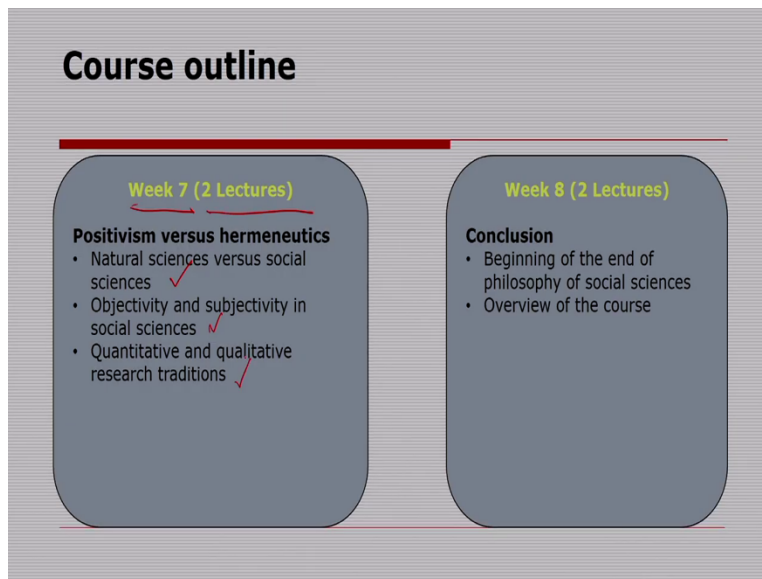


Philosophical Foundations of Social Research
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Week 7 : Lecture 18
Positivism Versus Hermeneutics – I

Hello everyone, welcome to the seventh week of this Massive Open Online Course on Philosophical Foundations of Social Research.



In the seventh week in terms of two lectures we are going to discuss Positivism Versus Hermeneutics; phenomenological tradition in contradistinction with positivistic approaches to social sciences. And in this we are going to discuss natural sciences versus social sciences, objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences and quantitative and qualitative research traditions. We are going to discuss, these in the context of the controversies between positivism on the one hand and hermeneutics on the other.

Positivism versus Hermeneutics

- Natural Sciences and Social Sciences ✓
- Objectivity and Subjectivity in Social Sciences ✓
- Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions ✓

But, how can we frame these controversies: we are going to frame such controversies against the backdrop of these three criteria namely natural sciences and social sciences, objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences and quantitative and qualitative research traditions. We are going to do this in terms of two lectures when we try to compare and contrast and when we try to make a distinction between positivism and hermeneutics or positivism and phenomenological tradition or positivism versus Verstehen.

As you all know, that we have already discussed positivism that in the context of Comte, in the context of the central tenets of positivism, how positivism as a stage of a transition from theological stage to metaphysical stage to positivistic or scientific stage. In the positivistic stage, we have discussed there are certain parameters, or there are certain guidelines, there are certain principles, there are certain characteristics, there are certain features, there are certain tenets of positivism.

What are those tenets then? Now, one is methodological- that science is distinct from all areas of human activity or creativity, because it possesses a method unique to it. Secondly, methodological monism- that there is only one single method common to all sciences irrespective of their subject matter. Thirdly, inductivism- that the method of science is the method of induction that from particular instances you tend to arrive at concrete generalizations that is the principle of induction.

And fourthly, we have discussed systematic verifiability. In other words, that the hallmark of science lies in the fact that all scientific statements must be systematically verifiable. Fifthly, we have discussed fact value dichotomy- that in the positivistic schema science is based on fact, science does not believe in values, science is value free- that is why I told you that if I say that this is your computer, this is your fact. If, I say this computer looks beautiful then I add value to it and science does not believe in value, because it may appear to me it may appear beautiful to me but it may appear beautiful to you science does not believe in that, science believes in facts. That is why values have no factual content and facts are value free.

