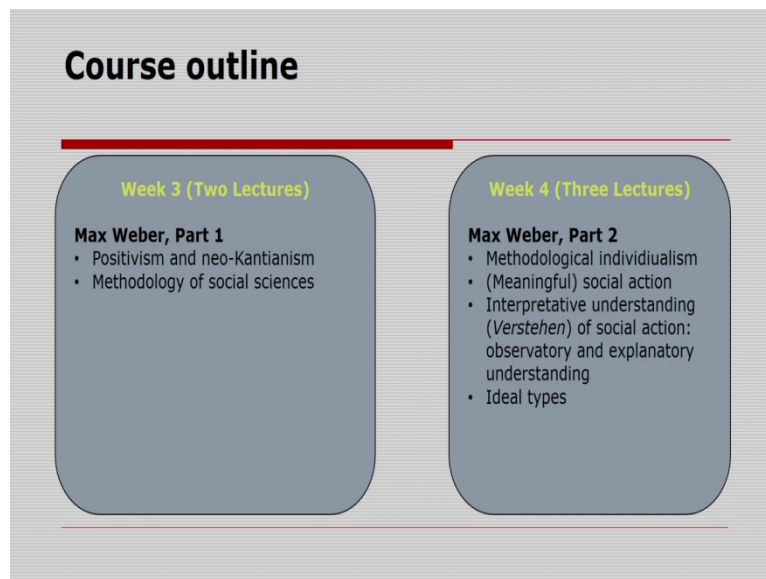


Philosophical Foundations of Social Research
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Week 3 (Max Weber-1) : Lecture – 07
Methodology of the Social Sciences

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the seventh lecture of this massive open online course on Philosophical Foundations of Social Research.



We are going to have the second lecture of the third week. And overall it is the seventh lecture of this 20 hour massive open online course on Philosophical Foundations of Social Research. And as I said earlier, that this module on Max Weber has been divided into two parts.

And we are discussing the first part in the third week, and we will discuss the second part in first lecture of the third week. In the last lecture, we have discussed how Weber contributed heavily to the development of substantive sociological theory and to the debate on methodology.

How Weber's theoretical positions and methodological writings are usually characterized as affecting a reconciliation between positivism; how Weber tries to mediate the two between positivism on the one hand and Neo-Kantianism on the other.

We have already discussed how positivism marks the supremacy of science over non-sciences and Neo-Kantianism suggests how our knowledge of the social world is constructive knowledge, which involves selection and interpretation of multiple data systems.

Max Weber

- Value relevance
- Interpretative understanding
- Cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge

Causal Relationship

Objectivity/Subjectivity

We have discussed in the last lecture third area in Weber's methodology, I mean Weber's reflections on methods that is idealization in the cultural sciences. Weber points out two core components of cultural sciences and namely value relevance and interpretative understanding and how cultural sciences differ from natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge involved in them. And in today's lecture, in the seventh lecture, we are going to discuss the methodology of the social sciences.

Weberian methodology of the social sciences may be divided into three important parts. One is ethical neutrality in sociology and economics. Secondly, objectivity in social science and social policy and thirdly, critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation.

We have partly discussed cultural sciences. I deliberately kept the major chunk of the cultural sciences for today's lecture, because we are going to have this lecture on Weberian methodology of the social sciences in terms of these three important parts.

value-judgments

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics ①
- Objectivity in social science and social policy ②
- Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation ③

Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics, objectivity in social sciences, objectivity in social science and social policy, and critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, objective possibility and adequate causes in historical explanation. Weber tried to look at these three important dimensions within methodology of the social sciences.

And we must try to reflect on these three important dimensions within Weberian methodology of Social Sciences against the backdrop of a constant and intensive meditation on the substantive problems of the theory and strategy of the social sciences, methodology of the social sciences.

And these three dimensions were drafted by Weber, between 1903 and 1917: the most productive years of Weber's life, when he was working on his studies in the sociology of religion, the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism and so on. And even before it, objectivity in social science and social policy was written, and Weber had achieved eminence in Germany in a variety of fields.

He had already done important work in economic and legal history, and had taught economic theory as the incumbent of one of the most famous chairs in Germany. On the basis of original investigations, he had acquired a specialist knowledge of the details of German economic and social structure,. He had mastered over economics, law, sociology, and so on. His always vital concern for the political prosperity of Germany among the nations had thrust him deeply into the discussion of political ideals and programs.

