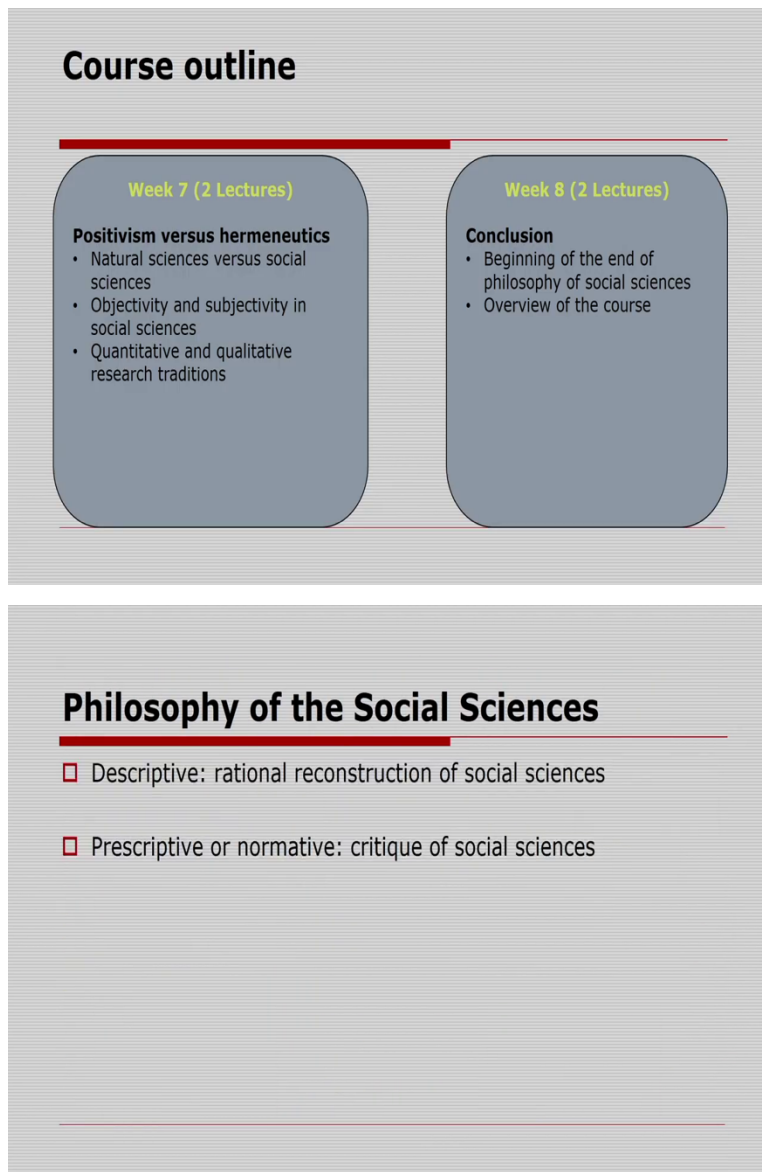


Philosophical Foundations of Social Research
Professor Sambit Mallick
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
Week 8 : Lecture 23
An Overview of the Course

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



Course outline

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

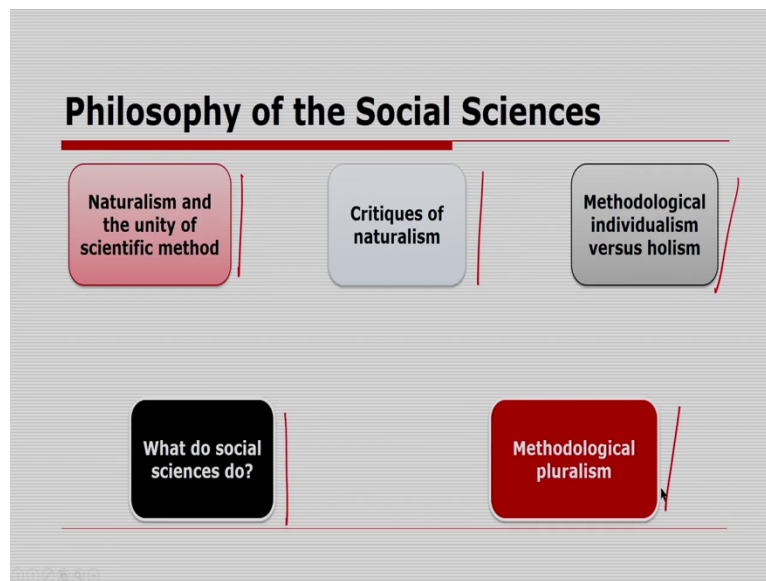
Philosophy of the Social Sciences

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

In the last lecture, we have discussed philosophy of the social sciences beginning of the end of the philosophy of the social sciences, beginning of the end of the epistemology, the truth, the

knowledge, we must question them there cannot be a unilinear, there cannot be a single form of knowledge, there must be multiple forms of knowledge.

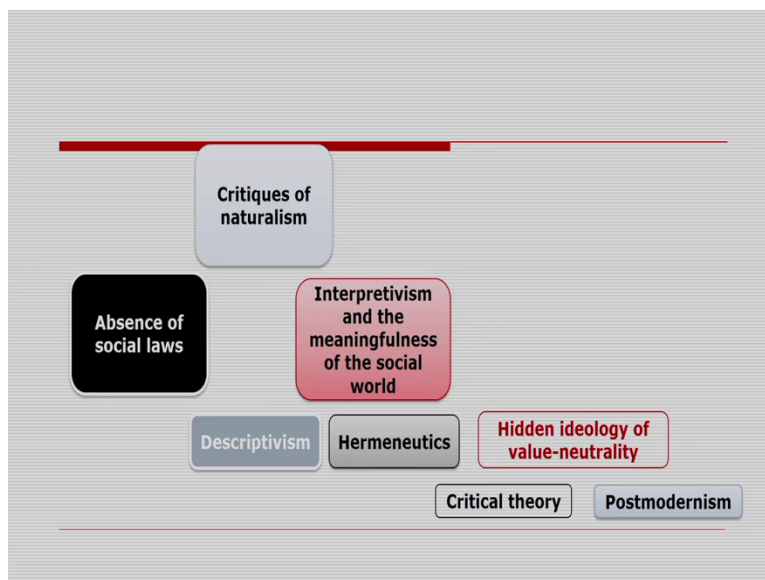
And that is how philosophy of the social sciences seeks to understand rational reconstruction of social sciences; that is a descriptive aim and the prescriptive or normative aim of philosophy of the social sciences is to bring about a critique of social sciences.



And in this sense, the purpose of this module is to look at philosophy of the social sciences from the vantage points of these five parameters naturalism and the unity of scientific method, critiques of naturalism, methodological individualism versus methodological holism and what do social sciences do and methodological pluralism.

