

Evolution of Social Sciences Paradigms

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Summary

In this analysis “Evolution of the Paradigms of Social Sciences”, the acquired vision is shown through face-to-face class and the supporting material provided by the module Professor, which has the same name in the exposed Ph.D. History with a minor in Regional and Local Transdisciplinary studies in UNAN- Managua.

The history of the social and natural sciences is related to the use of models (paradigms) for its development. It is worth mentioning Lincoln and Guba, who proposed a paradigm to study, which could reflect the differences being between these two sciences from the methodological point of view when treating the Human Being- Nature relation.

Introduction

The use of the paradigm¹ term has evolved and it has had many uses and applications in linguistic schools, from referring to a fable or a parable. Also, today it announced more specific meanings depending on the field it is applied.

My first “contacts” with the paradigm, term was on the study French literature courses to *Ferdinand de Saussure*. The legacy of this great man from Switzerland, whom I quote in this current analysis, was the erudite inspiration for an intellectual movement that began with *Levi-Strauss*, “*Sad Tropic*” (my second key character), when introducing, the structuralist approach in Social Sciences. This gentleman, was in fact the founder of *the structural anthropology*, based on the homonymous linguistic created by *Saussure* and developed by the *Russian formalism method*.

Because of the importance of his work, he was one of the most influential intellectuals of the twentieth century, inside and outside anthropology.

It is during this century, when the worldview of the social and natural universe was awakened by a new epistemological approach; already explained, for example in the thesis known

¹ The term, Paradigm, comes from the Greek Paradeima, which means model, type, example. According to it, it can be defined a paradigm as the result of uses and costumes, of pre-set beliefs of half-truths.

Technically, paradigms are a set knowledge and beliefs that build up a vision of the world (Cosmo vision), around a hegemonic theory in a determined historic period. Each paradigm is established after a scientific revolution, that responds questions of the enigmas that could not be solved in the previous paradigm. (MSc. Luis Orlando Luna).

as the *Triangle of Ogden*, -whose purpose was to theorize about Knowledge- in the case of justifying that human beings, instead of focusing on reality itself, they prefer to pay more attention to language and therefore they believe, intuitively, that reality is objectively unique, it is multiple reality.

Thought or reference

This thesis was shown in the following way: the **benchmark** which is, “*the things, the perceptible world*”, the **thought**, conceived as “*the idea or mental representation of things*” and the **symbol** as “*the word used to express that thought*”, in which, the first element refers to the object, the second one to the third one to the scene of the relations among subjects...

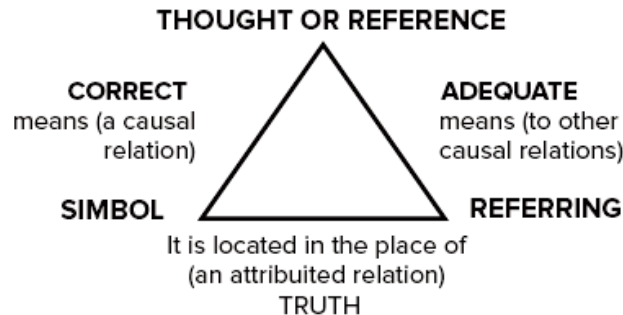


Figure 1. Source: www.hispanoteca.cu

The Ogden-Richards triangle is a graphical representation of the relationships between language, thought and reality. The μ Group, author of the famous *General Rhetoric*, has been used to expose the location of rhetorical figures at various levels of language, according to its structuralist approach to the subject. (V. Dubois, Jacques et al: *general rhetoric*, Polity Press, 1987, p.77)

All this reflection and development of the same Social Sciences began many centuries ago, Everything was mixed and confused with the Social Philosophy, however the group of disciplines were developed solidly with the expansion and especially with consolidation of industrial capitalism, in the XIX century.

In this same century it was developed the *Positivism*² and *Marxism*³ was born as thinking currents.

In short, **the positivism** used to criticize the currents that admonished Capitalism. It explained society was governed by natural laws; “Admitting that if nature and society are objects similar to be studied, then we can study the society, using the same methods, techniques and the same vocabulary they use for the social sciences” (Notes taken in Dr. Lobato class.)

Professor Claudia Peirano, in one of her material of *Methodology Research*, has some charac-

² **Positivism** is a philosophical trend which stands that only authentic knowledge is the scientific one, and that such knowledge and only come out from the assertion of theories through the scientific method. The positivism is derived from the epistemology which came up in France in the beginnings of the XIX century by the hand of the French thinker **Saint-Simon** first, **August Comte** second, and the British **John Stuart Mil** and got extended and developed through the rest of Europe in the second half of such century. According to this school, every philosophical and scientific activities must be done, only, in the frame of the analysis of the real facts verified by experience. Source: es.wikipedia.org/wiki/positivism.

