

**Philosophical Foundations of Social Research**  
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**Week 8 : Lecture 20**  
**Philosophy of Social Sciences: Taking Stock**

Hello everyone. This is the 20th lecture of this Massive Open Online Course on Philosophical Foundations of Social Research.

**Course outline**

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<b>Week 7 (2 Lectures)</b>	<b>Week 8 (2 Lectures)</b>
<b>Positivism versus hermeneutics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural sciences versus social sciences</li><li>• Objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences</li><li>• Quantitative and qualitative research traditions</li></ul>	<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beginning of the end of philosophy of social sciences</li><li>• Overview of the course</li></ul>

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We have already covered seven weeks of this course. And now, we are in the eighth week of this course: in terms of two lectures in this week what we are going to do? We are going to discuss, beginning of the end of **the** philosophy of the social sciences. We do not believe in the epistemology, the methodology, we do not believe in the philosophy of social sciences and then we will provide an overview of the course. Now, in this lecture we are going to discuss philosophy of the social sciences.

## Philosophy of the Social Sciences

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Naturalism and  
the unity of  
scientific method

Critiques of  
naturalism

Methodological  
individualism  
versus holism

What do social  
sciences do?

Methodological  
pluralism

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Philosophy of the social sciences can be captured in term of five parameters.

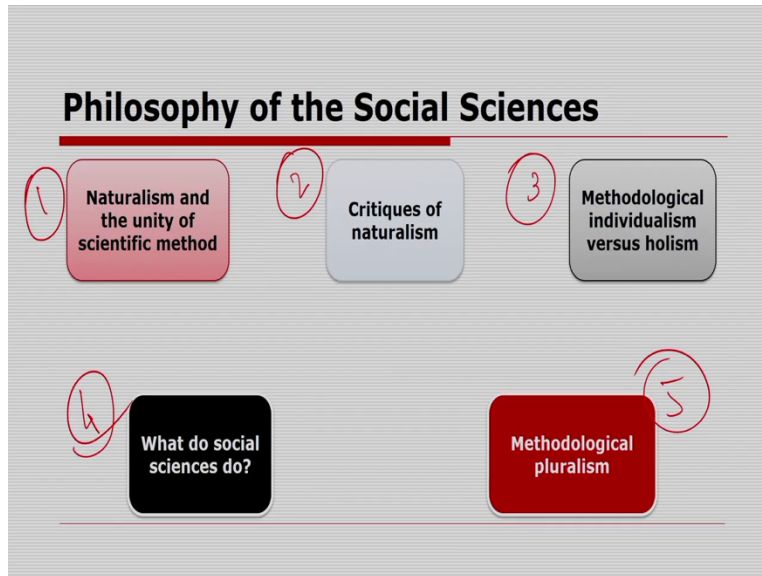
## Philosophy of the Social Sciences

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- Descriptive: rational reconstruction of social sciences
- Prescriptive or normative: critique of social sciences

Two aims

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But before doing this, the philosophy of the social sciences can be described broadly as having two aims; one is descriptive and the other prescriptive or normative. When I say descriptive aim, philosophy of the social sciences seeks to produce a rational reconstruction of social sciences. This entails describing the philosophical assumptions that underpin the practice of social inquiry just as the philosophy of natural science seeks to lay bare the methodological and ontological assumption that guide scientific investigation of natural phenomena.

Secondly, when I say prescriptive or normative, philosophy of the social sciences seeks to critique the social sciences with the aim of enhancing their ability to explain the social world or otherwise improve our understanding of it. Thus, philosophy of social sciences is both descriptive as well as prescriptive or normative in nature. As such it concerns a number of interrelated questions, what are these questions?

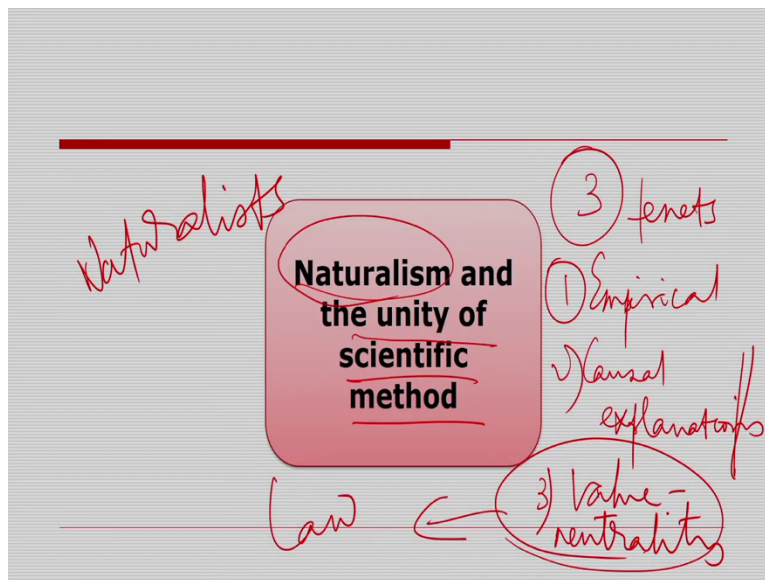
These include what is the method of social sciences or what may be the possible methods of social sciences? Does social sciences use the same methods as natural science? If not, should it aspire to or are the methods appropriate to social inquiry fundamentally different from those of natural sciences? Is scientific investigation of the social world even possible? If it is possible is it desirable?

What type of knowledge does social inquiry produce? Can the social sciences be objective? Can the social sciences be neutral? Can the social sciences be value neutral? Should social sciences

strive to be objective? Should social sciences strive to be value neutral? Or can the social world represent a unique realm of inquiry with its own properties and laws?