Thus, Weber did not come to the methodology of the social sciences, as an outsider who seeks to impose standards on practices and problems of which he is ignorant. The interest with which his methodology holds for us in the 21st century, even in the second decade of the 21st century, is to a great extent, a result of this feature of Weber's career, just as some of its shortcomings from our present point of view may perhaps be attributed to the fact that, some of the methodological problems which he treated could not be satisfactorily resolved prior to certain actual developments in research technique.

Let us first start with ethical neutrality in sociology and economics. Weber, in his methodology of the social sciences, starts with value judgments. Value judgments are to be understood, where nothing else is implied or expressly stated, practical evaluations of the unsatisfactory or satisfactory character of phenomena subject to our influence. The problem involved in the freedom of given science from value judgments of this kind, that is the validity and the meaning of this logical principle is by no means identical with the question, which must be discussed namely, whether in teaching one should or one should not declare one's acceptance of practical value judgments.

Teaching must involve certain value judgments or not? This is a serious methodological question where ethical neutrality assumes greater significance, and this must be deduced from ethical principles, cultural ideals of philosophical outlook, philosophical perspective.

This question cannot be discussed scientifically according to Weber; it is itself entirely a question of practical valuation and cannot therefore be definitively settled. That is why Weber was referring to ethical neutrality: in social sciences broadly and sociology and economics in particular. That is why this question of ethical neutrality, the question of value judgments cannot be settled definitively.

With reference to this issue, a wide variety of views is generally being held, of which Weber tried to provide two extremes; at one point or at one pole, we find the stand point that distinction between purely logically deducible and empirical factual assertions on the one hand and practical, ethical and philosophical value judgments on the other is correct, but that nevertheless or perhaps precisely because of this, both classes of problems properly belong within the area of instruction.

Secondly, at the other pole Weber tried to elucidate the proposition that even when the distinction cannot be made in a logically complete manner, it is nevertheless desirable that the assertion of value judgments should be held to a minimum.

And the second proposition that even when the distinction between these two extremes that logically deducible and empirically factual assertion on the one hand and on the other the practical ethical philosophical value judgments, this is one and at the other pole that Weber talks about, I mean the proposition that even when this distinction cannot be made in a logically complete manner, it is however desirable that the assertion of value judgments should be held to a minimum.

And this the second proposition that that even when the distinction cannot be made in a logically complete manner, value judgments must be kept to the minimum, this proposition according to Weber is untenable and unsustainable. Especially untenable is the distinction, which is rather often made in our field between value judgments of partisan character and those which are non-partisan. And this distinction only obscures the practical implications of the preferences which are suggested to the audience.

And once the assertion of value judgments from the academic platform is admitted, the contention that the university teachers should be entirely devoid of passion, and that she or he should avoid all subjects which threaten to arouse overheated controversies constitutes a narrow minded, bureaucratic state or government dictated opinion which every independent teacher must reject; that freedom must be there among the academic communities.

Of the scholars who believed that they should not renounce the assertion of practical value judgments in empirical discussions it was the most passionate of them, who were the most tolerable. That is why we must always understand that academicians must have the capacity of tolerance.

The academicians, the intellectuals, the academic community must be able to tolerate but at the same time, if there is a tendency of intolerance, that tendency of intolerance must be rejected by the academic community. Consequently, or as a result of that intensely emotional tone, their audiences were enabled to discount the influence of their evaluations in whatever distortion was introduced into their factual assertions.

Thereby the audiences did for themselves what the lecturers were temperamentally prevented from doing. The effect on the minds of the students was thus guaranteed some depth of moral

feeling, which in my opinion, the proponents of the assertion of practical value judgments in teaching one to protect without the audiences being confused as to the logical disjunction between the different spheres of reality. And this confusion must necessarily occur whenever the exposition of the empirical facts and the exhortation to take an evaluative position on important issues are both done with the same tool of dispassionateness.

That dispassionate analysis must be there, but at the same time, when you make a dispassionate analysis, then you must be able to question the powers, the stereotypes you must question, the state and so on. The first point of view is acceptable and can indeed be acceptable from the standpoint of its own proponents only when the teacher sets as his unconditional duty in every single case even to the point where it involves the danger of making his or her lecture less lively or less attractive.

First of all, while teaching, or in pedagogic systems, according to Weber must be value neutral- it may be a little boring, it may be a little less attractive, it may be a little less lively, but we must maintain that value neutrality, ethical neutrality, ethical neutrality or value neutrality. This is very important.

To make relentlessly clear to our audience, and especially to ourselves, which of our statements of logically deduced or empirically observed facts and which are statements of practical evaluations. One has acknowledged the logical disjunction between the two spheres of reality, one sphere is absolutely logically deducible empirical facts on the one hand, and on the other value judgments, philosophical inquiry and, ethical guidelines and so on.