³ **Marxism** is a set of politic, social, economic, and philosophic movements derived of the work of **Karl Marx**, economist, philosopher and journalist. German revolutionary descending from Jews, who contributed to fields like sociology, economy, law, and history and also to his partner **Friedrich Engels**, who helped him in many of his theories. Engels coined the term; scientific socialism to differentiate Marxism from the socialist trends previously encompassed by it, under the term; utopic-socialism. Also, he used the term, socialism-marxist to refer to ideas and specific proposals of Marxism in the frame of the socialism. Source: Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism

teristics of positivism, in relation to the Paradigms of Social Sciences of which I only mention the one which caught my attention most, for being, according to my assessment, the one that describes best this trend:

- *It based on factual acts.*
- *The laws that study society are natural laws, as such they are considered universal, e.i for everywhere and every time (eg. Law of Gravity).*
- *Positivism assumes that the researcher can be placed in a neutral position, and that their personal and social values do not influence the results of your research.*
- *For positivists, the subject of the investigation is a being to be able to shed their feelings, emotions, subjectivity so he can study the object, the social and human reality from an outside overview.*

Marxism, on the contrary to the positivism, departed from the trends that criticized capitalism. Its basis laid on the conception that societies were divided into classes. That the subject constructs the object of knowledge, -according to the dialectical conception- and that this construction is mediated by the previous experiences of the subject. In the field of research, it starts on the basis that the researcher's values have influence on the results of the investigation.

From my appraisal, both streams are the pillars on which the epistemology of modernity⁴ is based, which comprises an economy with objective reality, a constitution of the sphere of powers, practices and consequences of democratic self-government and the notion of popular sovereignty. Modernity that in the search for universal laws, divided in a cartesian and hierarchical way the various knowledge in different disciplinary fields, clearly bounded to account for the natural and social phenomena.

Phenomena needed to be explained

Since ancient times it arose the need to understand the universe, that is why it became an object of study. A science, Cosmology, which is considered one of the most advanced and theoretical disciplines of Physics, it was created to address the phenomena of nature in oldness and today to contemplate and scientifically investigate the epistemological changes from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution and the phenomena of nature in S. XX and XXI century in its beginning.

Moving a little through time and space, I allow myself share the following:

In our region, the social sciences face with new socio historical realities and try to grab them conceptually, being faithful to its spirit and identity these disciplines that reflected on the origins of capitalism, the nation-state, the Industrial Revolution, the bureaucracy, the division of labor and an ampler process as it was the European modernity, it begins the analysis about the new geopolitical, economic and social conditions derived from the reorganization of the world bureau.

⁴ A civilizing process, usually was presented as a result of the cultural superiority of Europe as a hegemonic center and "reflexive conscience" of the world system, because it was considered that this region was the realization of the universal spirit, el result of the defeat of the medieval obscurantism and the cause of such process, this is, Europe has been seen as the only place where the necessary conditions where generated for the arousal of a rational behavior model for the utilitarian individual. It was considered, also, that the modernity would be a project to undertake and do all over the peoples and in the different corners of the world, since it was per se the very expression of the liberal ideology, and also, the features of the soviet ideology were present. Source: www.eumed.net/cursecon/ecolat/mx

But, is there a Latin American epistemology? This question is crucial because there is a process of globalization going on. However, this process is assimilated in different ways: For us (I call “us” all intellectuals who are dedicated to the art of teaching), there is a lack of commitment to our own work, it helps feel “defeatism” , due to lack of commitment to know the reality: there is no alternative to capitalism, a social and historical reality. What also happens is that Latin American social sciences have much information on a minimum of issues and very little on central issues. “Our crisis is not precisely because of lack of adequate historical framework, but it is because the quantity and quality of available information relevant to propose explanations and relevant hypotheses” (Sorj, 1991, p. 111).

What should be done? From my point of view, it is necessary to stop prioritizing the study that X person produced X person about history and to prioritize what our neighbor did, it means, to give more importance to what we have under our noses and about the battle between Sciences “hard” and “soft” look for alternatives to overcome the dichotomies and disciplinary boundaries.

The latter is of great importance for the understanding of reality and to be able to explain it. All science must be in continuous interaction, since it cannot be explained in an isolated way or fragmented.

Skinner attributed to Science, two types of characteristics in very general terms: (i) first, science is a set of attitudes, i.e., a specific disposition to deal with the facts; and (ii) on the other hand, it carries a certain treatment of those facts. Source: (Class Material)

This means, that the characteristics of science are not subject to any particular discipline. Human behavior can be explained from the natural sciences and the social sciences without any problems, regardless the method you want to use for the study, contrary to the proposal of Elster⁵, who intends to prove that something characteristic of the social sciences is the impossibility of formulating laws, its local and individual character instead a universal one.

Moreover, the authors Fay y Moon answer the question is it possible to make laws in a similar way as they do they do for natural sciences in the field of the social sciences? Saying, “*There are two polarized positions facing the issue: naturalists who view the social sciences as very similar to the natural sciences, and therefore, methodologically corresponding with these.*”

Science is not just about the research work, used to refine theories, it is a professional institutionalized activity involving prolonged education, construction of precious moral values, beliefs, ways of thinking development, research and analysis. Science is a whole complex model that should be studied. (Source: Class Material) and the product of the study, is the knowledge as a basis for future generations, and that scientific thinking has evolved since ancient times as a result of the interaction of disciplines experience.