Or can the regularities and their properties of the social world be reduced to facts about individuals? In this lecture, what we are going to do, we will survey how philosophers of social sciences have addressed and debated these questions. We are going to discuss these questions against the backdrop of these five parameters.

One, naturalism and the unity of scientific method; two critiques of naturalism; three, methodological individualism versus holism; four, what do social sciences do? And five methodological pluralism. In terms of these five parameters, let us discuss, one by one. We will start with naturalism and the unity of scientific method.



## Philosophy of the Social Sciences

- Descriptive: rational reconstruction of social sciences
- Prescriptive or normative: critique of social sciences

Two aims

The achievements of the natural sciences in the wake of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century in England have been most impressive. Their investigation of nature, has produced elegant and powerful theories that have not only greatly enhanced understanding of the natural world, but also increased human power and control over it.

For example, modern physics has shed light on such mysteries as the origin of the universe and the source of the sun's energy and it has also spawned technology that has led to supercomputers, nuclear energy and bombs and space exploration. Natural science is manifestly progressive in so far as over time its theories tend to increase in depth, range and predictive power.

It is also consensual in the sense that there is general agreement among natural scientists regarding what the aims of science are and how to conduct it, including how to evaluate theories. At least in the long run natural science tends to produce consent regarding which theories are valid. Given this evident success many philosophers and social theorists have been eager to import the methods of natural science to the study of the social world.

If social sciences were to achieve the explanatory and predictive power of natural science it could help solve fixing social problems such as violence and poverty, improve the importance of institutions and generally foster human well-being. Those who believe that adopting the aims and methods of natural sciences to social inquiry is both possible and desirable, support the unity of scientific method.

And such advocacy in this context, is also referred to as naturalism. Those who suggest that social sciences must follow the methods of natural sciences they and those who suggest that social inquiry and the social sciences must follow the methods of natural sciences and they support the unity of scientific method, such advocacy in this context is also referred to as naturalism.

Of course, the effort to unify social and natural science requires reaching some agreement on or about what the aims and methods of science are or should be. In this context positivism is very important. The genesis of positivism can be traced to the ideas of British empiricists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century including most notably John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

As an epistemological doctrine, we have seen how empiricism in essence holds that genuine knowledge of the external world must be grounded in experience and observation. In the nineteenth century, we have also discussed how August Comte who coined the term, positivism argued that all theories, concepts or entities that are incapable of being verified empirically must be purged from scientific explanations.

The aim of scientific explanation is prediction as August Comte argued rather than trying to understand a noumenal realm that lies beyond our senses and is thus unknowable. If we cannot experience something, if we cannot see something, if we cannot observe something, then that is not real according to positivists and empiricists.

And that is why we have also discussed how rationalist said suggested that science begins only when we go beyond observations; on the contrary what positivists and empiricists suggested that science begins with observations must remain at the level of observations and must end with observations.

But what rationalists suggested that no, science begins only when you go beyond observations that is how sciences becomes trans-observational in nature. For a variety of reasons positivism began to fall out of favor among philosophers of science beginning in the later half of the twentieth century. Perhaps its most problematic feature was the logical positivist's commitment to the verifiability criterion of meaning. We have already discussed how Popper replaced verifiability with falsifiability.

Not only did this implausible relegate slew of traditional philosophical questions to the category of meaningless, it also called into question the validity of employing unobservable theoretical entities, processes and forces in natural sciences theories. Logical positivists held that in principle the properties of unobservables such as electrons, quarks and genes could be translated into observable effects in practice, nevertheless such derivations generally proved impossible.

And reading unobservable entities, their explanatory role would require dispensing with the most successful science of the twentieth century. Despite the collapse of positivism as a philosophical movement, it continues to exercise influence on contemporary advocates of the unity of scientific method.

Though there are important disagreements amongst naturalists about the proper methodology of science three core tenets, that trace their origin to positivism can be identified. First, advocates of naturalism remain wedded to the view that sciences is fundamentally an empirical enterprise. Second, most naturalists hold that the primary aim of science is to produce causal explanations grounded in law like regularities. And finally, naturalists typically support value neutrality: the view that the role of science is to describe and explain the world not to make any value judgment.

At a minimum, an empirical approach for the social sciences requires producing theories about the social world that can be tested via observation and experimentation. Indeed, as a matter of fact, many naturalists support this view. First proposed by Karl Popper that the line demarcating science from non-science is empirical falsifiability or you can say systematic falsifiability. According to this view if there is no imaginable empirical test that could show a theory to be false then it cannot be called a scientific theory.

Producing empirically falsifiable theories in turn necessitates creating techniques for systematically and precisely measuring the social world. Much of the twentieth century social sciences involved the formation of such tools including figuring out ways to operationalize social phenomena, that is, conceptualize them in such a way that can be measured the data produced by operations in turn produced the raw empirical material to construct and test theories.

At the practical level ensuring that scientific theories are subject to proper empirical rigor requires establishing an institutional framework through which a community of social scientists

can try to test each other's theories and thus you will find the purpose of a theory according to naturalists is to produce causal explanations of events or regularities found in the natural and social worlds.

Indeed, this is the primary of aim of science according to naturalists. For instance you will find astronomers may wish to explain the appearance of Halley's comet on at regular intervals of 75 years or they might want to explain a particular event as such as the collision of the comet, scientific explanations of such regularities or events in turn require identification of law like regularities law that govern such phenomena.

An event or regularity is formally explained when its occurrence is shown to be logically necessary given certain causal laws and boundary conditions. This so-called covering law model thus views explanation as adhering to the structure of a deductive argument with the laws and boundary conditions serving as premises in a syllogism.