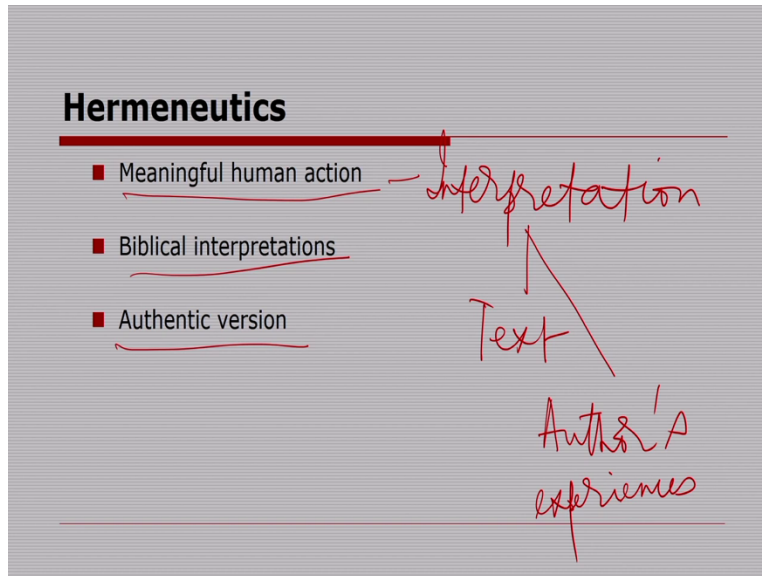
We have also discussed there is a uni-linear relationship between observation and theory, observations are pure in the sense that theories are dependent on observations, whereas, observations are theory independent; observation leads to theory generation but the converse is not true.

In this sense positivists argued in favor of science. That is why, you must understand the demarcation, autonomy and cognitive authority of science over non-sciences- demarcation between science and non-science, autonomy of science over non-sciences, and cognitive authority of science so far as non-sciences are concerned.

Now, what we are going to do: we are going to look at if whether, the methods of science can be absolutely replicable in social sciences? Are they same or do they require different methods or we can strike a critical balance between the study of nature and study of human action?

Hermeneutics, phenomenological sociology, provide us with a scope where, we can understand the marked difference between the study of nature and the study of human action. Please do not think that positivism has been rejected or hermeneutics has been propounded.

But, we are trying to understand the difference between positivism and hermeneutics and how we can use both positivistic and hermeneutics methods in social science. Research cannot be reduced to only one ideology, one viewpoint; research must try to take many viewpoints, multiple viewpoints. Multiculturalism is the ethos of social sciences, that is how social sciences have thrived over a period of time; when multiculturalism becomes the casualty then social sciences suffer.



Hermeneutics refers to the theory and method of interpreting meaningful human action. We have discussed the typology of action in the Weberian schema: what are those types? the traditional social action, the effective or emotive social action, value rational social action and goal rational social action which is alternatively known as instrumental rationality.

Now, for Weber value rational social action and goal rational social action they constitute meaningful social action, they are reflective in nature. The other two are not, traditional social action or effective or emotive social action; they are unreflective in nature.

If you go ahead with meaningful social action, hermeneutics, phenomenological sociology they try to go ahead with meaningful social action, it is and how are you going to do this? By the interpreting meaningful social action. Because, interpretation depends on the context, the positionality, the perspective. Meaningful social action may differ from person to person, from context to context.

Hermeneutic tradition has a long history being rooted in the problems of biblical interpretation. Before printing for example, when bibles were produced by hand copying, numerous errors were introduced. Hermeneutics referred to the problem of recovering the authentic version of the bible. In the early part of the nineteenth century the proponents of hermeneutics became interested in how to interpret any text. By concentrating on the text itself as in the case of biblical interpretation, but also by reference to the experiences of the author.

When we go ahead with interpretation we not only interpret the text, but we also look at the act, a picture, maybe a book, maybe a painting. The authors experiences are also important. What forces an author to depict violence? What forces an author to depict peace? What forces the author to emphasize on science, scientific temper, critical inquiry? The authors experiences as well as the text, they undergo the process of interpretation this the subject hermeneutics became more developed.

① → Difference between the study of nature and the study of human action. #

□ **Dilthey:** Two methods

- In the first, the focus was on the relationship of the creator of an act, a book or a picture to the interpreter. The latter understands by putting herself/himself in the position of the former. Understanding is possible because both share a common humanity or, in another formulation, because they are both expressions of the Spirit.
- In the second, the characteristics of individuals are disregarded. Instead, **hermeneutics** understands human action in relation to some wider whole which gives it meaning. For example, a painting is understood by reference to the outlook or worldview of the society in which it is problem. Similarly, the analyst can construct such a worldview out of its individual manifestations. This circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as a hermeneutic circle.

lived experience

Verstehen
/
Verfahren

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Dilthey argued that, there is a marked difference between the study of nature and the study of human action. That the study of nature was a in the purview of positivism, whereas the study of human action is in the purview of hermeneutics.