Naturalism and the unity of scientific method

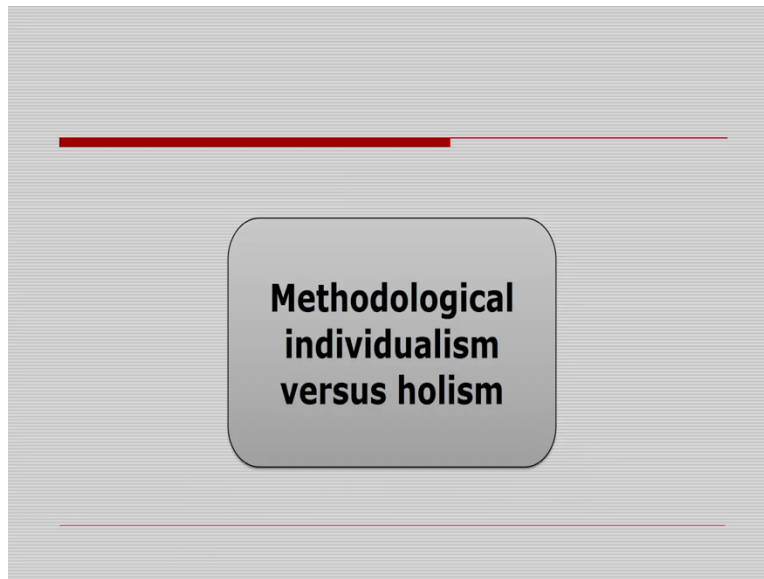
If you slightly recall we have already discussed naturalism and the unity of scientific method that the proponents of naturalism or the proponents of natural sciences they suggest that there cannot be any difference between the method of natural sciences and the method of social science. There must be a unity of scientific method, there cannot be a difference between the method to study of nature on the one hand and the method to the study of human action on the other, there cannot be any difference.



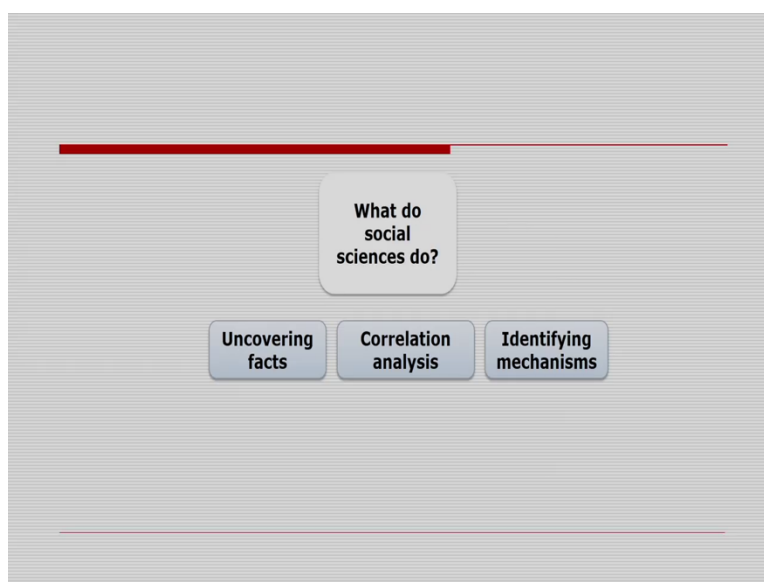
In critiques. of naturalism, we have understood that, there must be marked difference between the study of nature and the study of human action. And critiques of naturalism they consist of

two parts; absence of social laws, law-like regularities in the social world and secondly, interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world.

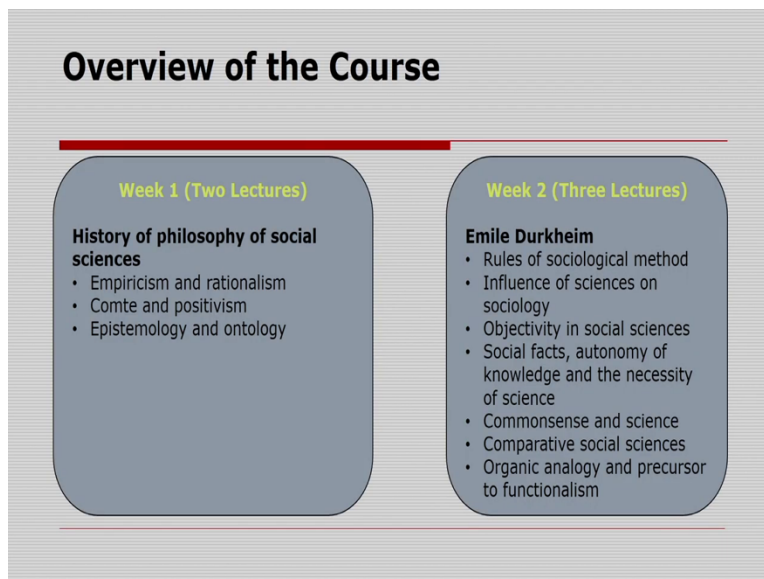
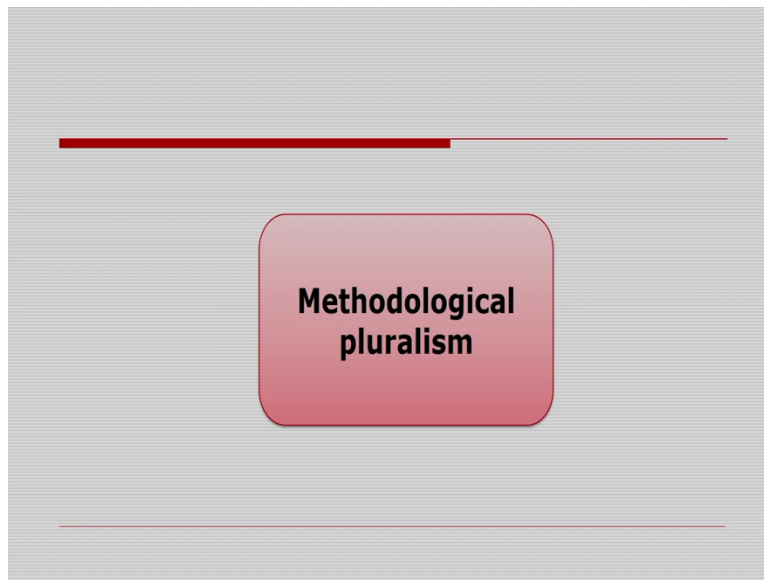
Interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world consists of three parts: one is descriptivism, hermeneutics tradition and hidden ideology of value neutrality. And within hidden ideology of value neutrality propounded by positivists, rationalists, empiricists and so on, that was also challenged by fields of critical theory and postmodernism.