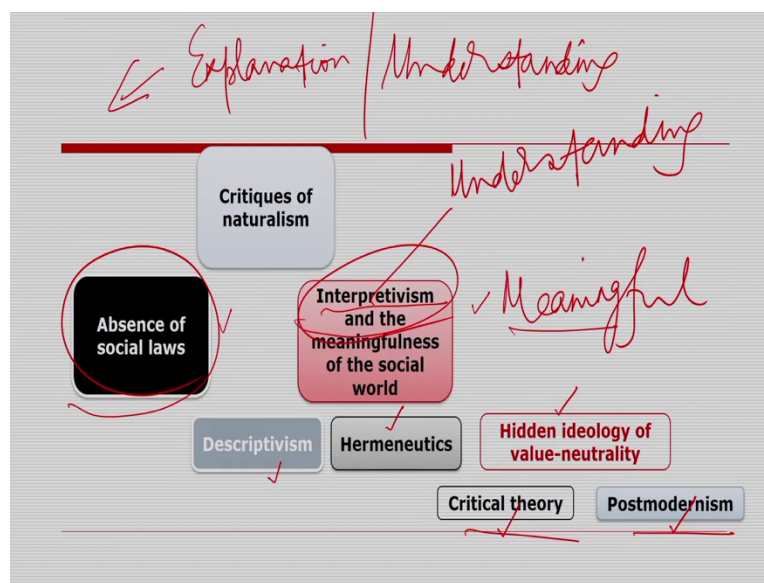
The doctrine of the value neutrality is grounded in the so-called fact-value dichotomy, that we have already discussed in the central tenets of positivism, which traces its origin to David Hume's claim that an ought cannot be derived from an is. Normative questions cannot be derived from descriptive questions, that is factual statements about the world can never logically compel a particular moral evaluation. For instance, based on scientific evidence biologists must conclude that violence and competition are natural human traits. But such a factual claim itself does not tell us whether violence and competition are good or bad, they are moral questions. According to advocates of naturalism, the same holds true for claims about the social world. For instance, political scientists might be able to tell us which social political and material conditions are conducive to the development of democracy. But according to this view a scientific explanation of the causes of democracy cannot tell us whether we ought to strive to bring about democracy or whether democracy itself is a good thing; we do not know in as so far as the proponents of naturalism are concerned. Science can help us better understand how to manipulate the social world to help us achieve our goals, but it cannot tell us what those goals ought to be. To believe otherwise, is to fall prey to the so-called naturalistic fallacy.

And in this context, what we are trying to do here? When I say naturalistic fallacy nevertheless, value neutrality does not bar social scientists from providing an account of the values that



individuals hold or nor does it prevent them from trying to discern the effects that values might have on individual's behavior or social phenomena.

As a matter of fact, Max Weber, a central figure in late nineteenth and early twentieth century sociology and a defender of value neutrality in his "the methodology of the social sciences", insisted that providing a reach a count of individual's values is a key task for social scientists. At the same time, Max Weber maintained, that social scientists can and should keep their ethical judgment of people's values separate from their scientific analysis of the nature and effects of those values on nature, on individuals, on individual social action and so on.



And from here, we tend to move on to a critique of naturalism. When we discuss critiques of naturalism, it can be divided into two parts, one the absence of laws and interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world. Again, interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world can be classified into three types. One is descriptivism, hermeneutics and hidden ideology of value neutrality. And hidden ideology of value neutrality, can be classified into two parts; one is critical theory, and the other postmodernism, we will discuss this.

Naturalism has been highly influential in the social sciences, especially since the middle of the twentieth century and particularly in the United States of America. Movements to make social inquiry genuinely scientific have dominated many fields most notably political science and economics. However, whether these efforts have been successful is contestable and naturalism has been subjected to wide-ranging criticism. Some critiques point to what they view as

formidable obstacles to subjecting the social world to scientific investigation. These include the possible absence of social laws or social law-like regularities at the social level, the complexity of the social environment and the difficulty of conducting controlled experiments. These represent practical difficulties nevertheless and do not necessarily force the conclusion that modeling social inquiry on the natural sciences is doomed to failure. Proponents of interpretive social inquiry as more radical critiques of naturalism argue that, the approach is thoroughly misconceived.

Advocates of interpretive social sciences claim that, the aim of social investigation should be to enhance our understanding of a meaningful social world rather than to produce causal explanations of social phenomena grounded in universal laws. In addition, many proponents of interpretive social inquiry can also cast doubt on the possibility as well as the desirability of naturalism's goals of objectivity and value neutrality. The skepticism that the proponents of interpretive school of social sciences have demonstrated, is shared by two others influential schools of social inquiry known as critical theory and post-modernism

But opponents of these approaches also emphasize the various ways in which social sciences can mask domination in society and generally serve to reinforce the status quo. Criticisms, let us see, we will start with absence of social laws. Among critiques who point to practical obstacles impeding efforts to model social inquiry on the natural sciences, perhaps their most important objection questions the very existence of law like regularities in the social world. The way you find laws in natural sciences, you may not find that find that kind of law in social sciences.

They argue that the stringent criteria that philosophers of science have established for deeming an observed regularity to be an authentic law like regularity cannot be met by proposed social laws. For a regularity to be deemed a genuine law of nature, the standard view holds that it must be universal, that is it must apply in all times and places. For example, the second law of thermodynamics is held to apply everywhere in the universe and at points in the past and future in addition the types of laws of most importance to science are causal laws. A law may be described as causal, as opposed to a mere accidental regularity if it represents some kind of natural necessity, a force or power in nature that governs the behavior of phenomena.