Once one has acknowledged the logical disjunction between the two spheres of knowledge production two spheres of reality, it seems that the assumption of this attitude is an imperative requirement of intellectual honesty, academic honesty. And in this case, it is the absolutely minimal requirement.

On the other hand, the question whether one should in general exert practical value judgments in teaching even with this reservation is one of practical university policies. On that account, it must in the last analysis be decided only with reference to those tasks which the individual according to her or his value systems assigns to the universities.

Those who on the basis of their qualifications as teachers assigned to the universities and thereby to themselves the universal role of moulding human beings of inculcating political, ethical, aesthetic, cultural or other attitudes will take a different position than those who

believe it necessary to affirm the fact and its consequences that the academic lecture hall achieves a really valuable influence only through specialized training by specially qualified persons.

When India was under the colonial regime, teaching community was instructed not to speak against the colonial forces, not to speak against the British. And those who spoke against the colonial government, their intellectual honesty was questioned, their academic honesty was questioned; they were termed political, sedition charges were made.

But what Weber was trying to do that when the nature of the state tries to dictate, you must try to mediate, you must try to be as neutral as possible while teaching, but at the same time, it is the duty of teachers to impart values, ethical value systems, morals, intellectual integrity, honesty to its students. Whoever spoke against colonialism, during when India was not independent, when India was under colonial regime, now we all glorify them, rather those who spoke in favour of the British, now we denigrate them. That is the spirit.

In this context, therefore, intellectual integrity is the only specific virtue which it should seek to inculcate. The first point of view can be defended from as many different ultimate value positions as the second. The second, which Weber personally accepted can be derived from most enthusiastic as well as from thoroughly modest estimate of the significance of specialized training.

In order to defend this view, one need not be of the opinion that everyone should become as specialized as possible. One may on the contrary, hold the view in question because one does not wish to see the ultimate and highest personal decisions which a person must make regarding her or his life confounded with specialized training.

However, highly one may estimate the significance of specialized training not only for general intellectual training, but indirectly also for the self discipline and ethical attitude of the young person according to Weber. One may hold the latter view, because one does not wish to see the students so influenced by the teacher suggestions that she or he is prevented from solving her or his problems, on the basis of her or his own conscience.

When you look at the essay on objectivity in social science and social policy- The essay on objectivity had its immediate origins in Weber's desire to clarify the implications of a very concrete problem. What is that problem? The real problem is how to understand the

distinction between absolutely logically deducible empirical facts on the one hand and ethical value judgments on the other.

And that is why I said the essay on objectivity in social science and social policy, had its immediate origins in Weber's desire to clarify the implications of a very concrete problem. It is important to look at how Weber wished to make explicit the standards, which the teachers would apply and to which they would expect their contributors i.e. the teaching community to confirm.

In doing so, Weber's powerful mind which strove restlessly for clarity at levels, where his contemporaries were satisfied with ambiguities and clutches drove through to the fundamental problems of the relationship between general sociological concepts and propositions on the one hand, and concrete historical reality on the other.

Another problem, which was to engage him until his death, the problem of the relationship between evaluative standpoints or normative judgments and empirical knowledge received its first full statement in the essay on objectivity in social science and social policy. Then what kind of problems that we tend to find in Weber's theoretical positions and methodological writings, that first he tries to make a distinction between purely logically deducible empirical facts on the one hand and philosophical ethical value judgments on the other.

Secondly, he tries to look at the relationship between general sociological concepts and propositions on the one hand and concrete historical reality on the other. And thirdly, he looks at the relationship between evaluative standpoints or normative judgments on the one hand and empirical knowledge on the other.

Let us go a little back to ethical neutrality and sociology and economics: he wrote this during the First World War, and Weber himself was engaged in a series of titanic polemics against the prevailing political system in Germany as well as Europe and while he was still working on the sociology of religion.

This ethical neutrality as well as objectivity in social science and social policy, so far as these two are concerned, a mass of particular concrete interests underlie these essays. Weber's recurrent effort to penetrate to the postulates of economic theory, his ethical passion for academic freedom, his fervent nationalist political convictions and his own perpetual demand for intellectual integrity.

Then, when he tries to look at ethical neutrality in sociology and economics, and objectivity in social science and social policy, he was also trying to look at the postulates of economic theory, ethical passion for academic freedom, and his fervent nationalist political convictions and his own perpetual demand for intellectual integrity.

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics
- Objectivity in social science and social policy
- Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation

Rational self-determination

Max Weber's pressing need to know the grounds for his own actions and his strong belief that human being's dignity consists in their capacity for rational self-determination as evident throughout this essay on ethical neutrality as well as in this own objectivity in social science and social policy.

