Chapter 1
General Introduction: Social Sciences Between Knowledge and Ideologies – Need for Philosophy

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Social sciences are crucial in our understanding of the increasingly globalizing ways of living in the twenty-first century. Rapid technological advancements in our societies—"East" and "West", "North" and "South"—are paralleled with resistances by traditional social orders to them. Local social norms and political control systems (Chaudhary, Hviid, Marsico, & Villadsen, 2017) that sometimes erupt as revolts or revolutions (Wagoner, Moghaddam, & Valsiner, 2018) constitute the braking systems in development. Development and resistance to it go hand in hand—leading to tensions in the building of new knowledge.

Societies worldwide are characterized by disquietude in which various kinds of tensions are constantly growing. The "volcano" of our "global society" can easily erupt into a new global war—economic, discursive,[1] or military. The results of such wars are likely to be devastating—but like our predecessors taking the *Titanic* to cross the Atlantic, we might not be aware how our ordinary social life gives rise to such apocalypse.[2] Are we granting quality in science through watching out for the correct uses of established methods? Or are we part of an institutional effort of making the given discipline homogeneous in its methodological practices in ways similar to mass volume production of various consumer products? Is the publication of a research paper in a "peer-reviewed" journal such a

[1] I use the notion of "discursive war" to indicate the clashes of opinions of different ideological backgrounds that do not lead to new ideas but insist of social power dominance of existing perspectives (e.g., fights against "dualisms" in the social sciences which do not lead to solving the problem). In contrast, philosophical look at how to solve such problems would be important.

[2] Georg Simmel (1904) pointed out that wars are being prepared during peace times.

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product or an act of communication with fellow scientists? Why is the "open access" movement in scientific communication—an appealing idea for any science (see Wenaas, 2019 in this volume)—becoming a battleground of fights between various institutions? What can be the stake of a political establishment—a US president declaring a decade as that of the study of the brain or European Union requiring specific "breakthroughs" in its Research Council's science funding programs—in the actual processes of scientists' intellectual endeavors in trying to create new knowledge? What is the value of university administrators who expect scientists to bring in research grants with "overheads" in the actual making of new knowledge? These are difficult questions on the border areas of real *Wissenschaft* and the socio-political administration of science. This volume will provide some answers to these questions and raise some new puzzles.

Society's Suicide: Reliance on Opinions

Gaston Bachelard back in 1938 pointed to the paradoxical role opinions (in his terms these are" dead thoughts") play in human knowledge:

> Opinion *thinks* badly; it does not *think* but instead *translates* needs into knowledge By referring to objects in terms of their use. **It prevents itself from knowing them**. (Bachelard, 2002, p. 25, added boldface)

How can an opinion "prevent itself" from knowing the objects about which they are expressed? Very simply, my particular opinion "S is P" ("politicians in country X are corrupt") gives a taken-for-granted characteristic (P = "corrupt") and attaches it indiscriminately to all cases (S = "politicians" in X), thus not allowing me to inquire into the possibility of some of the S to be non-P or strive toward becoming non-P. Instead of a nuanced view of the field (S) which would allow recognition of variety, I create a totalitarian prejudice against S overwhelmed by P.[3] My opinion—which in other terms is my prejudice—stops my further inquiry into the varieties of S. My political prejudice ("politicians are corrupt", "refugees are terrorists," etc.) pre-sets my understanding in ways that lead to serious absence knowledge and failure to understand rapid changes in the world.

From the perspective of the scientists, reliance on opinions—of themselves, their "peer reviewers," politicians, and "opinion polls"—sets limits for new knowledge. It has the potential to stop further inquiries by creating consensually fortified "black box" explanations that remain in fashion for long times and may become encoded even in textbooks of a given discipline. For example, the notion accepted in psychology since the 1930s that "the scientific" approach to phenomena necessarily involves quantification ("assigning numbers") has led the field to a conceptual impasse (Toomela & Valsiner, 2010) that has neither historical (Porter, 1995) nor

[3] Notice that the opinion here is produced by substitution of "all" for the doubt-allowing "some" ("some S are P"). Bachelard's rejection of opinions equals the reduction of heterogeneous classes of phenomena (fuzzy sets) to their representations as if these were homogeneous classes (crisp sets).

mathematical (Lamiell, 2019; Michell, 1999; Rudolph, 2013) foundations. Its history of entrance into social sciences is well described as an avalanche of the "empire of chance" over the twentieth century (Gigerenzer et al., 1989). It is here where ideological guidance of axiomatics of science can be located. The *social* convention of quantification as necessary for psychology to be "scientific" has overridden the more important question of *what do the quantified data represent*?