When I said there is a marked difference between the study of nature and the study of human action which being an expression of lived experience requires a special method of analysis. Very often we see that in our day-to-day life that women can speak for themselves. Only women, only Dalit, only marginalized communities, only the poor they have different narrative all together. Whichever way the author tries to depict those narratives perhaps fails to do that; only they can do that. Only those subjects they can do that, they can depict, they can express their lived experience.

And in this sense, Dilthey argued that there is a marked difference between the study of nature and positivism on the one hand and the study of human action, hermeneutics on the other- when I said study of human action which being an expression of lived experience requires a special method of analysis.

I cannot study human action, I cannot study lived experience by the principles which positivists argued for. Perhaps, I will not be able to do that, I require certain other methods of inquiry.

Dilthey effectively provided two such methods, what are these two methods? In the first the focus was on the relationship of the creator of an act, or a book, or a picture to the interpreter- there are two individuals here, one the creator and the interpreter. The interpreter, understands by putting herself or himself in the position of the creator. Suppose, I want to study farmer suicide, I am the interpreter. I must be able to understand by putting myself in the position of those farmers who have committed suicide or who are undergoing the phase where you will not find any hope.

Then I must understand: if you slightly recall we have discussed understanding in the context of Weberian Verstehen. We are going to discuss Verstehen a little while later. I must try to understand by putting myself in the position of the actor. Understanding is possible because both share a common humanity or in another formulation, because they are both expressions of the spirit, Dilthey is arguing.

In the second method, the characteristics of individuals are disregarded instead hermeneutics understands human action in relation to some wider whole which gives it meaning. For example, a painting is understood by reference to the outlook or worldview of the society in which it is a problem.

Similarly, the analyst can construct such a worldview out of its individual manifestations. This circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as a hermeneutic circle. Let me give you an example: if I say a painting which could capture the horrendous crimes and casualties perpetrated by the second world war, maybe I will try to capture the painting of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, maybe I will try to capture a painting from the Bengal famine, or I will try to capture the painting of a communal holocaust.

Then, that painting is understood by reference to the outlook or worldview of the society in which it is a problem. Suppose, I want to draw a painting or I want to interpret a painting of migrant workers during the phase of nationwide lockdown- how people migrated from different parts of the country to their native place. So many people passed away because of this. So, many people had terrible experiences while migrating from one place to the other.

Then that painting will depict or that painting will be understood by reference to by making a reference to the outlook or the worldview of the society in which it is a problem. Similarly, the interpreter or the analyst can construct such a worldview out of her or his individual manifestations. This circular relationship between a whole end up and its parts is nothing but a hermeneutics circle.

All knowledge except scientific knowledge, is socially and culturally conditioned.

- Mannheim: Individual and cultural manifestations, part of larger world view
- Documentary meaning to Human actions
- No intentions but worldview
- Critique of positivism in sociology
- Human actions caused by social structures
- Validity — how to validate interpretations
- Hermeneutics circle

conditioned.

Verstehen
|
Interpretation

□ **Dilthey:** Two methods

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- In the second, the characteristics of individuals are disregarded. Instead, **hermeneutics** understands human action in relation to some wider whole which gives it meaning. For example, a painting is understood by reference to the outlook or worldview of the society in which it is produced. Similarly, the analyst can construct such a worldview out of its individual manifestations. This circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as a hermeneutic circle.

Karl Mannheim is one of the founders of the sociology of knowledge perspective and he wrote ideology and Utopia, he wrote the sociology of science and so on. Mannheim advanced similar arguments- Mannheim suggested that individual and cultural manifestations can be understood by seeing them as part of a larger worldview. The analysis attaches documentary meaning to human actions. This has nothing to do with intentions but makes sense in the context of worldview.

For example, the documentary meaning of a painting can be understood by locating it within the worldview of the society or group which has produced it. And in this sense Mannheim said, all knowledge except scientific knowledge is socially and culturally conditioned. And that is why he made a demarcation between science and non-science. That is why we have mentioned that what is the first unit of positivity, that science is distinct from all areas of human activity or creativity because it possesses a method unique to it. Now, what is that method? The method of induction, method to study nature. That is why hermeneutics has formed part of a general critique of positivism in sociology, in which human action is seen as caused by social structures of various kinds. However, the difficulty of hermeneutic analysis has always been seen how to validate such interpretations?

