

Towards an Integrated Methodology of Social Science

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The Philosophical deliberations of the methodology of Social Sciences were carried out to a very great extent under the influence of the methodology of natural sciences. The positivists appeal for a 'Unity of Method' tended to undermine the differences between the nature of the natural sciences on the one hand and social sciences on the other. The present project proceeds on the background the post-positivist philosophy of science, which by and large accepts that there is a categorical difference between the subject matter of natural sciences and that of social sciences and hence their methodologies must differ to a certain extent.

Unlike the subject matter of the natural sciences, the social reality, which the social sciences study, is always already constituted with meanings that the participants confer it prior to scientific investigation. The problem of meaning there fore becomes one of the crucial problems needs to be has to be taken into account. However, this problem also gives rise to the equally pertinent problem of objectivity of knowledge and the whole cluster of related methodological issues. The project seeks to explicate and critically discuss four major anti-positivist / post-positivist approaches to these problems namely, hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical theory and postmodernism, in order to identify and develop the ways in which problems and issues that they give rise to can be addressed. The objective is to explore the possibility of formulating the preliminaries of integrated methodology where the valuable insights provided by the above mentioned alternatives to positivism could be reconciled without giving up the demand for objectivity.