Whether, there are genuine law-like regularities that govern social phenomena is not at all clear. Rather in any event you will find no laws governing the social world have been discovered that

met the demanding criteria of natural sciences. To be sure, social scientists have identified many social regularities some of which they have even dubbed social laws- examples from the discipline of economics would include the laws of supply and demand, from political science we may find we find Robert Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy, which holds that popular movements regardless of how democratically inclined over time will become hierarchical in structure. Another proposed law of politics in Duverger's law which posits the two party system will emerge in political systems that feature simple majority single ballot electoral systems. But upon closure inspection these laws fail to meet the criteria for genuine law like regularities that we have found in natural sciences. Sometimes particularly in economics which boasts more purported laws than the other social sciences, the laws merely describe logical relationships between concepts. These may be true by definition, but because they do not describe the empirical world they are not scientific laws.

On the contrary social laws that claim to describe empirical regularities, invariably turned out to be imprecise, exception ridden and time bound or place bound rather than precise and universal. Consider the law of demand from economics which holds that consumer demand for a good will increase if prices go up and increase in prices go down. Though this pattern typically occurs it is not without exception sometimes increasing the price of a good also increases the demand for it; this may happen when consumers interpret a higher price as signaling higher quality or because purchasing an expensive good provides an opportunity for conspicuous consumption, wasteful expenditure as a display of status.

Moreover, the law of demand is a weak law: it merely specifies an inverse relationship between price and demand, unlike the more precise laws of natural science it does not specify the magnitude of the expected change. You can go ahead with, many other examples like, rational choice theory and so on: that you will find that the kind of law like regularities that we may find in natural science, you may not find in the case of social sciences.

You look at, examples from Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, August Comte, Emil Durkheim, Max Weber as well as the numerous advocates of behaviorism or positivism in the twentieth century. But in the end the consensus on method and the hope for scientific progress have failed to materialize today, and therein lies the significance of interpretive school of social sciences.

Advocates of interpretivism propose an approach to social inquiry grounded in profoundly different assumptions about the nature of the social world than those who support naturalism. In particular, the proponents of interpretive school of social sciences assert that the social world is fundamentally unlike the natural world in so far as the social world is meaningful in a way that the natural world is not.

This difference, can be made clear by considering a difference between human action and the behavior of entities or systems found in the natural world. If we have to compare human action on the one hand and the study of nature on the other, then we will find that there is an action by an individual that we wish to explain. For example, voting at a school board meeting for a particular proposal.

Imagine that the individual votes for a measure by raising his hand. The act of voting entails more than a particular physical movement, however, in fact in different situations the same physical behavior of hand raising could indicate different things posing a question; if I simply raise my hand, maybe I want to pose a question, maybe I want to vote for somebody's proposal, maybe I will point to the ceiling, yawning and so forth.

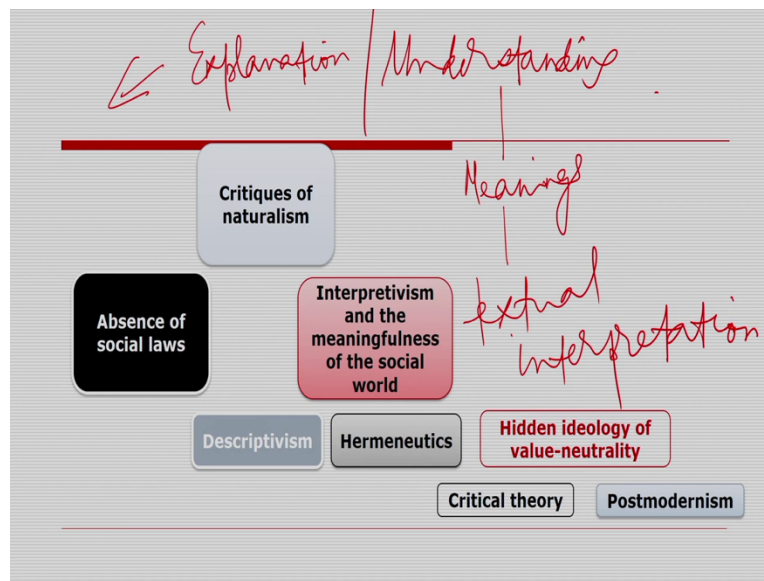
Thus, to adequately explain the person's behavior, it is not enough to explain the physical processes that caused the hand raising. As a matter of fact, indeed in most cases of social inquiry what we generally find? That the physical processes will be irrelevant to the explanation of the behavior rather, what is required is an account of the meaning behind the action.

That is why Weber suggested that value rational social action, goal rational social action, they are meaningful social action. Why? Because they are reflective in nature. In this example, that would be an account of what the person meant by raising his hand or her hand namely to vote. There is no equivalent type of explanation in the physical sciences. Astronomers for instance might wish to explain the orbital path of a comet. To do so, they cite relevant natural laws and conditions that produce the comet's orbital trajectory. But the motion of the comet has no meaning per say in need of explanation.

What implication does the meaningful nature of the social world have for further methods and aims of social inquiry? According to interpretivists, it implies that the key aim of social inquiry

should be to enhance our understanding of the social world's meanings as opposed to producing causal explanations of social phenomena.