When I said, hermeneutics has formed part of a general critique of positivism in sociology that the study of nature and the study of human action cannot be equated on equal parance; there must be different methods of analysis to study nature on the one hand and to study human action on the other in which human actions is seen as caused by social structures of various kinds.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of hermeneutic analysis has always been that how to validate interpretations.

Suppose, x has been interpreted by you and by me, but what is the way to validate. Your interpretation maybe different from my interpretation. But, how are you going to validate? This is the problem within hermeneutics. On the face of it, one interpretation of the meaning of an action or text is as good as another. The solution offered to this problem as we have already discussed that is the hermeneutics circle.

That if, I say for example a painting is understood by reference to the outlook or the worldview of the society in which it is a problem. Similarly, the interpreter or the analyst can construct such a worldview out of its individual manifestations and this circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as hermeneutics circle.

A slide with a light gray background. On the left, there is a list of concepts under the heading 'Gadamer'. To the right of the list, there are handwritten notes in red ink. The notes are written in a cursive style and appear to be a summary or clarification of the concepts listed.

- Gadamer
 - Part and whole
 - Interpreter and author
 - Fusion of horizons
 - Tentative interpretations

Part in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the part

□ Gadamer

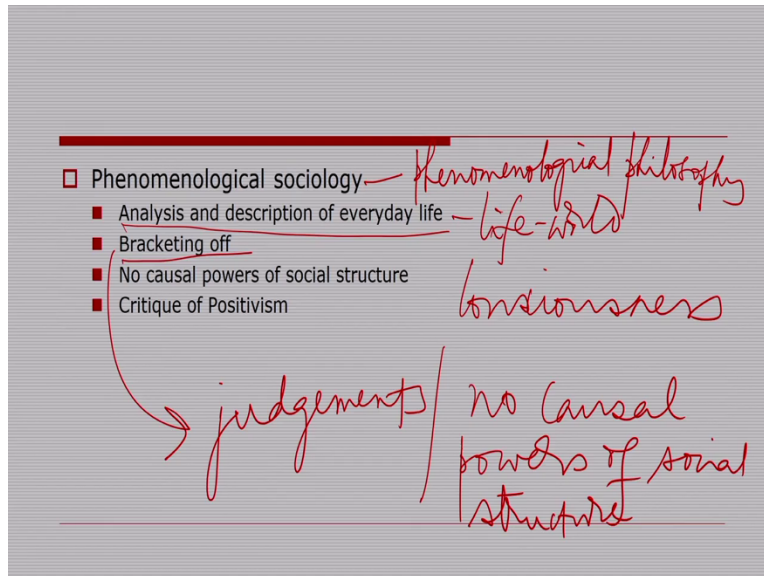
- Part and whole
- Interpreter and author
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Spatial and temporal gap between the author and the interpreter is bridged by tradition

Gadamer insists that hermeneutics has to understand the part in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the part. The interpreter or the analyst in judging a book, for example, has to recapture the perspective within which the author has formulated her or his views. For Gadamer, the spatial and temporal gap between the author and the interpreter is bridged by tradition and Gadamer calls it fusion of horizons.

Nevertheless, the gap can never be completely breached, there can never be a completely correct interpretation- you cannot say that interpretations are absolute; interpretations are always relative to the context in which they are produced historically; interpretation is historically conditioned. Because it is relative, you just cannot say that interpretation is absolute, as in the context of positivism natural sciences you have seen that science may be absolute.

But, in social sciences, in interpretive social sciences there cannot be any completely correct interpretation; interpretations are always tentative in nature and subject to revision in the hermeneutic circle. That we have already discussed hermeneutic circle, that the circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as hermeneutic circle; that is why interpretations are never absolute, interpretations are tentative in nature and so on.

