reflexive Explanations

- * start with self-location
 - * not an optional add-on
 - * find the traces of structure in our daily activities
- * adopt a marginal perspective
 - * seeing from the limits is *epistemically* preferable
- * knowledge critiques society
 - * provokes a response, dialectically
 - * pay attention to effects

Science?

- * no single unified logic of scientific inquiry
- * a broad definition of science:
 - * systematic links between premises and conclusions
 - * subject to public criticism and improvement
 - * focused on producing worldly knowledge
- * *lots* of room for variation within this space

Two Dimensions

- * dualism / monism

- * dualism: theory compared with world

- * monism: theory arises from and orders world

- * phenomenalism / transfactualism

- * phenomenalism: we can only know what we can experience

- * transfactualism: we can know the deeper roots and causes of experience

	phenomenalism	transfactualism
dualism	neopositivism	realism
monism	analyticism	reflexive

Difference and Dialogue

- * no philosophy of science justification for a single uniform view of scientific methodology
- * we should be careful of so-called “mixed” research designs
 - * can’t simply combine methodologies without privileging one or assimilating others
 - * can’t introduce a strict common standard for evaluation without tacitly taking a methodological stance
- * we must begin with difference and distinction in order to have a discussion

In Defense of Pluralism

- * there is no philosophically defensible alternative to pluralism—but a *rigorous* and *engaged* pluralism
- * different methodologies answer different questions
- * different approaches to the "same" topic yield diverse knowledge-claims that can be *valid in their own terms*
- * this imposes a task of *translation* rather than synthesis
- * efforts to be internally consistent afford such contentious conversations

As we approach the third millennium, our needs are different, and the ways of meeting them must be correspondingly rethought. Now, our concern can no longer be to guarantee the stability and uniformity of Science or the State alone: instead, it must be to provide the elbowroom we need in order to protect diversity and adaptability.

—Stephen Toulmin