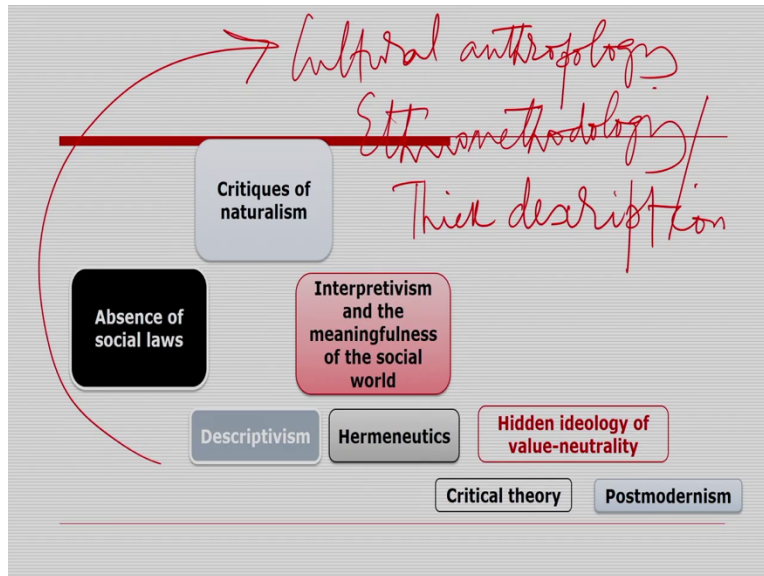
Then are two ways to produce knowledge, one is explanation and, the other understanding. Explanation was propounded by positivists, by naturalists and understanding is propounded by the interpretive school, by Verstehen method.



Interpretivists often compare social inquiry to textual interpretation. The aim of textual interpretation is to make sense of a novel, play essay, religious document or other text by laying bare the beliefs, intentions, connections and context that comprise their meaning.

Similarly, interpretivists suggest that the aim of social inquiry should be to make sense of the actions, beliefs, social practices, rituals, value systems, institutions and other elements that comprise the social world. This involves uncovering the intensions and beliefs that inform human action, which in turn requires making sense of the broader social context in which those beliefs, intentions and actions reside.

Interpretive social sciences have been foregrounded in terms of three parameters: One, is descriptivism, secondly hermeneutics, thirdly hidden ideology of value neutrality. Please do not think that they are separate, but just for the sake of convenience I have tried to classify them.



Interpretive school has drawn much of its inspiration from the fields of cultural anthropology and ethnomethodology: the study of how people make sense of their everyday life. Indeed, some advocates of interpretive social inquiry wish to make the aims and methods of these approaches the exemplar of all social inquiry like Garfinkel. Harold Garfinkel who precisely advocated for ethnomethodology.

A key goal of cultural anthropology for example, is to make sense of the beliefs, norms, practices and rituals of foreign cultures. For example, suppose an anthropologist wishes to explain a particular religious ceremony practiced by a hunter-gatherer tribe. According to interpretivists, the aim of such inquiry has nothing to do with identifying relevant law-like regularities or causal mechanisms that govern the ceremony, nor should the litmus test of a successful explanation be the ability to generate predictions about the tribe's behavior in the ceremony.

Although the capacity to predict behavior might be a by-product of such inquiry, rather the anthropologist's aim should be to make sense of the purpose and meaning of the ceremony. Naturally this would require producing an account of how the members of the tribe understand their economy, but it would also entail placing the ceremony within the broader context of the tribe's values, world views, practices or institutions.

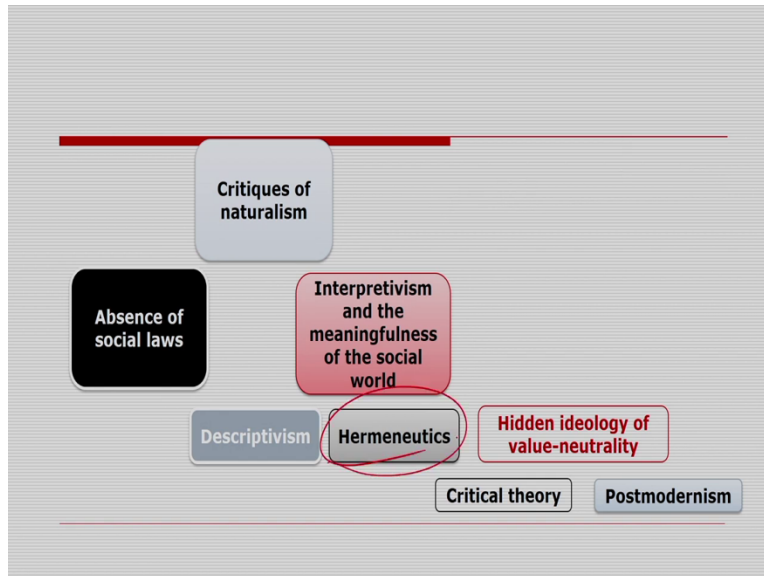
The end product of such investigation would be a so-called thick description that enhances our understanding of the tribe rather than a causal explanation of their behavior. This kind of inquiry has been labeled descriptivism; detailing of you can look at perhaps for example, M N Srinivas'

work, 'the field worker in the field', 'the remembered village', detailing of the experiences that he had with our social change in modern India. You look at the works of Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliff-Brown, they depict thick description of their data detailing their field work.

Many social scientists and philosophers acknowledge that, advocates of descriptivism have identified an important difference between the natural and social worlds. And there is no doubt that thick descriptions of foreign cultures that the approach produces have greatly enhanced our understanding of them. This in turn has increased understanding of human society, generally, in so far as it has revealed great diversity of human beliefs, values, traditions and practices. However, the claim that the primary goal of social inquiry should be to produce thick descriptions has been subjected to serious criticism from advocates of naturalism as well as from critiques who identify with the interpretive approach.

A key objection to descriptivism is that, it would limit interpretive inquiry to describing cultures on societies in their own terms leaving no room for criticizing the beliefs, values or self-understanding of those cultures or societies. Clearly the objection runs: this is unsatisfactory, for persons or even cultures collectively can be unaware or deeply misguided about how their societies really function and some beliefs and values operative in a society may be incoherent, contradictory, self-defeating or even delusional.