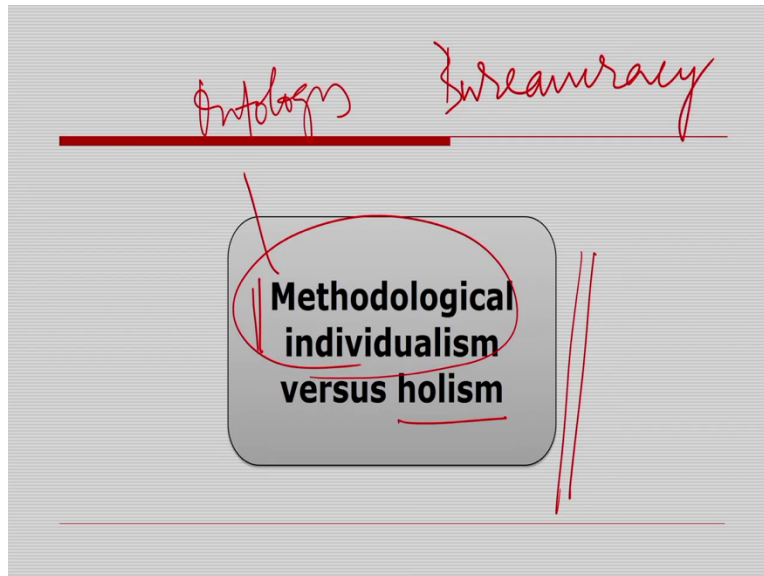
And today, what we are going to do? We are going to discuss methodological individualism versus methodological holism.



What do social sciences do in terms of uncovering facts, correlation analysis and identifying mechanisms?



And then, we will discuss methodological pluralism before moving on to the overview of the course.



Now, let us start methodological individualism versus methodological holism. A long standing controversy in the philosophy of the social sciences is the debate between methodological individualists and methodological holists. We have already discussed methodological individualism in the context of Weber and so on: methodological individualists they hold that social facts and phenomena are reducible to facts about individuals.

On the contrary advocates of methodological holism argue that there are some facts conventionally dubbed as social facts that are not reducible to facts about individuals and that social phenomena can sometimes be adequately explained without reference to individuals. It should be noted that there is no necessary connection between support for methodological individualism or methodological holism and one's stand in relation to naturalism debate.

Nonetheless there is a tendency for advocates of naturalism to embrace methodological individualism. Still methodological holists are found in the naturalist camp too, including Emile Durkheim, August Comte both of whom were key figures in founding the field of sociology as a theoretical discipline, as a theoretical construct, as well as a methodological device.

That is why do not think the debate between methodological individualism and methodological holism constitutes any kind of dichotomy- rather we must try to understand under what circumstances we must go ahead with methodological individualism, under what circumstances we must go ahead with methodological holism.

Such individualism-holism debate can be somewhat confusing because the terms of debate often refer to different claims. Sometimes, methodological individualism is understood to be a theory of meaning that holds that all statements about social entities or phenomena can be defined in terms that refers solely to individuals.

So, according to the proponents of methodological individualism including Weber, the meaning of bureaucracy can be defined exclusively in terms of the individuals that compose a bureaucracy without reference to the properties of a bureaucracy as an institution.

Methodological individualism can also constitute an ontological theory. What are the central philosophical and political questions that ontology addresses? What is being? What is existing? Perhaps for this reason ontology is alternatively known as the study of existence.

Methodological individualism hence can constitute, an ontological theory. This version, that methodological individualism can constitute an ontological theory, claims that only individuals are real and that social entities, facts or phenomena are at best useful abstractions. Perhaps they are not real, only individuals are real. According to such view, we may speak of armies, trade cycles or riots in our explanations. But we must keep in mind that such entities and phenomena merely describe individuals and their interactions with each other. Our terms describing social entities and phenomena may be useful for formulating shorthand descriptions of reality or shorthand descriptions and explanations about reality or a part of reality but this does not mean that the entities and phenomena that they refer to actually exist; that is the view of methodological individualism.

Both the meaning and the ontological versions of methodological individualism are contested in this context. Critiques of the meaning theory note that the view entails barring reference to institutions, rules and norms when defining social entities and phenomena.

The critiques of meaning theory they charge that this is simply not possible for instance explaining the meaning of army would require defining it in terms of the individuals that compose an army namely soldiers. But the description of the soldiers could not contain any reference to the rules, aims, norms, social relations and structures that in part create an army; not only would, for example, a description of a soldier as someone who belongs to an army be barred, also prohibited would be any reference to other holistic phenomena and entities such as

wars or platoons. The account of soldiers would have to be limited solely to narrow descriptions of their psychological dispositions.

And such restriction seems highly implausible not the least of which because soldiers self-understanding naturally includes holistic entities and phenomena. If individuals incorporate holistic entities into their actions and self-descriptions, why must social science be barred from doing so? Moreover, a social science bereft of such reference seems unimaginable and in any event social scientists routinely and without controversy employ them in their descriptions as well as explanations. Thus, few actual practitioners of social inquiry accept the meaning thesis. The ontological thesis is generally regarded as less objectionable but is still contested.

It is arguable that individuals are the only real inhabitants of the social world even if people generally act as if social entities and phenomena are real. So for instance a person might favor privatization of government services on the ground that in her or his judgment government control fosters bureaucracies which in her or his view are inherently inefficient. She or he may hold this belief that about bureaucracies without knowing anything about the attitudes, values, meanings and so forth of particular individuals who work with them, who work in them.

That is in the sense that she or he believes something about the nature of bureaucracies themselves as opposed to merely holding certain beliefs about the individuals that inhabit them. Methodological holists on the contrary may claim that her or his belief is grounded in a proper realist understanding of institutions bureaucracies are real entities.

Suppose bureaucracy: for methodological individualists bureaucracy is meaningless; it is all about individuals; how individuals are situated in a bureaucratic setup. But for methodological holists bureaucracies are real entities, because the institutional structure of bureaucracies affects the behavior of the individuals within them.

But methodological individualists can retort that in principle the structural properties of bureaucracy can be reduced to facts about the individuals that comprise them. This is true even if individuals including bureaucrats themselves believe and act as if bureaucracies themselves have certain properties. It may be possible to define a bureaucracy in terms that omit reference to holistic entities but that does not mean that bureaucracies or other holistic entities are real, according to methodological individualists.

The situation can be compared to the relationship between paranormal investigators and the ghosts that they believe in; it may be impossible to define paranormal investigator without reference to the idea of ghosts and other fantastical entities and it may be the case that belief in ghosts affects the behavior of paranormal investigators but none of this proves that ghosts exist.

A third and least controversial version of methodological individualism merely posits that social phenomena must be animated by individual actions, therefore, any satisfactory explanation of a social event or regularity or law like regularity must show how it is the result of individuals responding to a particular social situation, social context.