The knowledge, product of inter and cross disciplinarily is a challenge. I think it is a necessary exercise; and the knowledge, joined with observation and experimentation on the field help us on the task of *scientific research in the social sciences*, which has a specific methodology, whose

⁵ Jon Elster (born in 1940) is a Norway social and politic theoretical who has published works about philosophy of the social sciences and the rational relection theory. He is re known member of the analytical Marxism and a critic of the neo classic economy and the public election theory, based for it on behavioral and phicologycal considerations. He was a member of the so called September Group (formed among others by G.A Cohen, John Roemer, Adam Przeworski), Erik Olin Wright, Philippe Van Paris and Robert-Jan Van der Veen). He has thought at Oslo University, in the department of History, and got a chair at Chicago University, where he thought in the departments of philosophy and politic science. Currently he is Professor Robert K. Merton of Social Science with specialty in politic science and philosophy, and also professor titular at College of France.

importance is based on strengthening relations between the researcher and the research itself, using time and space for analysis and to integrate the political, economic and social spheres.

It also serves to generate changes after studying the phenomena and also to get more performance and effectiveness, the object and subject of study; and even when the experience is known as “the theoretical crisis of Social Sciences”.

This crisis is an “inadequateness of social scientific knowledge to its historical moment” (Zemelman, 1996, p. 237), that basically in its analysis lacks of historicity of the phenomena and the limit of what is to know, what is scientifically thinking to build theories about social reality .

Adrian Sotelo argues that “*the theoretical crisis opened a critical transition towards finding new concepts and categories that functioned as ‘concepts replacement’, not to move or replace the previous, as was believed, but to enrich and expand them. This means that the crisis of social thought are healthy, as long as they are able to revolutionize the deep understanding of social phenomena and their subject to study, which are just the social relations*” (2002, p. 12).

Sotelo also notes that in the case of Latin America, “*the crisis of Latin American thought, opened in the eighties decade, expressed the inadequacy of a set of assumptions, hypotheses, and theses and ideas, which were developed to explain the general economic and socio-political problems in the context of current transformations of the capitalist mode of production in a globalizing world process*” (Sotelo Valencia, 2002, p. 9)

It is clear that the 80’s decade was an important period since it occurred significant political, social, economic and cultural phenomena, such as the increasing stress of the wars between the United States and the Soviet Union. The nuclear threat became more real than ever, so the middle of the decade was a rapprochement between the two parts, which was favored mainly by the policies known in the West as Glasnost and Perestroika of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. I had to live the above while I was studying in Rostov in the Russian Federal Republic.

The international terrorism that had been presented since the previous decade increased, and the United States attacked Muammar Gaddafi’s Libya in retaliation for terrorist attacks supposed to be sponsored by that country. In Latin America, Peru, emerging from military period of 11 years and returned to democracy as a dictatorship, the Maoist terrorist movement Shining Path, which began its armed struggle in Ayacucho and slowly was moving into the Capital.

On the economic point of view, the US president, Ronald Reagan, introduced a series of free market economic policies, popularly known as *Reaganomics*, which set the foundations of neoliberal economics in the coming years. Moreover, the differences in development between the different countries of the world were evident and several countries in Africa were devastated by famine. In Ethiopia, the situation was particularly dramatic because of the drought.

Many writers put their efforts in trying to narrate or describe these facts. Hundreds of modern philosophers meditated on the clear story line. And the question-answer is: What would Marx be, if he were here? Marx would be considered as a legitimizing European and American colonial expansion. Uncomfortable and unhappy, full of expletives moral and ethical protests, but legitimizing scientific and political in the end...

An issue to study in class was “*Towards an economy for life*”. It began with the following thought: What sense has as a last resort, for human beings before the historical evolution of humanity, before their lives, and more over before death? (*Essay: The Myth of Sisyphus*)

Many scholars have tried to answer it from their own approaches. Albert Camus is categorically expressed: *The meaning of life is to live it!* Simply because the first thing for the human being is life itself; although in different cultures and economies values are different: merchandise, money, capital, transformed in social subjects for humanity, these are guiders and decision takers upon life and death.

The affirmation of life, which are the duty of everyone to live and the right that each one and everyone has to live, derived from existing values: the property system, social structures, forms of economic calculation, the consumption patterns, are the institutions of the economy where life flows in.

There is no life, if it has not included the natural circuit (Human Being > Nature) which includes the economic. Denial and destruction of this natural circuit means death and the bodily relationship between human beings and nature is called *System of social division of labor / coordination system of social work*.

In the analysis of human life in the production and reproduction of real life there is the **right to live**. It is a method that analyze the real life of human beings in terms of this life and the reproduction of their material conditions of existence.

The Human being is a natural being, but also could is a social being, based on an economy that is supplied directly by the biosphere, who actively produced to meet the high consumption for the existence and sustainability of life. Some in misery, others in progress (depending on whose hands wealth is), because unfortunately we live in a world of socioeconomic inequality, far from utopian thoughts adorned with an admirable socialism.