That latter question of course makes sense only if the notion of data as signs—which represent something else—is axiomatically accepted. If not, the data and the phenomena become fused into one, and an assigned number becomes a valid data point. We can see exactly at this junction how the social sciences need philosophy—to sort out their axiomatic bases to understand what kind of knowledge is possible in their particular field given the underlying assumptions that are made. Can knowledge in some field of social science (anthropology here is an example) be considered ideally "local" by axiomatic decision—leading to stopping of any efforts to generalize beyond the particular context? The result is the hyperactive production of empirical observations without theoretical innovation and even proud assertion that theories are not needed; we just need to figure out "what is really there" in the social practices of another tribe—be it in New Guinea or backwaters of Norway.

So, philosophy is needed, but what kind of philosophy? Can philosophy of science be that of science only? Or is it embedded in a wider ideological field that governs the given society at the given time? How can it be that some research questions—which are not popular in science at the given time—are not only ignored but *actively disliked*. Darryl Bem's (2011) technically perfect experimental proof of some aspects of human thinking that have parallels with parapsychological research themes of the past have been actively disliked in contemporary psychology (Zickfeld & Schubert, 2019—in this volume). The few scholars who dare to say that there is something valuable in the inquiry into these topics are not just silenced but *vigorously dismissed* in their suggestions. Such affective outbursts of social stigmatization point to the extra-philosophical origins of the philosophy of science presences in the social sciences.

To summarize, philosophy of science at times stops being philosophy and becomes an affective display. What is needed is careful scrutiny of the triad **ideology<>philosophy of science<>science** itself, and that kind of scrutiny can be presented as *social philosophy of social science*—the general theme of this volume.

Social Philosophy of Science: Beyond Paradigms to Sociodigms and Metadigms

Social philosophy of social sciences occupies the arena of investigation that includes *paradigms* (Thomas Kuhn's invention) in their relation with *sociodigms* and *metadigms* (Yurevich, 2009). Sociodigms complement paradigms with practical societal demands for application of sciences:

> The main dividing line between academic and practical psychologies is probably the divergence of corresponding *communities*, which warrants describing them as different

> *sociodigms*—not reducible to Kuhn's paradigms—and making it necessary to go beyond that concept. It has rightly been noted that the academic and practical psychology are like two sub-personalities of a split personality; academic and practical psychologists have different circles of communication and different "authorities", practical psychologists do not know the names of the directors of academic institutions and academic psychologists do not know the names of "star" psychological practitioners. (Yurevich, 2009, p. 97)

Similar functioning of sociodigms in other social sciences can be found in Norwegian sociology (Aakvaag, 2019 in this volume), economics (Lind, 2019 in this volume), and neuroscience (Watzl, 2019 in this volume). The "fashions" that episodically capture a particular field in the social sciences in a particular country are guided by wider societal projects. Such projects may prescribe arenas of applicability to a science based on the general reference to "needs of the society."

The *metadigms* are organizational means of higher order that unify both practices and sociodigms into various kinds of rationalities—"Eastern" versus "Western" thought, or religious versus secular understandings of the world. Within the Occidental tradition, various practices of healing are presented with their scientific bases in focus—while the practices themselves may coincide with those used by grandmothers without any evidence base or are similar to Oriental practices largely embedded in the philosophical and religious frameworks of Buddhist societies.

Functioning metadigms include buffering mechanisms against situations where scientific activities might lead to findings that are damaging to the metadigm. This selectivity may be at the root of difficult transitions of Kuhnian paradigms from "normal science" to its "revolutionary" counterpart. The implicit opinions "direction X is not for science" maintain social barriers that keep a specific domain of knowledge from being investigated.[4]

Secondly, a metadigm can set up dominance hierarchies in the realm of different parallel perspectives in the given science. In the social sciences of the past century, we observe unqualified and doubts-free prioritization of the quantitative research tools over their qualitative counterparts. The latter have been stigmatized as "soft science," while the former have been superimposed upon the study of phenomena which by their nature defy quantification. The result is the same for use of both—the prioritized quantitative approaches fail to produce breakthroughs in our knowledge because they miss the fit with phenomena, and the underprivileged "soft science" perspectives have no chance to provide alternatives other than producing "anecdotal evidence." Even if the prioritization were to be reversed—qualitative approaches set as priority over quantitative ones—the dominance reversal would continue to produce many new data

[4] This boundary defense also applies to the exposure of doctoral aspirants to ideas from philosophy of science. Strand (2019; Chap. 3) mentions a former dean at the University of Bergen, in a research education strategy meeting, remarking "It is OK that Ph.D. students with individual research projects go through these courses, *but we do not really want that Ph.D. students hired on prestigious, international research projects come to doubt their own science*, do we?" (added emphasis). In this admission the role of institutional goals—producing knowledge proletariat of Ph.D. level who is freed from doubts about their science—is clear. What this agenda, if developed further, would mean for innovation in the social sciences is more than uncertain—would it eliminate innovation?

without challenging the basic assumptions on which the research enterprise is based (Branco & Valsiner, 1997). The values of the metadigm are protected—while the scientific enterprise proceeds in its ever-active empirical productivity. The ever-increasing flow of empirical data in the social sciences masks the lack of paradigmatic breakthroughs—a feature that keeps social sciences at distance from having a stake in the politically set work on crucial social problems in a society.