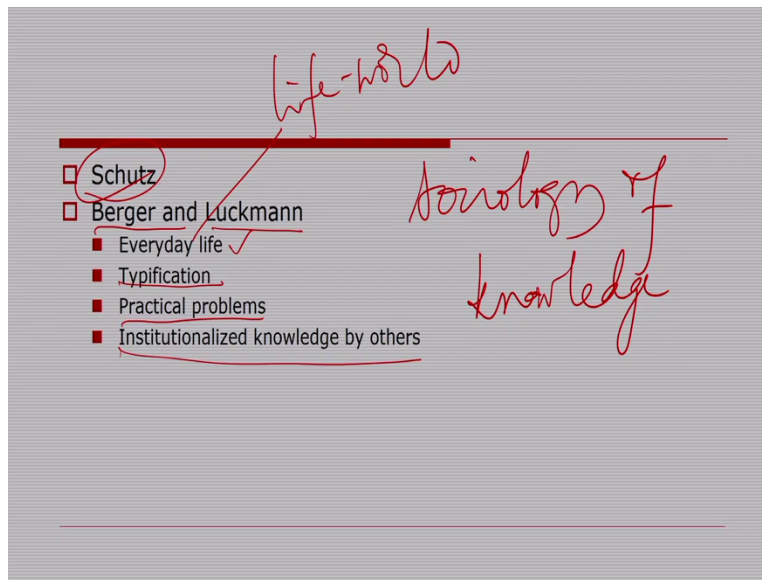


When you look at, phenomenological sociology through the works of Alfred Schutz and then we will also discuss in part time in Berger and Luckmann, the social construction of reality and then we will also discuss Verstehen. What you will find in phenomenological sociology, it is a type of sociology derived from phenomenological philosophy; phenomenological sociology takes its may name the analysis and description of everyday life. Schutz and others have very often used this term life-world, lebenswelt in English it is known as life-world. When I said phenomenological sociology takes its may name the analysis and description of everyday life that is the life-world and its associated states of consciousness; life-world and then consciousness, associated states of consciousness, intellectual consciousness, political consciousness and so on.

Studies in phenomenological sociology are carried out by bracketing of judgements about social structure- that is making no assumption about the existence or causal powers of social structure,. The proponents of phenomenology argue that, although, people generally take the everyday world for granted, a phenomenological analysis must show how it has been made up and how it has been constructed.

If I have to consider in this way, phenomenological sociology is part of the movement criticizing positivist methods in sociology. In particular, practitioners of the subject phenomenological sociology have objected to the notion that human beings are formed by social forces rather than creating the social world themselves to the neglect of the meaning of human actions and to the

use of causal analysis of human action. Phenomenologists have felt that, these features tend to neglect the uniquely human character of social interaction.



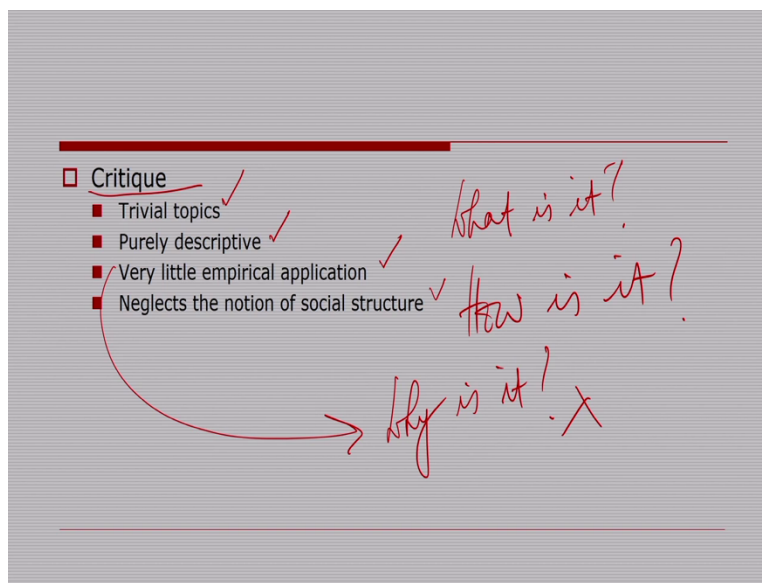
Phenomenology has entered sociology largely through the work of Alfred Schutz. However, the best known sociological study informed by phenomenological principles is that by Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1967. Berger and Luckmann's starting point is a phenomenological analysis of the knowledge appropriate to everyday life, life-world, lived experiences and so on; that is why they tried to look at the foundations of sociology of knowledge.

There must be different foundations of sociology of knowledge, we must try to question the foundation of knowledge; there cannot be any single foundation of knowledge, there must be multiple foundations of knowledge, and that is why I said Berger and Luckmann's starting point is a phenomenological analysis of the knowledge appropriate to everyday life, life-world, lebenswelt. Such knowledge is almost always characterized by typification, and we tend to classify everything types and is essentially oriented to solving practical problems.