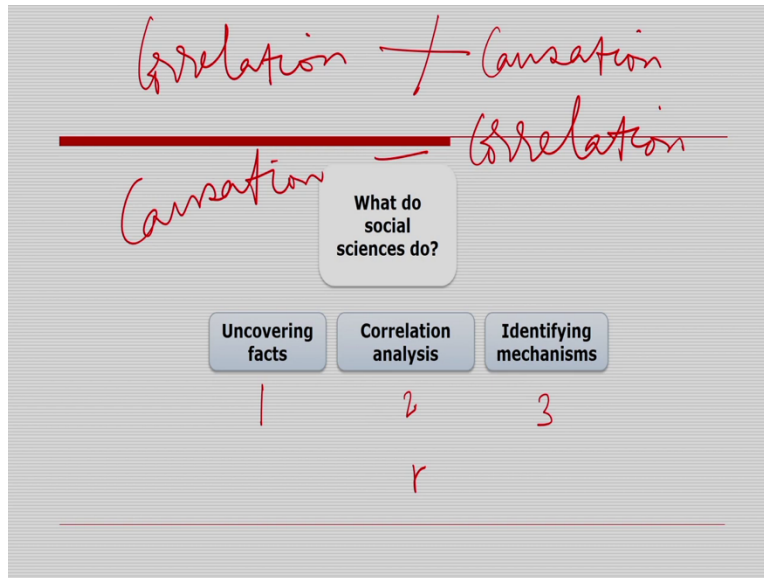
This view does not require that holistic entities or phenomena be defined in terms of individual level facts, nor does it require denying the reality of holistic entities or phenomena. It simply requires that wherever a holistic entity or phenomenon is claimed to cause certain effects or whenever a social regularity is identified, some plausible mechanism at the individual level that produces the phenomena must be identified.

Some advocates of methodological individualism have argued that methodological holism is politically dangerous. They claim that ascribing reality to holistic entities lends credence to the view that such entities have needs or interests of their own; as such methodological holism too readily becomes the handmaiden to tyrannical regimes that claim that needs of the state or the nation transcend those of actual living people. For this reason, Karl Popper called methodological individualism as democratic individualist approach to social inquiry whereas methodological collectivism supported totalitarian justice.

However, critiques of methodological individualism claim that it has its own built-in biases, prejudices and so on by denying the reality of institutional structures and other holistic entities or at least downplaying the degree to which they can constrain individual actions. Methodological individualism tends to support a conservative political outlook. This world view attributes individuals, social or economic position principally to their own actions and abilities rather than the social situation that they are embedded in.

Thus, the poor remain poor owing to their own choices and effort and not because the capitalist system presents obstacles to exiting their situation. A methodological holist would argue that it is the capitalist situation that has ensured that the poor should remain poor. This is how we try to

capture the controversies, the debates, between methodological individualism on the one hand and methodological holism on the other. In the context of such controversies, in the context of such binaries what do social sciences do?



Reflecting the tendency of philosophy of social science, I would like to focus on comparing social sciences to the natural sciences. As we have seen that formidable problems are encountered when the social sciences strive to produce theories that approach the range, elegance, predictive power and objectivity associated with natural sciences.

But instead of asking whether social sciences can or should mirror the natural sciences, another way to evaluate social sciences is to ask, how do social sciences enhance our understanding of the social world? Assessing the merits of social sciences in this way entails a reflection on the actual practices of social scientists, the methods that they use, the questions that they pose, the puzzles that they try to solve, the kind of evidence that they produce and so on and so forth.

Even if social sciences have failed to produce theories that rival the elegant and powerful theories of the natural sciences, that does not necessarily show that social sciences are not a worthwhile endeavor. One way to measure the success of the social sciences is to ask whether they are finding surplus common sense or folk wisdom or otherwise tell us something useful non-obvious or counter intuitive about the social world. And through this lecture we will examine three ways in which social sciences could be deemed successful by the standard uncovering facts about the social world, finding correlations and identifying mechanisms.

Let us start with, uncovering facts about the social world. An important task of social inquiry is to lay bare facts about of often murky social world. This can be a significant achievement in its own right even if the discovery and collection of facts never leads to the more desirable goal of producing elegant theories and causal explanations about social phenomena or empowers us to make precise predictions about the social world.

Without social sciences, our factual understanding of the social world would be left mainly to folk wisdom and anecdotal evidence. Neither of which is very reliable, uncovering facts about the social world is no mean feat. In often uncovering facts about the social world often requires empirical rigor and conceptual sophistication it also often necessitates developing special methods for measuring the entities and phenomena about the social world.

Let us take a few examples of factual questions that social sciences can help us answer. These questions seem inherently interesting or are important from the standpoint of public policy and answer and the answers to them are not likely to be evident without sophisticated inquiry. Suppose for example, from economics what types of economic systems produce the most robust economic growth? Is the economy currently shrinking or growing? What is the current unemployment rate?

Has the income of the median worker for example in Indian states increased in the past decade and if so, by how much? If it has decreased, then how much? Has social mobility increased or decreased in advanced industrial societies? Has social mobility increased in Indian society? For example from political science, which nations enjoy the most political freedom? Has political freedom throughout the world increased or decreased in recent decades?

Has warfare increased or decreased across the continents? How popular is the current political regimes throughout the world? Each political discourse getting more sophisticated or less? For example from sociology, have community ties grown stronger or weaker in Indian society in the last 50 years? Are people in societies with individualistic values happier than those in communitarian societies?

For example from criminology, has crime increased in recent decades in Indian society? If so, what kinds of communities have seen the biggest hike in crimes? From social psychology for example, how many people in India or in the western societies, or in American societies, in

African societies, they suffer from clinical depression? Has this number increased or decreased recently?

We can also include among the facts uncovered by social inquiry the thick descriptions of cultures and practices that interpretive inquiry can produce. Therein lies the significance of meaningfulness of the social world, when I say interpretive inquiry. Of course indeed what counts as a fact will be of partly interpretive matter and thus dependent upon the self-understanding of the persons or individuals being studied.

For, example, how should we conceptualize and measure freedom or individualism or depression? The definitions of these terms will always be contestable and subject to change. And social scientists will always be vulnerable to the critique as we have discussed earlier that the facts that they uncover reflect their own biases, prejudices, interests or world views.

Nonetheless, there are facts about the social world and it seems fatuous to deny that social sciences at best have not made us better acquainted with them, even if no purely neutral and objective concepts can be used to describe them; the same is true after all for natural sciences when we discuss uncovering facts about the social world.

When we try to look at correlation, when we try to analyze correlation between different variables, a particularly important tool of the social sciences for enhancing our understanding of the social world is a host of statistical techniques that can be broadly described as correlation analysis.

Correlation in statistics is represented by small r , you can find out the properties of r , r always lies between minus 1 and plus 1 there are different properties of r . These statistical innovations were developed by social scientists in the late nineteenth century and came into widespread use beginning in the twentieth century. The aim behind their development was to help get a handle on one of the most difficult problems confronting social sciences. What are those difficult problems?

Now, how to account for the often bewildering number of variables that potentially influence social phenomena. As we have discussed earlier, isolating the effects of particular variables in the social realm presents a formidable challenge to social scientists owing to the difficulty and sometimes impossibility of conducting controlled experiments. Multivariate regression analysis,

structural equation modeling and other sophisticated statistical tools address this problem by giving social scientists the ability to gaze with mathematical precision the impact of multiple variables on social phenomena.