As well as his contempt for those whose confidence in the rightness of their moral judgment is so weak that they feel the urge to support it by some authority such as the trend of history or its conformity with scientific doctrine in a sphere in which the powers of science are definitely limited.

Causal Relationship

Max Weber

- Value relevance
- Interpretative understanding
- Cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge

Objectivity/Subjectivity

On this occasion too Weber worked his way through to the most fundamental and most widely ramified methodological problems in the attempt to reach clarity about the basis of his own practical judgment. In this sense, here, of course, Weber has was not dealing primarily with the methodology of research, but his procedure and his success illustrate the fruitfulness of methodological analysis, when it has actual judgments and observations to analyze rather than merely a body of rules from which it makes deductions.

When we come to critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, we have already discussed how Weber was committed to the widespread Neo-Kantian insistence on the methodological peculiarities of the cultural sciences. For Weber these peculiarities centred on the two related concepts of value relevance and interpretative understanding, I mean the cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge involved in them.

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics
- Objectivity in social science and social policy
- Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation

Rational
self-
determination

Modern Capitalism
Objectivism and historicism

Critical studies in the logic of the cultural sciences, he wrote before 1905 because it was published in 1905. It must have been in the process of production, while he was also busy with a large scale investigation of certain aspects of German rural society and protestant ethic in the spirit of capitalism. The intricate task of explaining causally the emergence of one historical individual, in this instance, modern capitalism. He was referring to modern capitalism that finds its methodological implication in this essay, critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, which treats the nature of explanation of particular historical events, its relationship to general or universal propositions. And at the same time, Weber continued on this occasion, much more specifically, and with many illustrations to examine, as he had in the essay on objectivity in social science and social policy, the role of evaluative points of view in the selection of subject matters and problems and in the constructive application of getting rich.

Weber's efforts in this essay, the critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, were partly a continuation of his long standing self clarifying polemic against objectivism and historicism, but its analysis drew its vividness and its realistic tone from the fact that Weber was continuously attempting to explain to himself the procedures, the techniques, the strategies, which he and other important historians and social scientists at that time were actually using in the choice of problems and in the search for solutions to them including Marx.

And the three essays, ethical neutrality in sociology and economics which talks about value judgments and so on, objectivity in social science and social policy, critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, these three essays of course, do not comprise all of Weber's methodological writings.

In many respects, social science today is unrecognizably different from what it was in the years when these essays were written. Particularly in the United States, and Great Britain, entire European landscape, the social sciences have developed a series of techniques of observation and analysis, and have on the basis of these proceeded to describe the contemporary world with a degree of completeness and accuracy, which only a few optimists would have expected in Weber's time.

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics
 - Objectivity in social science and social policy
 - Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation
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The number of social scientists engaged in research has increased by a large multiple, and the resources available for financing research have likewise multiplied many times over. And the success or the failure of the social sciences in devising procedures for convincing reliability have led to their marriage with social policy to an extent which could have been conceived only in principle in Weber's time. And the turn of events and the passage of years have not however, reduced the relevance of these three essays so far as the methodology of the social sciences is concerned by Weber.

The concrete incidents have changed, we are no longer concerned to refute the errors of objectivism or professional prophets are not very important problems for us, maybe right now. But the relationship between concrete research, whether it may be descriptive concrete research or explanatory concrete research or exploratory concrete research, and general theory has become a problem more pressing than ever, even though awareness of it is much less universal.

Many of our current advances in research are made in wage, which seemed to avoid raging the problem. So, many of our success is in acute descriptions of our investigations, in which

the problem of explanation is left to those who requested the investigation or who or to use the results.

When he was writing objectivity in social science and social policy, Weber still under Rickert's influence - Rickert was also a Neo-Kantian - regarded the particular and the concrete as the really value relevant, a phenomenon which the social scientist must understand and seek to explain in the appropriate manner.

Max Weber

- Value relevance
- Interpretative understanding
- Cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge

Causal Relationship

Social/natural Sciences

Objectivity/subjectivity

For Weber, at this stage, a system in general concepts and a general theory was simply an instrument. It is really irrelevant as to whether we agree with Weber that it is the value relevance of concrete events which distinguishes the social from the natural sciences, the important point was that Weber saw the possibility and significance of a general theory.

It is most unfortunate that when Weber began to elaborate the general conceptual system, and which must have been intended by him as part of General Theory, which would have explanatory value, he did not write a methodological essay on the problems of theory construction, and systematization in the social sciences.

Objectivity in social science and social policy brings the problem before us in a most intriguing way, but leaves it unresolved, unsolved. In doing so, however, it raises issues which contemporary social scientists must face if our knowledge is to rise into a systematic scientific theory and not merely pile up in a chaos of unrelated monographs and articles.