Berger and Luckmann then suggest that this everyday knowledge is creatively produced by individuals who were also influenced by the accumulated weight of institutionalized knowledge by others. Whether it is peace, or whether it is violence, whether it is science, whether it is superstition perhaps, we always try to institutionalize them. You will find that at one point of time the state is trying to institutionalize science, at the same time you will find the state is trying

to institutionalize superstition. That is why I said that Berger and Luckmann's starting point is a phenomenological analysis of the knowledge appropriate to the lebenswelt, appropriate to the life-world, appropriate to the everyday life.

And such knowledge about everyday life, knowledge about life-world, or knowledge about lived experiences, knowledge about the lebenswelt, is almost always characterized by typification, and is essentially oriented towards solving practical problems. And Berger and Luckmann then suggest, that this everyday knowledge is creatively produced by individuals who are also influenced by the accumulated weight of institutionalized knowledge produced by others.



But, you will find that phenomenological sociology has not greatly influenced sociology as a whole and has also been subjected to extensive criticism. It has been argued that, it deals with trivial topics, it is purely descriptive in nature, it has had very little empirical application. And it also, neglects the notion of social structure. Why? The topics whether they are trivial or not we just cannot decide that these topics are trivial, these topics are not trivial we just cannot decide that.

But what the proponents of positivism have accused that hermeneutics or phenomenological sociology deals with trivial topics, phenomenological sociology is purely descriptive in nature, when I said they are purely descriptive in nature they only try to look at the question of what is it? Maybe how is it? But, perhaps they have never looked at the question of why is it?

And that is why it has it is very little empirical application- empiricism always tries to provide some explanation. What is it and how is it, they try to capture descriptive social sciences, descriptive sociology and on the contrary, the question why is it tries to address the explanatory question. And thus, phenomenological sociology also neglects the notion of the social structure. In this sense there is a critique of phenomenological sociology.

□ Schutz's phenomenological sociology:

- wanted to construct an adequate theory of social action, partly based on a critique of Weber
- carried out a series of investigations into the construction of the life-world
- tried to investigate the manner in which a sociology that took human action as important could be scientific

Explanation | *Understanding*
Verstehen

Schutz's phenomenological sociology wanted to construct an adequate theory of social action partly based on a critique of Max Weber. Schutz's did not want to look at that typology of social action, that traditional social action, effective or emotive social action, value rational social action, goal rational social action by Weber.

Rather Schutz's phenomenological sociology carried out a series of investigations into the construction of the life-world that is lebenswelt. How our everyday life is being constructed? Under what circumstances we tend to construct our life world, everyday life and so on. Whether we are trying to construct our life-world or we are the subjects of construction of the life-world, or we have been reduced to the objects while constructing the life-world.

Schutz's phenomenological sociology also tried to investigate the manner in which a sociology that took human action as important could be scientific. Whether the study of human action can be absolutely scientific or not. Precisely because there must be different methods to understand the study of nature on the one hand, and the study of human action on the other.

There is a marked difference between the study of nature, and the study of human action. While studying nature, we need the method of explanation then while, studying human action we must adapt the method of understanding, then there is a marked difference between the method of explanation on the one hand and the method of understanding on the other. Then we go back to Weberian form of understanding, Weberian form of Verstehen if, you slightly recall we have, discussed Verstehen in the third and in the fourth weeks. Especially, fourth week when we discussed methodological individualism, meaningful social action, interpretative understanding of social action, observatory understanding and explanatory understanding, ideal types and so on, But, in the context of the controversies between positivism on the one hand and hermeneutic tradition on the other we will try to look at Verstehen.

Verstehen:

- Critique of positivist or naturalist sociology
- Not from outside
- Not based on natural sciences
- Individual/social actions
- Meanings / meaningful social action
- Cognitive empathy
- Interpretations

Understanding

Meanings

Understanding the need / role of the other

Now, Verstehen as you know it is understanding of social actions, individual actions and so on. This concept Verstehen, has formed part of a critique of positivistic or naturalist sociology. It is argued that sociology should not analyze human action from outside by copying the methods of natural sciences. Because, the method of understanding must be different from the method of natural sciences' the method of explanation, instead the sociology should recognize the meanings which are attached to individual's actions.

Verstehen is the procedure by which sociologists can have access to these meanings. Weber defined sociology as being concerned with meaningful social action. Verstehen consists of placing oneself in the position of the other people to see what meaning they give to their actions.

