Sociological Paradigms of the World

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Abstract
Generally speaking, human being has developed mechanisms to grasp their worlds via different models of epistemological approaches. After all mankind need to debate on ontological issues concerning the reality under debate. The individuals that have ontological divergences on certain reality they are not expected to have convergence on epistemological issues because ontological issues are core and ground for knowledge organization. Regarding knowledge organization different individuals have different approaches that lay foundation for methodological issues employed in the searching and researching for truth. In fact, man developed cognitive skill that enables him to master the world surrounding him. There is no single approach to see what mentally constructed total picture of the things around him. The metaphysics and epistemology as well as the prior and posterior intellectual venture employed in the knowledge world shape the overall truth the man holds. This assumed genuine knowledge influence practical life of the individual particularly in political life of the individual.

Keywords: Sociological paradigm, Idealism, empiricism, positivism and dialectical method

1 | INTRODUCTION

Ontological and Epistemological issues

The key issues that primarily required to be addressed, before going to consume and further enhance our understanding and conscious level or knowledge, are ontological and epistemological issues and consequential methodological positions. Ontological issues are concerns of nature or meaning of being of entity or reality we need to know. It deals with what is essence of reality or entity. This school of thought focuses on essential characteristics of things we want to research. It more deals with study of living creature, state of existence, consciousness or life of something in actuality either in material or concept. The map of reality we hold but not concrete facticity. For example, God/Allah/Waqa, Society (Ethiopian society), race, etc are ontological issues that need scrutinization. The most important point next to ontological issue is epistemological idea. Epistemology is knowhow

Supplementary information The online version of this article (DOI 10.15520/assj.v5i10.2645) contains supplementary material, which is available to autho-rized users.
of ontological entities. Once we address existence of something in material or abstract and grasp its essential qualities then we turn to answer question of how we organize our systematized knowledge of those realities. Epistemology deals with knowledge organization, methodology involves in systematizing knowledge and theories that support our epistemic stance. Epistemology answer questions like what is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? What do people know? How do we know what we know? This questions addressed by different people differently based on their epistemic stance. Epistemic stance is a scholarly position that one can hold so as to solidify and expand his/her understanding from his/her own angle of conceptualizing realities through mental or cognition. It is the intellectual effort to actualize the map that correspond genuine territory. There are several epistemic stances as Tennis. J.T. (2008) enumerated in his article of Epistemology, Theory, and Methodology in Knowledge Organization: Toward a classification, Metatheory, and Research framework. The epistemic stances enlisted in the above article are pragmatic, positivistic, operationalist, referential, instrumental, empiricist, rationalist, realist, etc. These stances show us what kind of knowledge created by research, how we gather the knowledge claimed and also how we present the collected knowledge. Furthermore, Tennis. J. T pointed out that among the above listed epistemic stances the following are key epistemic stances for knowledge organization i.e. operationalism, referential theory, instrumental theory, system theory, etc.

For example, once we answer the question what is Ethiopia society (imagined, concrete, its nature and patterns) we turn to organize knowledge on our type of ontological reality held. For some Ethiopia is imagined entity or abstract that cannot be testified on the ground, others believe Ethiopia is real but not with its present mental picture rather its entity distorted the case of Kush land and Semitic dichotomous politics. On the other hand, some groups believe Ethiopia was, is and will be with its unchanging characteristics or uniformed state. They believe Ethiopia is known by its one culture, language, ideology, identity and same fate people. Thus, ontological difference on Ethiopia reality created ideological and political manifesto divergences which lay foundation for intractable political conflict between different political elites.

Generally speaking, ontological and epistemological issues are fundamental foundation of our understanding of reality and its characteristics. They help us to develop conception of entities, how to know or approach to know realities, how to gather valid knowledge, what evidences we use as a sources and how we make our organized knowledge acceptable and genuine knowledge. Below some epistemic positions that have relevance in study of reality particularly society.

### 2 | REALISM, IDEALISM, AND SKEPTICISM

First I would like to begin with Realism which is epistemological stance that support the dogma suppose universals are real they exist and are distinct from the particulars that instantiate them. It is the viewpoint believes an external reality exists independent of observation (science). Realism is the practice of accepting a situation as it is and dealing with it accordingly. This epistemic stance developed a concern for fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and imaginative. Realism is an artistic representation of reality as it is. It purports that in art or literature the representation of things in a way that is accurate and true to life is possible. It is a principle that stress universals or abstract concepts have an objective or absolute existence. Realists believe in the dogma that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications. The theory which may share resemblance this epistemic stance is Marxists. As indicated in the Marxist theory that political and historical events result from the conflict of social forces as caused by material needs and is interpretable as a series of contradictions and their solutions. This epistemic stance, contradicts with idealism which, assumes a prior to material or real things.