For example, criminologists wish to shed light on the factors that influence the rate of violent crime. A host of potential social variables might plausibly be thought to do so including poverty, education, sex race, population density, gun control laws, television viewing and so on. Multivariate regression which provides the ability to hold multiple variables artificially constant allows researchers to determine how strongly each of these variables is associated with violent crime.

Such analysis might be able to tell us for instance that poverty, sex and education level accounts for 60 percent of the variance in crime and that gun control laws have no effect, for instance. Multivariate regression can help us gauge the interactive effects of various factors. Perhaps, showing that education level alone has little effect but does have an impact on when combined with poverty and population density.

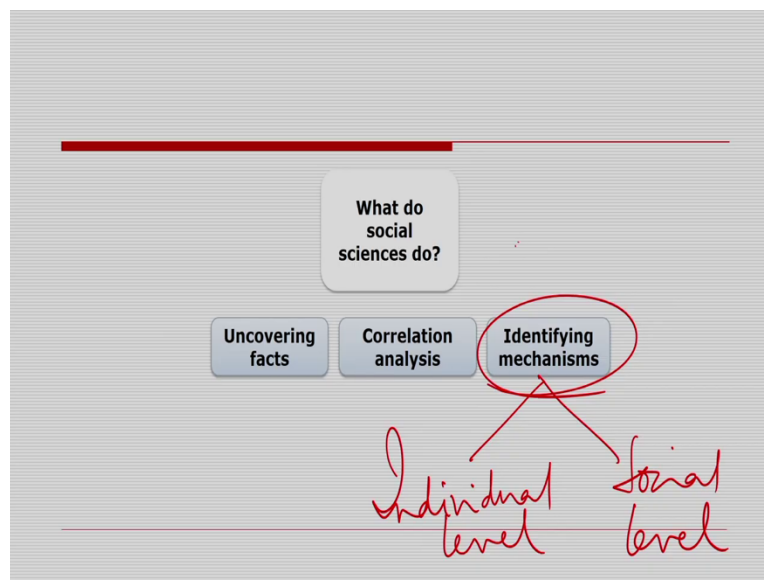
Correlation analysis has greatly enhanced social scientists understanding about the social world that has hampered by serious limitations. In particular, it can never tell researchers whether one variable causes changes in another variable; this is so even if a one to one correspondence between variables is uncovered, for it is always possible that there is an unknown third variable that is the true cause behind changes in the variable that investigators seek to explain.

For example, suppose statistical analysis demonstrates a strong and stable correlation between individuals average television viewing hours and violence- the more television individuals watch the more likely they are to commit violent acts. But such evidence by itself cannot tell researchers whether watching television makes people more inclined to commit acts of violence or whether the violence prone are more likely to watch television.

Perhaps, an unaccounted third actor say poor social skills and unemployment is the true cause of the violence and of the increased television viewing. If I give you another example that whether huge population is the cause of under development or under development is the cause of heavy population. We just cannot say that this is the cause, this is effect.

Maybe underdevelopment is the cause of population pressure, you just cannot establish a causal relationship in this. That is why I said explaining the cause of some phenomenon requires understanding of the causal mechanism that produces it, this correlation analysis cannot provide. It can however tell social scientists that Correlation does not necessarily entail causation but causation or causal connections always produce correlation.

So, failure to uncover a correlation between certain variables can inform researchers that there is no causal connection between them and in this way if we have to go back to Popperian schema of systematic falsifiability, then in this way correlation analysis provides an important tool for falsifying our hypothesis. Hypothesis are tentative solutions to our problems or hunches. And how to do that? By identifying certain mechanisms.



Some philosophers have argued that the primary explanatory power of social sciences resides in its ability to identify mechanisms as opposed to of law like generalizations. For example, John Elster, who defined mechanisms as frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences.

What Elster suggests that mechanisms often allow us to explain but not predict. We may not be able to say precisely under what conditions a mechanism will be triggered or exactly how it will operate in particular circumstances, particular conditions. Nonetheless we know a mechanism when we see one when, we encounter one.

Elster denies that social sciences have uncovered any genuine law like regularities and doubts that it ever will. However, social scientists can and have identified numerous mechanisms which produce explanations that go beyond mere description even if they fall short of explanations grounded in universal laws or theories.

Explanation by mechanisms may not always permit us to make predictions but we can often identify their operation in hindsight. Key aims of social sciences thus include identifying mechanisms, describing them with greater detail and if possible more precisely identifying the kinds of situations that can trigger them. With respect to social inquiry mechanisms can be divided into individual level and social level mechanisms.

Individual level mechanisms describe typical ways in which individuals form desires and beliefs or fall prey to perception or reasoning errors. An important category of these individual level mechanisms has the effect of reducing cognitive dissonance, the uncomfortable psychological stress caused by holding two incompatible beliefs simultaneously.

One common mechanism that combats cognitive dissonances is wishful thinking in which an individual represses unpleasant beliefs that she or he knows to be true. The sour grapes effect in contrast works on desires rather than beliefs. This mechanism takes its name from one of Aesop's Fables in which a Fox decides that some grapes are undesirable because they are too high atop a vine for him to reach. These psychological mechanisms may be triggered whenever individuals find themselves in a situation that is contrary to the way they would prefer it to be.

However, we will generally not be able to predict whether one of these individual level mechanisms will be triggered in such a situation or if one is triggered which one? But we can identify their operation retrospectively and in this sense they provide some general explanatory power. Elster argues that the works of the ablest social observers in the western tradition are replete with such mechanisms. Much of his analysis has focused on Tocqueville's democracy in America and Van's Bread and Circuses which explore the complex interaction between beliefs, desires and norms in respectively nineteenth century American democracy and the political institutions of classical antiquity.

Their insightful use of mechanisms in their explanations allows their work to transcend mere idiographic description and to shed light on contemporary politics. On the contrary, social level

mechanisms involved the interaction of individuals; unveiling them requires untangling such interaction to reveal how it produces social phenomena. Often the most important part of, for example, an economist's work resides in developing models that show how consumers and producers or other types of actors interact with each other to produce particular economic phenomena.

According to such view, the laws of economics and politics discussed earlier are best understood as typical patterns produced by human interaction rather than genuine law like regularities. If seen in this way that the Law of Demand and Michels's laws for instance are exception ridden and far from universal does not completely vitiate their explanatory power. They will capture important features of human social relations even if they fail to give social scientists the ability to determine precisely when or under what circumstances such phenomena will occur.

Their real value resides not in predicting outcomes but in demystifying and often opaque social milieu. Of special interest to social scientists are social level mechanisms that produce unintended consequences. The paradigmatic case of an unintended consequence explanation is Adam Smith's invisible hand concept developed in his seminal work the wealth of nations.

The invisible hand occurs when individuals contribute to the public good by pursuing their own narrow interests. These phenomena is ubiquitous in a capitalist economy. Farms seek to increase their profit by striving to produce the best goods for the lowest price and consumers seek to satisfy their own desires by purchasing such goods.