Surely a primary task of social inquiry must be to offer accounts that are more penetrating and critical than descriptivism can offer. If I have to quote Charles Taylor as he said, the primary aim of social investigation is to tell us 'what is really going on?'. Then descriptivism falls far short of this goal.



And therein lies the significance of hermeneutics tradition. An important criticism of descriptivism challenges the notion, that the role of the social scientists is to simply to re-express the ideas, beliefs, values and self-understandings of a culture or society by adopting the viewpoint of its inhabitants.

This criticism has been developed by advocates of an alternative and influential version of interpretive theory that draws on the philosophical hermeneutics of continental thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricard as well as Anglo-American theorists working within this tradition most notably teller. We have already discussed, Gadamer and others; we have discussed Dilthey also; when Dilthey said that there must be a marked difference between the study of nature on the one hand and the study of human action on the other.

These theorists argue that coming to understand a culture or society or another individual or even a text or work or art does not involve producing an objective description of an independent object. In a sense that philosophical hermeneutics approach rejects a subject-object ontology in which knowledge consists of an accurate representation of an external world in the mind of a subject. Instead explaining the beliefs of a culture or society whether our own or not entails a kind of dialogue with it.

The process of coming to understand a culture, society or social practice is analogous to a conversation with another person especially one aimed at getting to know the other person. In such a conversation, both participants may have their views challenged, their presuppositions



about the other exposed and in the process, a better understanding of themselves and their conversation partner will emerge. The same holds for attempts to understand whole societies or cultures according to the hermeneutical theorists.

Understanding is produced through a dialectical process in which the self-understanding of both parties, the investigator as well as the culture being studied, may be transformed and in striving to explain the world view embedded in a culture its values, beliefs and self-definitions we must necessarily compare and contrast those beliefs, values and self-definitions to our own that comparative framework must be there.

In doing so, we may come to see limitations, inconsistencies, contradictions, lacunae or even plain falsehoods associated with our own worldview as well as that of others understanding. As Charles Taylor suggested you will find that understanding is inseparable from criticism and this in turn is inseparable from self-criticism.

Advocates of this philosophical hermeneutics approach emphasize that such interpretive inquiry may also be applied to our own world. Taylor for instance via deep interpretive inquiry has detected a legitimation crisis at the core of contemporary western society; that legitimation crisis also you will find in Indian society today. He argues that the instrumental, goal oriented instrumental and acquisitive values of modern industrial society are in contradiction with and in fact erode other fundamental western values including genuine autonomy and community.

Hermeneutics' rejection of naturalism's subject-object epistemology, subject-object ontology and its embrace of a dialogical model of understanding also leads to a very different understanding of data in the social sciences. Taylor has argued, that naturalists wish to make data univocal, that is they seek to build theories grounded in data that will admit of only one meaning and univocal data allow for inter-subjective agreement among scientists and thus are a key source of sciences claim to objectivity.

In the natural sciences, the goal of producing univocal data is frequently achieved. Natural science's scientists do in fact often reach consensus on the meaning of data used to construct or test a theory. Supporters of such objectivity can be refuted within the tradition of hermeneutics and supporters of the hermeneutics tradition also emphasize that social inquiry is inherently evaluative; it requires both description as well as evaluation.

But more importantly one must understand how we cannot remain content with the world of explanation rather we must try to combine the world of explanation with the world of understanding; in not the way the naturalists only found that the world of explanation is adequate to explain the to understand the world to know the world. But the proponents of hermeneutics suggested that there is a marked difference between the study of nature on the one hand and the study of human action on the other. And when I said the world of explanation I refer to the study of nature and when I say thus the study of human action I refer to the hermeneutic studies.

And the proponents of interpretive school suggested that there is always a hidden ideology of value neutrality; that people very often say that science is objective, science is neutral, science is value neutral. Two important schools of thought that reject naturalism are critical theory and postmodernism; both of these approaches agree that social inquiry must be in part interpretive. They also agree with advocates of Hermeneutics that interpretation is an inherently evaluative activity, thus they reject naturalism's goal of value neutrality.

Their most important contribution to the critique of value neutrality lies in their exploration of the various ways that social sciences can serve to legitimate and reinforce oppressive values, beliefs and practices and thereby mask domination; far from being unbiased value neutrality represents a hidden ideology according to the interpretive school.

Then let us discuss critical theory quickly. Critical theory traces its origins to the Frankfurt School founded in the 1920's in Germany which included such thinkers like Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Habermas and so on. Coming out of the Marxist tradition members of the school took heart to Marx's famous conclusion from his thesis on Feuerbach, thesis 11: the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it.

Marx viewed his efforts to explain the inner workings of capitalism and the logic of history as a scientific endeavor. But he also saw social inquiry as necessarily intertwined with critiquing society and ultimately liberating mankind from oppression. Following in this vein, the original critical theorists argued that a social scientist should not and cannot be neutral observer of the social world.