Idealism, as epistemical stance of understanding social world, emphasizes the importance of the mind and mental products rather than the material world. The key point in the idealism is the social definition of the physical and material worlds that matters most, not those worlds themselves. In its extreme form, idealism asserts that only the mind
and psychological constructs exist. This epistemic stance gives a prior to the mind and its products and others considered as the result of mind and mental child brain. Some idealists believed that their mental processes would remain the same even if the physical and social worlds no longer existed. Idealists emphasize not only mental processes but also the ideas produced by these processes. This tradition pioneered by Hegel and continued by old Hegelians. Hegel believes that evolutionary change of the world is in idealistic form. Accordingly, Hegel believes people were endowed only with the ability to acquire a sensory understanding of the world around them. For example, people could understand things like the sight, smell, and feel of the social and physical world. Later, people developed the ability to be conscious of, to understand, themselves. Gradually, people with self-knowledge and self-understanding began to understand that they could become more than they were. Generally speaking, Idealism asserts that direct and immediate knowledge can only be had of ideas or mental pictures and any of various systems of thought in which the objects knowledge are held to be in some way dependent on the activity of mind.

Skepticism is also one of epistemological discourse in social world knowledge. The skeptic epistemic stance questions the reliability or possibility of absolute knowledge. Skeptic believes that there may be fallible and subjectivity of knowledge. This means absolute or perfect knowledge is questionable. Some Skeptics believe that knowledge without no sensory experience can be understood as world is no more than ideas and minds they are in. This stance in this particular idea compatible with empiricist and realist and at the same time they are against idealist. Fundamentally, Skepticism means searching but not finding from its original meaning. It is questioning or doubt toward knowledge or belief; against domains (moral, religion and knowledge skepticism). For example, it questions about absolute knowledge possible which question philosophical epistemology. Another is Religious skepticism that question basic principle of religion such as immortality, providence, revelation, etc. On the other hand, scientific skepticism focuses on testing belief or reliability by subjecting them to systematic investigation using the scientific method to discover empirical evidence for them. Skeptics label such practices as pseudo science. On the other hand philosophical skepticism refrains from making truth claims radical empiricism.

3 | EMPIRICISM AND RATIONALISM

Empiricism is a philosophical movement that deals with questions like nature of knowledge, how we know what we know by its paradigm. Empiricism holds that reality exist outside of us. From this it can be seen that empiricism oppose to rationalism. Empiricist denies existence of metaphysical facts. They assert that real knowledge derived from real sensory experience or sensory experience. In this regard empiricism and positivism share common stance because positivists also believes that realities are outside us and we can know them through empirical observation or sensory experience. Empiricist denies that knowledge derived a prior reason that is a prior to experience. Empiricism entails inductive approach. This indicates that empiricism oppose rationalism since rationalism gives primacy to reason not sensory experiences. According to empiricist position knowledge is a posterior that means first reality or sense experience that result in genuine knowledge. By this stance realism and empiricism share a common ground that both believe the existence of reality outside us and way of understanding them.

Now let us turn to rationalism which mainly support that knowledge should based on reason and the source knowledge should also reason. Rationalism asserts that the way we can test knowledge is through reason. The rationalists believe that reality not mere exist outside of us this implies they support metaphysical existence. The knowledge of reality is based on a prior reason that is through use of logic. The rationalist holds that deductive is possible via logical argument and use logical argument as tool of rationalism or rationality. They support that certainty is possible via valid deductive reasoning using true premises. The rationalists believe that it is possible to reach at true or reality without aid of sensory experiences. Rationalism and empiricism are competing views.
4 | POSITIVISM

Positivism school of thought or epistemological stance purport that scientific method of natural science can be employed into social world so as to investigate social reality. The positivism epistemological school of thought was the brainchild of Auguste Comte. Comte as founder of sociology believes that society can be studied through new science that is sociology. The study of sociology should base on scientific method like observation, experimental and historical analysis. Positivists believe that there is universal law or patterned behavior that can be discovered through scientific research. They believe that objectivity or neutrality of social research is possible and there should be distance between researcher and reality. Furthermore, the positivists believe that acquiring knowledge is only through science and scientific method. For example Comte mentioned that improvement of thought gradually passes through history of theological, metaphysical and positivistic stage. This indicates that positivistic thought is the highest and last development of thinking level or intellectual level. The natural science methods can be adopted into social sciences or soft sciences. Positivist denies metaphysical knowledge in principle. They rather focus on though going with empiricists’ stance that is scientific investigation of empirical realities. Positivists are very critical of theology and religion. Therefore, positivism favors empiricism and rejects all knowledge based on a prior metaphysics.

5 | DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

First let us see the first term which is dialectical that is a systematic method of argument that attempts to resolve the contradiction in opposing views or ideas. It is a way of thinking that stresses the importance of processes, relations, dynamics, conflicts, and contradictions-a dynamic rather than a static way of thinking about the world. On the other hand, it is a view that the world is made up not of static structures but of processes, relationships, dynamics, conflicts, and contradictions. Its basic idea is the centrality of contradiction. Dialectical philosopher believes that contradictions exist in reality and that the most appropriate way to understand reality is to study the development of those contradictions. According to Dialectical materialism contradictions are real or existing reality not in our understanding or in minds which is against dialectical idealism.