But in seeking to advance their own aims both also at the same time spur economic growth which reduces unemployment and raises the standards of living. The unintended and happy result of such self-interested behavior is greater overall wealth prosperity, sometimes unintended consequences are unwelcome or even disastrous as in the case of the so-called tragedy of the commons.

Such phenomena described by Garrett Hardin in an influential 1968 science essay occurs when individuals have free access to some desirable resource and each seeks to maximize her or his take off the resource resulting in its depletion which makes everybody worse off. An example is provided by the rapid exhaustion of the oceans stock of fish: commercial fishermen each strive to maximize their haul leading to the swift decline of the total stock and a reduction in each

fisherman's daily haul. And paradoxically to increase their take over in the long run fisherman must submit to limits on how much fish they can remove from the sea.

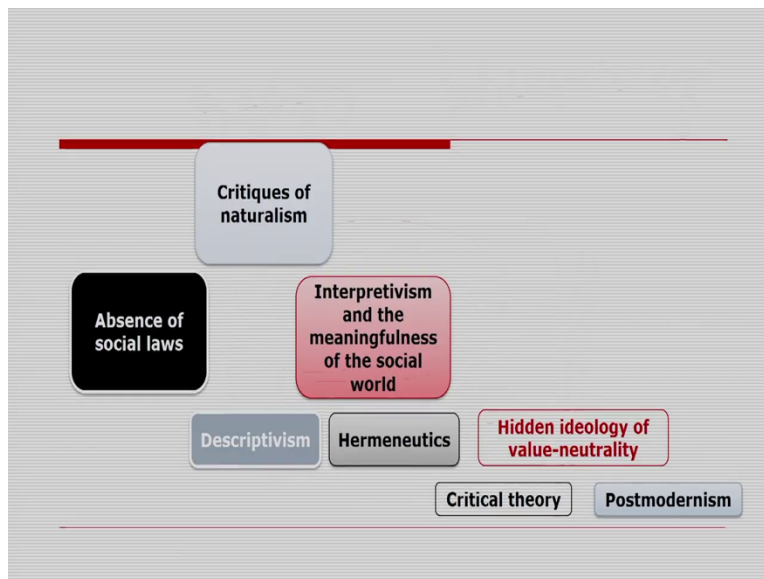
Considering the explanatory practices of some other fields we are inclined to all sciences, lends support to the legitimacy of explanation via mechanisms, identifying mechanisms rather than universal laws.

As Roy D'Andrade has noted the explanations produced by for instance biology, geology, meteorology and oceanography typically do not rely on universal laws. As in the social world the law like regularities and patterns found in these sciences are not timeless and universal. Instead they are contingent and contextual in the sense that they are dependent upon certain historical and environmental factors. Change the conditions and the patterns of or regularities may alter or disappear altogether.

Sciences that explain why identification of such mechanisms which dubs the natural sciences as opposed to the physical sciences such as physics, astronomy and chemistry include as D'Andrade suggests much of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and other social sciences. Natural sciences tend to view the objects of their inquiries as machines.

The machines of the social science understood as natural sciences in D'Andrade sense would include social structures and institutions such as markets, bureaucracies and electoral systems, villages, rural, urban centers and so on. The questions that scientists pose about a machine here: what is it made of and how does it work?

Offering a mechanistic account of the inner workings of machines provides an explanation that offers a degree of generalizable knowledge. Nevertheless D'Andrade adds that in the natural sciences generalizations about how things work are often complex; true only of one particular kind of thing and usually best stated in simplified natural language. This well describes the type of mechanisms as we have already discussed in the context of how social sciences try to attempt to uncover facts about the social world.



Now, we are trying to integrate natural sciences with social sciences and therein lies the significance of methodological pluralism. At present there is no argument about the proper approach to investigating the social world: As such reflection through some long-standing issues and debates in philosophy of the social sciences should have made clear. This lack of consensus in social sciences is reflected in the methodological pluralism that marks social inquiry as currently practiced; that we have already discussed in the context of Kuhn.

Social scientists, in the naturalist mould, use various kinds of quantitative analysis rational choice models particularly in economics and political science and experimental research particularly in psychology to uncover facts, patterns of correlation and identifying mechanisms

in the social realm. Outside the mainstream, various approaches informed by the descriptivist, hermeneutical and critical theory and postmodernism views described earlier: this would include for example, existential and humanistic psychology, ethnomethodology and anthropology and sociology, phenomenology, deconstructionism and Foucauldian genealogy in sociology, Marxism, constructivism, critical theory in sociology and political science and different kinds of participatory research in different fields.

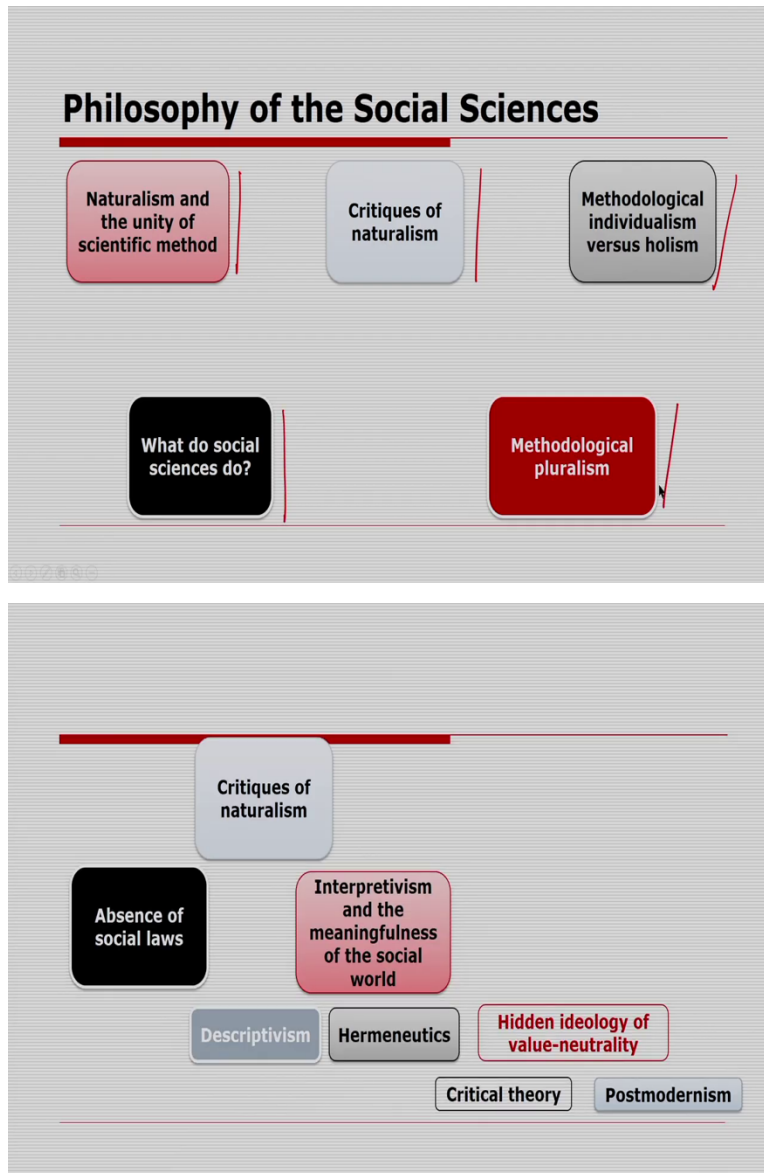
It would be facile to suggest that all of these methods and the theories underpinning them can be fully reconciled. But it also seems doubtful that one approach alone either among these currently news or the one yet to be discovered could capture the whole of social reality in all its multi-textured dimensions. Thus, the present methodological pluralism of social sciences seems welcome as well as necessary. It is not only possible but also but although the more it is desirable.