The third buffering mechanism of metadigm involves creating a complex pattern of the paradigm-sociodigm relation on the border of the private<>public disclosure area. The sociodigm side of the relationship involves demonstrations of practical efficiency of the paradigm and its relevance for users in society. At the same time, many aspects of the research process (paradigm side) involve actions that are not directly useful in any aspect of societal living. Their role in the pattern becomes presented as minimized, while other sides of the pattern are presented in their full societal usefulness. Still, as Yurevich points out:

> Imagine what may happen if a psychoanalyst's permanent client who has paid him a hefty sum of money, suddenly discovers that all his actions had been based on myth and metaphor and hunches, and not on solid scientific knowledge; as the client had sincerely trusted. And what if the client, as psychological clients often do, turns out to be an influential and griping individual who is hurt by the very thought that he is being fooled and that his time and money had been wasted, and makes common cause with other such clients? Would it not result in high-profile trials of psychologists as quacks and trigger another witch-hunt. (Yurevich, 2009, p. 102)

The potential for social scientists to become objects of witch-hunts in the twenty-first century is remote—protected by the pre-emptive direction of the topics of scientific investigation in directions that do not entail challenges to the prevailing ideologies that are the core of a metadigm.

The unity of metadigms, sociodigms, and paradigms in science creates the need for a new kind of philosophy of science. In contrast to the traditional philosophy of science built on the notions of classical logic and epistemology and overlooking social sides of the whole thinking about creating basic knowledge, the new version situates the philosophical discourses of science in their societal frames. I call it social philosophy of science—and in this volume it is outlined in our collective effort toward establishing it for the social sciences.

What Is *Social* Philosophy of Science?

Roger Strand (2019) (Chap. 3 in this book) gives a concise answer to the question what is philosophy of science? It is a:

> Subfield of philosophy, in which the presuppositions, methods, structures, goals and impacts of science are examined. (p. 34)

It could be seen as "simply" epistemology—but the focus here is on the examining of the whole array of knowledge creation tools. Any act of examination is a

social act—performed from the perspective of some metadigmatic goal-orientation. In other terms, philosophical examinations of the basic assumptions and theoretical constructions in any social science have direction from some metadigmatic point of view.

Back in 1991, we reported the societal conditions in Soviet Union in the early 1930s in our analysis of the work of Lev Vygotsky (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). The expedition that Alexander Luria organized to Central Asia to study the positive impact (metadigmatic positive objective) that introducing literacy would have for illiterate people became—in the course of a 3–4-year period—viewed in terms of negative metadigmatic perspective (as demonstration of "cognitive backwardness" of the "New Soviet Man" building "new society"). The change from positive to negative metadigmatic perspective coincided with rapid political changes in the Soviet society. The data from the scientific side of the Central Asia expeditions remained the same—but their societal value interpretation changed diametrically with the general ideological change of the prevailing rhetorics in the Soviet society.

What can we learn from the histories of metadigm-sociodigm-paradigm relations for the social sciences of today? First of all, caution about the wider waves of fashions and extra-scientific expectations directed toward streamlining the social sciences. The appealing labels of "usefulness" or "evidence base" are complex social dialogues—what is "useful" for one social agent (or agency) may look different from the perspective of another. What is called "evidence" may be a presentation that selectively highlights one kind of ideologically fixed opinion and hides its opposites. The social philosophy of the social sciences is needed to keep us all aware of these background negotiations of the opposite tendencies of social expectations in our opinion-based discussions of what is the valuable next step in our disciplines, how to provide ratings on our peers' grant proposals, how to resist the narrowing of the scope of our investigations by extra-scientific social powers, and—most importantly—how to guarantee our researchers' basic rights to create new knowledge.

The Origins and Overview of the Present Volume

This volume emerges from the regular once a semester series of seminars on Philosophy of Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Oslo that took place in 2016–2018. In covering the topic of the traditions of philosophy of science and the social practices of different social sciences in these seminars, it became obvious that a wider international and interdisciplinary volume is needed to support inquiries by social scientists. The seminars were unique as they were supposed to bring together "junior-level"[5] researchers who aspire toward their

[5] The "junior level" in practice involved the whole range of the life course—from the 20s to the oldest participant being 71 during the participation in the seminars.