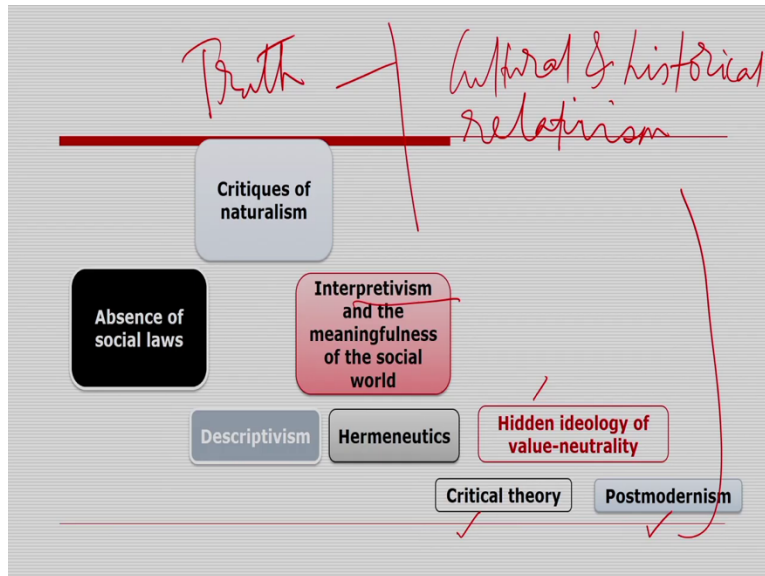
Thus the Frankfurt school sought to retain the social criticism intrinsic to Marxism, while distancing their approach from the rigidified orthodox version of the doctrine that popped up the totalitarian system in the erstwhile Soviet Union. In place of orthodox Marxism, they aimed to produce a new theory that could at once explain the failure of socialism in the western liberal democracies and also provide a critique of what they saw as oppressive features of developed capitalist societies.

Today critical theory encompasses a broader group of social theorists than solely the contemporary descendants of the Frankfurt school. Use of the term has expanded to include many other approaches such as Feminism and other liberation ideologies that claim to offer both a systematic explanation and critique of economic social and political structures, institutions or ideologies that are held to oppress people.

The aim of critical theory is human emancipation and this is accomplished in part by laying bare structural impediments to genuine freedom contradictions and incoherences in people's beliefs and values and hidden ideologies that mask domination. For critical theorists, the sources of domination and false consciousness are wide-ranging; those in the Marxist tradition for instance explore how the values, beliefs, hierarchies generated by capitalism serve to keep the working class deluded and exploited.

Feminist critical theorists, for example, examine how patriarchal values which they find deeply embedded in contemporary institutions legal systems and social values, serve to keep women subordinate.

When we come to post-modernism: the adherents of postmodernism have also been critical of the claim of social sciences to value neutrality and again like critical theorists they tend to see social sciences as a potential source of domination.



While postmodernism is a rather a loosely defined category with the views and thinkers associated with it varying widely, some key tenets of the approach can be identified. Central among them is cultural and historical relativism. According to postmodernists what counts as knowledge and truth, must be evaluated in the context of cultural and historical relativism.

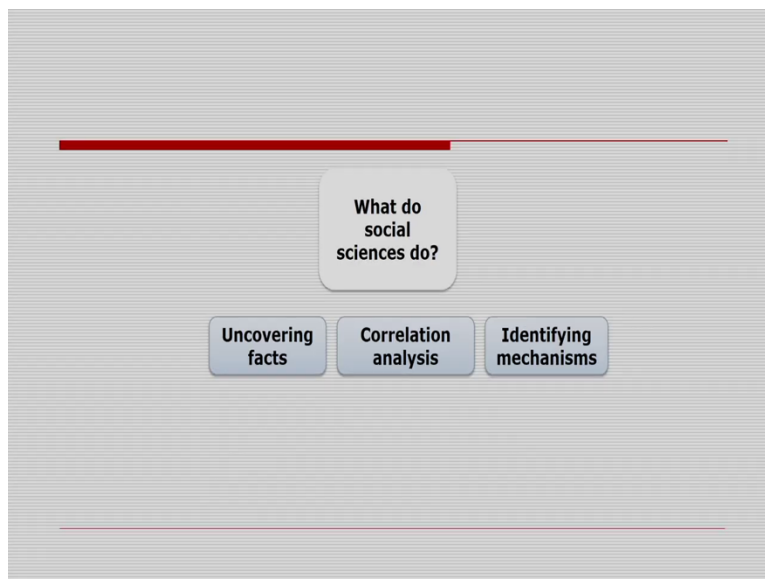
When you discuss postmodernism we must try to understand postmodernist construal of knowledge or truth in the context of questioning the project of enlightenment, in questioning the project of modernity as institution and so on, in questioning the knowledge, in questioning the epistemology. The knowledge that we talk about, the epistemology that we talk about is always constructed and so on. And that is all; if that is constructed that is how they have always tried to bring about a critique of naturalism.

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## Methodological individualism versus holism

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We have already discussed methodological individualism in the context of Weber and holism also as a counter to that Weberian standing of methodological individualism.

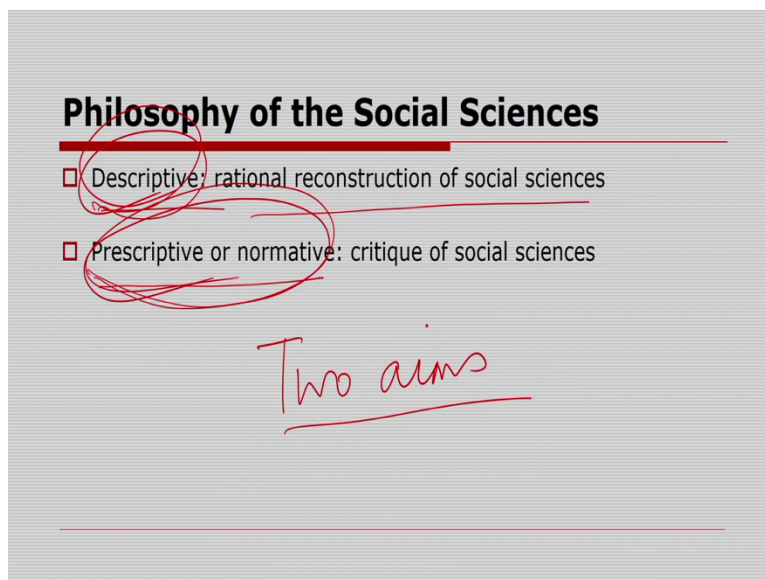


We are going to discuss in methodological individualism vs holism; what do social sciences do in terms of in uncovering facts, correlation analysis and identifying mechanisms,