That is nothing but cognitive empathy- if I have to understand the others position, then I have to place myself in other's shoes. If I have to understand the problem of the farming community, if I have to understand the problem of the migrant workers, then I have to I must put myself in their positions to understand them; that calls for nothing but cognitive empathy. What is cognitive empathy?- understanding the need or role of the other. Verstehen consists of placing oneself in the position of the other people to see what meaning they give to their actions. For example, if sociologists wish to analyze the social circumstances of waving, they must have some basis for deciding which cases for flapping one's arm up or down or waving, and which means something else.

Not to be able to investigate the meaning of the actions, may be seriously misleading, in that actions might all be put together in one category when they actually belong in different ones. To some extent the inspection of meaning involved here is simply an extension of everyday attempts to understand action.

Nevertheless, Weber wishes to go further by reconciling interpretations of action by Verstehen with causal explanation. That is why have always mentioned maintained that Weberian theoretical positions and methodological writings are always usually characterized as affecting reconciliation between positivist and neo-kantian positions. That is why Weber wishes to go further by reconciling interpretation of action by Verstehen with causal explanations. When I said interpretation of action by Verstehen that is Neo-Kantian position and when I said causal explanation that is a positivistic position.

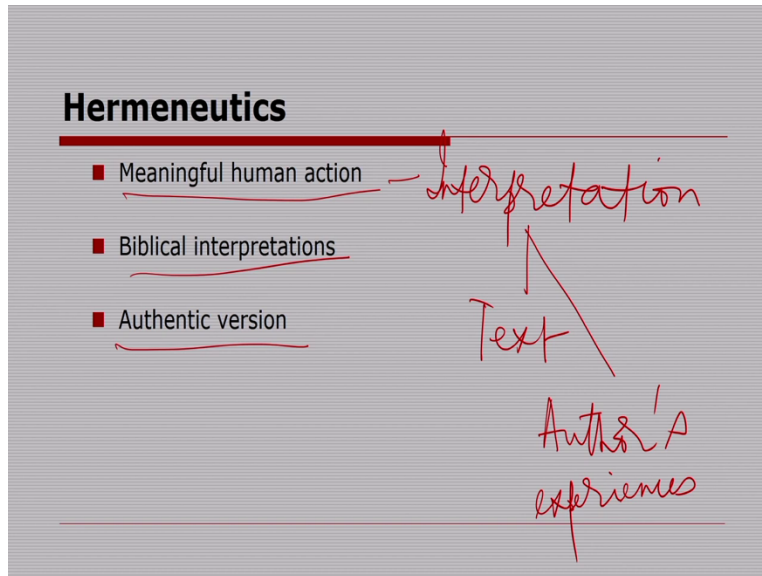
It is not entirely clear, what is meant here? And interpreters of Weber have variously suggested that Verstehen merely generates causal hypothesis or that meanings can function as causes. The use of Verstehen has been criticized, from two points of view.

□ Critique

- On the one hand, sociologists have argued that there is no way of validating *Verstehen* interpretations
- On the other hand, it has been suggested that the attempt to reconcile causal and *Verstehen* analysis actually ends up by denying the actor's point of view

Positivism versus Hermeneutics

- Natural Sciences and Social Sciences ✓
 - Objectivity and Subjectivity in Social Sciences ✓
 - Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions ✓
-



On the one hand, sociologists have argued that there is no way of validating Verstehen interpretations and on the other hand one is about the question of validity. And on the other it has been suggested that the attempt to reconcile causal and Verstehen interpretation of action actually ends up by denying the actors point of view.

If you look at the critique of Verstehen you will find that in sociology, hermeneutics is the interpretation and understanding of social events through analysis of their meanings and for the human participants in the events. It enjoyed prominence during the 1960's and 1970's and differs from other interpretive schools of sociology in that it emphasizes the importance of both context and form within any given social behavior.

Then what have we discussed in this lecture? Quickly we will try to recapitulate whatever we have discussed till now. We started with the controversies between positivistic sociology and hermeneutics phenomenological sociology in terms of three parameters, natural sciences and social sciences, objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences, quantitative and qualitative research traditions. We have discussed hermeneutics, in terms of meaningful social action and others.