Materialism is the philosophical aspects that believe that nothing exits beyond what is physical opposed to idealism. This lead to the Marx’s focus on real or existing contradictions create a way to form a particular method for studying social phenomenon that has also come to be called a dialectical method and the epistemic stance came to known as dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialists believe that fact or reality and value of the research should be inseparable so dialectic materialists do not support positivists or value free science. Dialectician believes that cause –effect relationship is not proper way to understand social world rather they attuned to reciprocal relationships between various elements of social phenomenon. Moreover, dialectician believes that understanding phenomenon should involve scrutinizing the past, present and future because past cause the present realities and the present scenario also likely influence the essence of future realities. This does not mean that dialecticians are deterministically inevitabilist rather they are historical possibilist. This can be seen from “thesis, antithesis and synthesis” their model of social change.

6 | CONSTRUCTIVISM

The constructivism school of thought believes that knowledge generate through interaction with experiences and ideas. The constructivists support that realities are in social world. They concern how subjective meaning becomes object or social facts. The key means for knowledge construction are socialization and interaction. The knowledge constructionists act collaboratively through culture and share meaning on artifacts. Social constructivism purport that individual learn culture in group. Thus, cognitive development achieved through culture and context. Social constructivism states that natural world has no role in scientific knowledge. They ignore and deny knowledge of realities based on a prior. The
constructivist reject role of superhuman necessity either discover or invented. Things exist in relation to observer or relativist. The relational conception is key. The constructivist argues that only bracketed absolute truth exists. Truth is within group but relative to other truths by observer. It seems that individuality of truth and truth of individuals. Constructivist believes that different communities construct different experiences and interpretation. They believe that truth never constructed outside interaction-truth is social. The constructivist support that on one topic there is consistent truths and contradictory truths based on perceptual and social linguistic. For example, religion and God has different ontological status for different groups. This indicates that knowledge and truth is created or constructed in relationship through connection, disconnection and negotiation. Jean Piaget mentioned that humans make meaning in relation to the interaction between their existence or experience and ideas.

Constructivists assume the ontological position or naturalistic inquiry. Because, reality is not merely physical but social constructions or entities. Constructions are the mental and sense making processes and products. Humans act on constructions and constructions get their physical or tangible reality status or ontological status equivalent to or if not exceeding physical realities. Constructions are dealt with scientific sense by resolving or fragmenting into smaller units. To understand the whole there should be integration of components or constituting variables. These constructed realities are not reduced to be true picture of some other realities. Because each constructed reality has meaning in a given individual group. This indicates that realities are not single rather there are multiple realities. Constructivists believes that realities exist in many forms and particularistic depend on the observer of that realities. Generally speaking, constructivists developed their own paradigm of truth and attuned to distinctive epistemic stance as well as deviated methodological idea.

7 | POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is epistemic stance that distrusts existing theories and ideologies. It is intellectual movement that aims at asking whether thought complex invented, discovered, created, found, constructed/contemplated. Postmodernism focus on back again toward reminiscence. Postmodernists believe that there is nothing absolute or unified sense behind reality. They deny the claims of scientific knowledge in modern society. Postmodernism reject conventional view and believe that objective representation of reality is not possible. It is new way of solving complicated society’s problem. In this sense postmodernists oppose the positivistic paradigm. The supremacy of science questioned. Even postmodernists argue that scientific fact causes devastating effects like bombing. Postmodernism epistemic stance initiated by shift in physics from Newtonian to relativity and quantum mechanics. Postmodernists question the valid claims of scientific theories, the nature of scientific truth and the status of knowledge. They argue that all knowledge is contextual and local. Moreover, Postmodernists argue validity claims of any scientific theories are not to be found in some abstract, universal criteria. No universal laws possible. They believe that valid and universal scientific theories are results of negotiated consensus or power struggle. It refuses ultimate faith on science and hold antipositivist and antiverificationist position. Postmodernism also insist on individuality of truths as matter of perspectives. It engages in blurring old distinctions and hyper reality which demonstrate no distinction b/n virtuality and actuality, copy and original, everything is mixed.

Postmodernism is incredulity toward metanarratives but urge micro narratives. It believes that there is no base in social world that is nothing supports anything. It is eclectic-seems flea market and realities have been given a name bricolage-construction from varieties of things. In postmodernism personal conviction always taken to be seriously. There is a say that it is not my history unless I affirm it. This illustrates that truth is validated by irresistible force of influence. Postmodernists support that everything is choice no fixity. Concerning morality postmod-
ernists believes that morals are multiple and subjective. From my review of Brann, TH.Eva. (1992) article it is stated that a time, a culture, a society, movements are and do nothing. People believe that things have temporal location. Generally, postmodernism is characterized by globalization, multiculturalism, information and media, new literary trends, etc.

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February 15, 2015

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