That the social world is a meaningful world created by self-interpreting beings as the interpretive school holds is undeniable. Thus, one of the aims of social inquiry should be to capture that meaning. Also as the hermeneutical, postmodernism and critical theory approaches insist social inquiry is inherently evaluative. A purely objective neutral science of the social world is neither possible nor desirable.

So, room must be made in social investigation for reflection on the biases, interests and ideologies embedded in various social science methods. And finally naturalistic mainstream social scientists are surely right in continuing in searching for patterns, mechanisms and causal processes in the social world, for they do exist; even if they are only relatively enduring and dependent upon social context, social conditions including the shifting self-understandings of human beings.

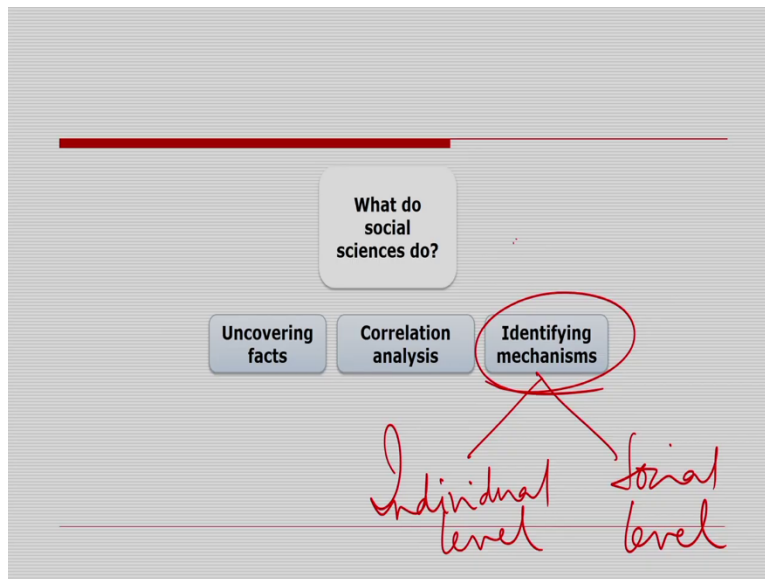
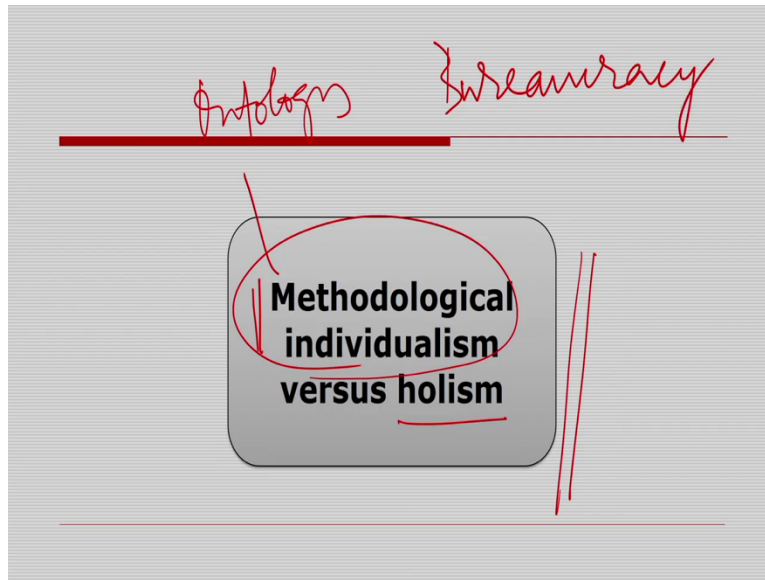
From this vantage point a kind of unification of the social sciences can be envisioned, though not in the sense advocated by naturalism. Unification in this sense requires as the hermeneutical approach suggests that we view social sciences as social practices. The efforts of social scientists should be seen as part of wider ongoing human project to better understand ourselves and our world in which we live and to make our world better.

The facts patterns and mechanisms that mainstream social science uncovers, the meanings that descriptivism unveils and the self-reflective awareness of the values embedded in such inquiry that critical theory and hermeneutics counsel should all be part of this broader human conversation. Then in this lecture what we have discussed?



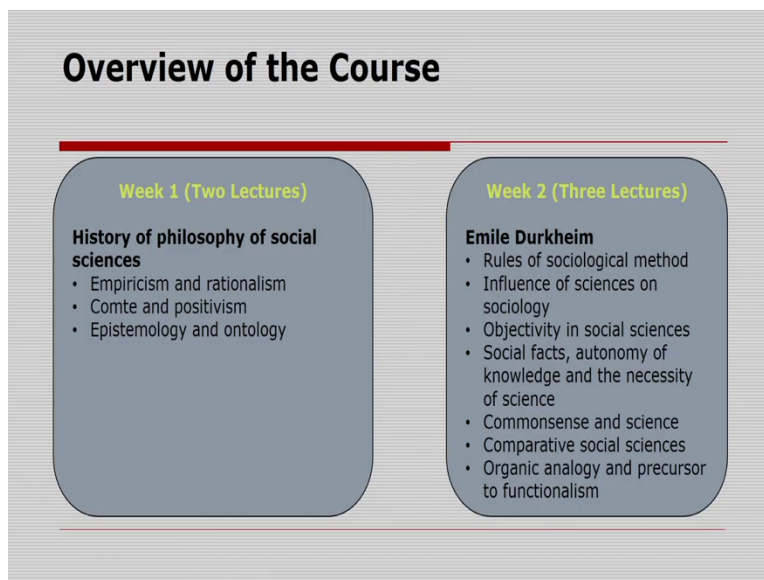
We have discussed, philosophy of the social sciences, beginning of the end of the philosophy of the social sciences in terms of naturalism and unity of scientific method, critiques of naturalism. Within critiques of naturalism we have discussed, absence of social laws, interpretivism and the meaningfulness of the social world, descriptivism, hermeneutics and hidden ideology of value

neutrality. Within hidden ideology of value neutrality we have discussed critical theory and postmodernism.