And in this sense, what we have observed, that this scientific attitude seems to have become more pronounced, with the scientifically right and necessary assent to pre-eminence of the

theory of personality, like in the case of psychology, and so on. And Weber statement of the relationship between social science on the one hand, and the ends of action and therefore of policy should aid social scientists to see both their possibilities and their limitations.

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics
- Objectivity in social science and social policy
- Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation

Social Sciences | Policy Making

It should dissolve the false identification, of apolitical attitude with scientific intellectual academic integrity, and it should help us refute the baseless accusation that the social sciences are ethically relativistic or nihilistic, either in their logical implications or in their empirical consequences.

If it helps us think better about the way in which social sciences can clarify the assumptions of any policy, it will also help us in the clarification of the criteria of value relevance, because policy adds value for social science. By tracing the assumptions of any policy back to its postulates, the establishment of value relevance of a subject matter or problem will also be carried out on a more general or theoretical plane.

Max Weber

Causal Relationships

- Value relevance *Social/Natural Sciences*
- Interpretative understanding
- Cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge

Objectivity/Subjectivity

Problems for research will therefore, themselves tend to be formulated with closer regard with their theoretical assumptions and the movement of research interest onto a more abstract plane, where theory and research will be fused; theory and practice, they must be integrated and fusion will become more likely.

But these are only a few of the many lines which connect Max Weber's methodological analysis to the main issues of contemporary social sciences.

In this week we have discussed two lectures.

Max Weber

Reconciliation between:

Positivism:

Supremacy of science over non-sciences

Neo-Kantianism:

Our knowledge of the world is constructed, and hence subject to selection and interpretation

And through these two lectures what we have discussed: how Weber contributed heavily to the development of substantive sociological theory and to the debate on methodology and

how Weber's methodological writings and theoretical positions are usually characterized as effecting a reconciliation between positivist and Neo-Kantian positions.

Though Weber's positions were not of course, entirely consistent throughout his life, though it is possible to say that in general, he rejected the view attributable to some Neo-Kantians though not Rickert's. Weber was very close to Rickert's analysis, that the cultural sciences are exclusively concerned with the uniqueness of their objects of study, and that the category of causality is inapplicable in them.

Weber was committed to the widespread Neo-Kantian insistence on the methodological peculiarities of the cultural sciences. For Weber, these peculiarities centred on the two related aspects of value relevance and interpretative understanding; the cultural sciences differ from the natural sciences, in the distinctive role of valuations in the formation of the concepts and in the distinctive type of knowledge involved in them. A third area of methodological differences was thought by Weber to the usage of idealization in the cultural sciences.

Methodology of Social Sciences

- Ethical neutrality in sociology and economics
- Objectivity in social science and social policy
- Critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences: objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation

Social Sciences | Policy making

And then we have discussed Weberian methodology of the social sciences, and how Weberian methodology of Social Sciences has three important dimensions. One is ethical neutrality in sociology and economics, objectivity in social science and social policy and critical studies in the logic of cultural sciences, I mean objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation that we have discussed. And with this, we have come to the closure of the seventh lecture.

In the fourth week, in terms of three lectures, we are going to discuss the second part of Max Weber famous definition of interpretative sociology and how sociology is a science which

attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects.

And what is methodological individualism? For example, what is social action? What are the types of social action, and whether all types of social action are meaningful social action or not, or whether all social actions or some of them are meaningful social actions and some of them are really meaningless. It does not imply that they do not attach meanings, they attach meanings, all types of social actions, but it does not imply that they will turn out to be meaningful social action.

Then we will also discuss how the characterization of Weberian sociology in terms of understanding an explanation of social action. We will also discuss meaningful social action, interpretative understanding of social action and how interpretative understanding has two parts: interpretation at the level at the textual and linguistic meaning of a cultural product, and how value interpretation does not involve evaluation of action or product, but involves selective conceptualization of the object in relation to value and that value may be social value, maybe aesthetic value or cognitive value.

And then we will discuss ideal types and how selection is based on cultural relevance, how Weber treats culture and how verstehen comprises imaginative identification and recognition of the rational connection between means and ends, methods and objectives and how explanation must be adequate at the level of meaning and at the level of statistical generalizations by mediating both positivism as well as Neo-Kantianism and what are the economic phenomena, what are the economically relevant phenomena and what are the economically conditioned phenomena, and then we will discuss ideal types and so on. And in terms of three lectures, we are going to cover the fourth week, in terms of second part of Max Weber. Thank you.