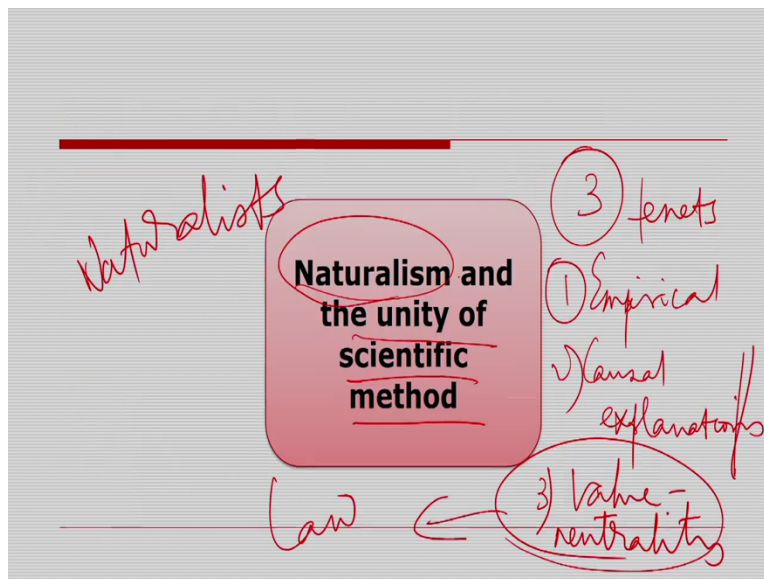
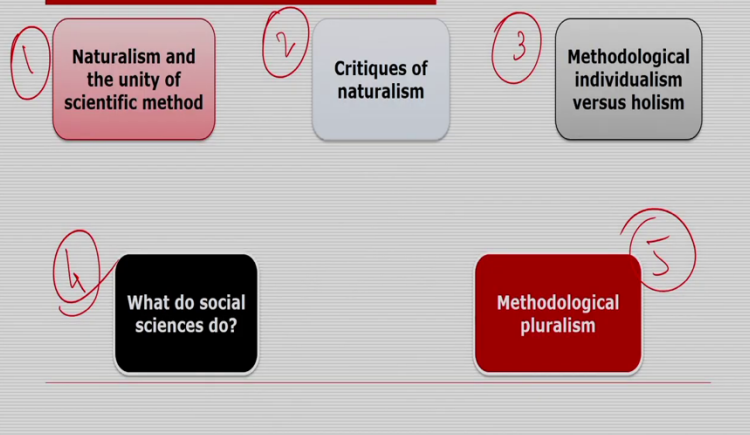
, and methodological pluralism in the next lecture with an overview of the course broadly and there we will give a closure to this course.

Then what have we discussed today.



How it marks a beginning of the end of the philosophy of social sciences; we do not believe in the epistemology, the knowledge, the truth or something- it is subject to interpretation and so on. How philosophy of social sciences seeks to bring about a rational reconstruction of social sciences which is descriptive in nature and what is more important which is prescriptive or normative in nature to bring up in bringing about a critique of the social sciences.

## Philosophy of the Social Sciences



The aim of this week's lecture is to look at philosophy of the social sciences broadly in terms of five parameters: one naturalism and the unity of scientific method, secondly critiques of naturalism, thirdly methodological individualism versus holism, fourthly what do social sciences do and fifthly methodological pluralism. In today's lecture we have discussed, we have discussed, naturalism and the unity of scientific method and critiques of naturalism in terms of absence of social laws and interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world.

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## Methodological individualism versus holism

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What do social sciences do?

Uncovering facts

Correlation analysis

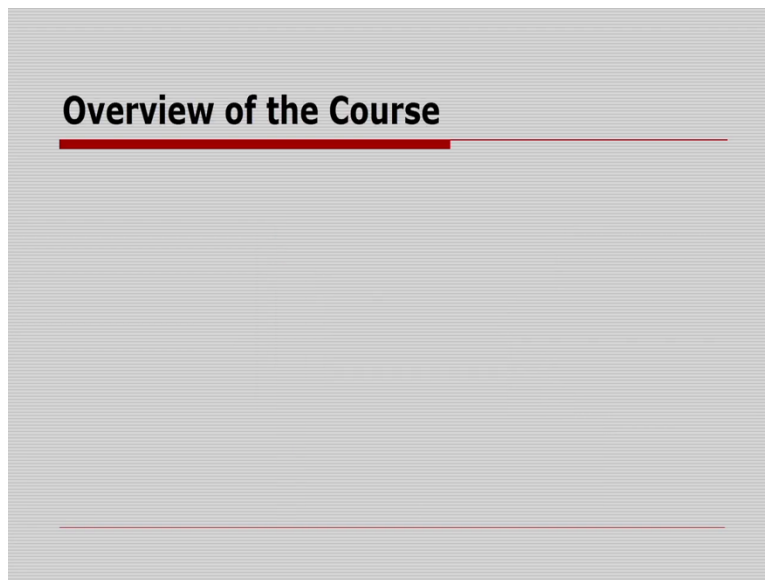
Identifying mechanisms

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In the next lecture, that will be our last lecture of the course what we are going to do: we are going to discuss methodological individualism versus holism. What do social sciences do in terms of uncovering facts, correlation analysis, and in identifying mechanisms and methodological pluralism.



And then we will provide an overview of the course. Thank you.