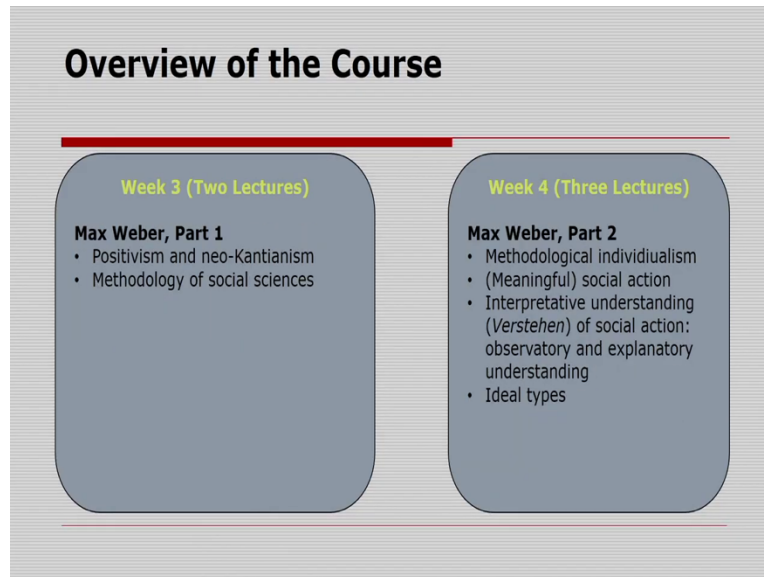


And today we have discussed methodological individualism in contradistinction with methodological holism. And then we have discussed, what do social sciences do, in terms of uncovering facts, in terms of correlation analysis and then identifying mechanisms. And then we have discussed, methodological pluralism.



Now, very shortly what we are going to do? We are going to provide an overview of the course. Very quickly, we will try to wrap it up. In this course titled philosophical foundations of social research what we have done: in the first week we have discussed history of philosophy of social sciences in terms of empiricism and rationalism, positivism, Comte's law of stages i.e. theological stage, metaphysical stage, and positivistic or scientific stage.

And then, we have discussed the relationship between epistemology and ontology and in the second week in terms of three lectures we have discussed Durkheim's methods which are significant for social sciences methods today in terms of rules of sociological method, influence of sciences on sociology, objectivity in social sciences, social facts, autonomy of science, then necessity of science, common sense and science, comparative social sciences and organic analogy and precursor to functionalism.



In the following two weeks, we tried to divide Max Weber in two parts in terms of six lectures spreading over two weeks. We have discussed Max Weber part one, in the third week and Max Weber part two in the fourth week. In the third week, in the first part of Max Weber we have discussed how Weber's theoretical positions and methodological writings are effectively a reconciliation between positivist and neo-kantian positions.

We have discussed his methodology of social sciences and then in the second part, in the fourth week, we have discussed Weberian methodological individualism meaningful, typology of social action: whether all types of social actions they constitute meaningful social action or not. Interpretative understanding of social action that is *Verstehen*.

What is observatory understanding? What is explanatory understanding? What are ideal types? What are economic phenomena? What are economically conditioned phenomena? What are economically relevant phenomena? What is the basis of selection? Selection is based on cultural relevance and so on, we have discussed in the context of Weber.

Overview of the Course

Week 5 (Three Lectures)

Karl Marx

- Idealism versus materialism
- Materialist conception of history
- Principles of dialectic
- Understanding nature
- Ideology and science: methodological implications

Week 6 (Four Lectures)

Karl Popper

- Principle of falsification
- Context of discovery and justification
- Hypothetico-deductive model

Thomas Kuhn

- Consensus-driven paradigm
- Normal science
- Anomalies
- Crisis
- Revolutionary science
- A new paradigm

Then we moved on to Karl Marx. In the fifth week we have discussed idealism versus materialism, materialist conception of history, principles of dialectic, understanding nature. We tried to evaluate Marx not as an ideologue of the communist party but as a theoretician. In this sense we have discussed the relationship between ideology and science and what are the theory of knowledge, theory of science, theory of ideology and what are the methodological implications of theory of science and so on.

And then, we tried to divide sixth week in two sections: one Karl Popper and secondly Thomas Kuhn. We have discussed Popper's context of discovery, context of justifications, systematic falsifiability, principle of systematic falsification as opposed to positivistic construal of systematic verification, Popper's hypothetico-deductive model was discussed.

And then we discussed how Kuhn suggested that the life of every major science passes through two important stages namely pre-paradigmatic stage and the paradigmatic stage and how within a paradigm, normal sciences is practiced or pursued. And then we have discussed how normal science often encounters anomalies unanticipated or unexpected occurrences or happenings.

And when science encounters anomalies it enters the stage of crisis and then the search for a new paradigm begins and we generally tend to make a transition to a new paradigm mediated by a revolutionary science. That is why what Kuhn suggested that if normal science is a tradition bound activity, then revolutionary science is a tradition shattering activity; that is what we have discussed in sixth week.

Overview of the Course

Week 7 (2 Lectures)

Positivism versus hermeneutics

- Natural sciences versus social sciences
- Objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences
- Quantitative and qualitative research traditions

Week 8 (2 Lectures)

Conclusion

- Beginning of the end of philosophy of social sciences
- Overview of the course

In the seventh week we have tried to foreground the debates on the controversies between positivism on the one hand and hermeneutics or phenomenological sociology on the other in terms of three parameters: natural sciences versus social sciences; Secondly, objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences and then quantitative and qualitative research traditions.

And in the last week in terms of two lectures, we have discussed beginning of the end of the philosophy of the social sciences, in terms of naturalism and the scientific and the unity of scientific method, critiques of naturalism, then methodological individualism versus methodological holism, then what do social sciences do and then in terms of methodological pluralism. And from such vantage point a kind of unification of the social sciences can be envisioned though not in the sense advocated by the proponents of naturalism.

Unification in this sense requires that we view social sciences as social practices. The efforts of social scientists should be seen as part of a wider ongoing human project to better understand ourselves and the world that we live in, our world. And to make our world better, safer, more scientific, more humane, more compassionate, more empathetic and so on.

The facts patterns and mechanisms that mainstream social sciences uncover, the meanings that descriptivism unveils and the self-reflective awareness of the values embedded in such inquiry that critical theory and hermeneutics counsel should all be part of this broader human conversation.

We will end here and weekly there will be assignments and there will be a final examination where you have to appear. But as you go on listening to these lectures you can go on posing questions regularly; you need not wait till the end to ask questions. There is a portal that you can see, you can raise questions, I can answer, we have a team, the team always asks me to answer. I will definitely get back to you whenever as and when you pose questions.

If there is any doubt please raise those questions, please raise them; you see one cannot learn in the environment of fear, the more you fear the less you learn. In this context I would say that such courses are very important for our understanding about social research methods, social theory, philosophical foundations of social research and so on. You can anytime ask questions and obviously our team is very prompt to answer these questions as and when they are posed. Thank you, all the best.