Verstehen
Interpretation

□ **Dilthey:** Two methods

- In the first, the focus was on the relationship of the creator of an act, a book or a picture to the interpreter. The latter understands by putting herself/himself in the position of the former. Understanding is possible because both share a common humanity or, in another formulation, because they are both expressions of the Spirit.
- In the second, the characteristics of individuals are disregarded. Instead, **hermeneutics** understands human action in relation to some wider whole which gives it meaning. For example, a painting is understood by reference to the outlook or worldview of the society in which it is problem. Similarly, the analyst can construct such a worldview out of its individual manifestations. This circular relationship between a whole and its parts is known as a hermeneutic circle.

All knowledge except scientific knowledge, is socially and culturally

□ **Mannheim:** Individual and cultural manifestations, part of larger world view

- Documentary meaning to Human actions *conditioned*
- No intentions but worldview ✓
- Critique of positivism in sociology
- Human actions caused by social structures
- Validity — how to validate interpretations
- Hermeneutics circle

- Gadamer
 - Part and whole
 - Interpreter and author
 - Fusion of horizons
 - Tentative interpretations

Spatial and temporal gap between the author and the interpreter is bridged by tradition

How Dilthey provided two methods. Because, Dilthey argued that there is a marked difference between the study of nature and the study of human action therefore, he suggested two methods which are important to study human action.

Then we have discussed, hermeneutic circle and Mannheimian position also we have discussed then the way Mannheim took a more positivistic position, still he tried to look at individual and cultural manifestations part of a larger worldview and then we have discussed critique of positivism in sociology.

Gadamer's position part and whole interpreter and author and the way we have discussed spatial, the spatial and temporal gap between the author and the interpreter is bridged by tradition perhaps, and what Gadamer says that, calls fusion of horizons perhaps such gap can never be breached completely. Because no interpretation can be absolutely correct because interpretations are always tentative in nature.

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- Phenomenological sociology
 - Analysis and description of everyday life
 - Bracketing off
 - No causal powers of social structure
 - Critique of Positivism
-

-
- Schutz
 - Berger and Luckmann
 - Everyday life ✓
 - Typification
 - Practical problems
 - Institutionalized knowledge by others
-

life-world

sociology of knowledge

□ Critique

- On the one hand, sociologists have argued that there is no way of validating *Verstehen* interpretations
- On the other hand, it has been suggested that the attempt to reconcile causal and *Verstehen* analysis actually ends up by denying the actor's point of view

And then, we have discussed phenomenological sociology Berger and Luckmann reflections on everyday life typification and others. And there is a critique of phenomenological sociology.

□ Schutz's phenomenological sociology:

- wanted to construct an adequate theory of social action, partly based on a critique of Weber
- carried out a series of investigations into the construction of the life-world
- tried to investigate the manner in which a sociology that took human action as important could be scientific

Explanation

Understanding

Verstehen

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- Verstehen:
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Meanings
Understanding the real/role of the other

Positivism versus Hermeneutics

- Natural Sciences and Social Sciences ✓
- Objectivity and Subjectivity in Social Sciences ①
- Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions ②

Then we have discussed Schutz's phenomenological sociology as he wanted to construct an adequate theory of social action partly based on a critique of Weber. And Schutz's phenomenological sociology carried out a series of investigations into the construction of the life-world and also Schutz's phenomenological sociology tried to investigate the manner in which sociology that human action could be scientific.

Then we have discussed Verstehen. Then critique of positivist or naturalist sociology. Because, one cannot examine an action from outside. Verstehen is not based on natural sciences. But, rather based on human action. We have discussed individual social actions and how meanings

are attached to individual social action. We have also discussed understanding the need of the other understanding the role of the other in terms of cognitive empathy.

And we have also discussed interpretations of human action and there we have also provided a critique of phenomenological critique of Verstehen and the central principal of sociological hermeneutics is that, it is only possible to know the meaning of an act or statement within the context of the discourse or worldview from which it originates. Context is critical to comprehension. An action or event that carries substantial weight to one person or cultural may be viewed as meaningless or entirely different to another.

Now, for example giving up thumbs up gesture is widely accepted as a sign of job well done in the United States of America while, other cultures view it as an insult. Similarly, putting a piece of paper into a box might be considered a meaningless act unless it is put into the context of democratic elections, the act of putting a ballot paper into a box.

In the next lecture, in the 19th lecture we are going to discuss the controversies arising out of the difference between positivism and hermeneutics not only as theoretical constructs but as methodological devices. We are going to consider objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences and quantitative and qualitative research traditions when we look at the controversies between positivism and hermeneutics.

Thank you.