Ph.Ds at the University of Oslo in the whole of social sciences. Furthermore, the seminar sequence was designated as a "*mandatory* doctoral course[6]" for all doctoral students in the social sciences. The positive result from these encounters over the 3 years of the (total 6) weekly seminar sequences was a productive "snapshot" of the intellectual worlds of Norwegian scholars in sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, and history.

Even as it started in a narrow—didactically set—context, this book transcends the narrower set of tasks that were covered in the Oslo seminar settings and brings in contributions from all over the world. David Carre (2019) (Chap. 2)—based on the context of Chilean economists relating to their society—discusses what various social sciences give back to the societies that, in its turn, make their further research possible. We presume that commodity is knowledge—but it needs to be elaborated what kind of knowledge becomes appreciated by "the society." It is far from clear what is subsumed under that generic label—especially if it is designated as *the*, rather than *some part of*, society. In Chap. 3, Roger Strand introduces the basics of *Wissenschaftstheorie* in its fullness. The benefit of the Norwegian perspective on the philosophy of science is the preservation of this wider European notion of knowledge construction, rather than accepting the Anglo-Saxon *science* "versus" *humanities* opposition. Sebastian Watzl (Chap. 4) gives us a glimpse into how our occidental metadigmatic worldviews deal with making sense of the brain functions through the lens of cultural dichotomy of gender. The assumptions of strict oppositions—"male" versus "female"—as applied to the brain are blatantly inadequate (Watzl, 2017), yet these are replicated in almost all new investigations. In Chap. 5, Rolf Reber and Nicholas Bullot (2019) suggest a solution to philosophy of the social sciences in terms of *conditional objectivism*, a strategy that aims to guide decision making in the face of value-laden subject matters of scientific inquiry. To explain the heuristic procedure by means of which the strategy provides practical recommendations, they use a decision tree. Anna Zadrozna (Chap. 6) brings the readers to the anthropological world view and reminds us about the dangers of moving our philosophies too far from societal realities.

Causality is a perennial question in the traditional philosophy of science. Raino Malnes (2019) (Chap. 7) provides an in-depth analytic view of the history and ontology of the issue, while Jaan Valsiner (Chap. 8) makes the proposal to follow chemistry in its move from thinking in terms of causes to that of catalysts. Janis Zickfeld and Thomas Schubert (Chap. 9) address the complicated issue of replicability in the social sciences, providing accounts of new practices to guard their field

[6] It is symptomatic of European institutions of higher education in the 2020s to establish institutional organizational forms of "doctoral schools" which bring together under one label (and with mediocre additional funding) various doctoral projects usually funded by different grants (or not funded at all). Such streamlining of the highest level of aspirations toward knowledge I can only see as an example of administrative control over knowledge construction processes. The creation of *mandatory* "courses" at the doctoral level is yet another symptom of such control that sets the whole system of higher education into a crisis about advancement of *Wissenschaft* on the one side and the production of army knowledge workers on the other (Valsiner, Lutsenko, & Antoniouk, 2018).

(psychology) against possible flaws of illusory replication. Henrik Skaug Saetra (Chap. 10) gives a commentary on the issues raised in the previous three chapters with a focus on emergence of new knowledge. The paradox of replicability as a value for science is its contradictory status with creating new knowledge—if something new is found, it is necessarily an example of non-replicability of what had already been discovered.

The social philosophy of the social sciences needs to consider normativity in the realm of the different social sciences. The issue of normativity is worked out in psychology (Svend Brinkmann (2019) in Chap. 11) and generalizes to all social sciences—as we see in the chapters on economics (Jo Thori Lind—Chap. 15) and sociology (Gunnar Aakvaag in Chap. 14). The socio-political issues of "open access" (Lars Wenaas—Chap. 13) give the wider frame for normativity in bringing the results of the social sciences to the audience. Psychology also is an arena for demonstrating how a research enterprise over a century goes wrong under metadigmatic guidance—loss of the person-centered approach in psychology over the twentieth century has accentuated the crisis in the field (Lars-Gunnar Lundh (2019) in Chap. 12). Finally, in Chap. 16 I will sieve through the key new moments that the different perspectives in the volume could contribute to the worldwide discussions of how social sciences could proceed in the age of the rapidly changing context where politicians resort to tweets (Valsiner, 2018) and where short declarative messages expressing metadigmatic opinions act as social anesthetics for our scientifically valuable capacities to doubt the present beliefs and explore new alleys of knowing.

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