

## SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AS THE GUARDIAN OF THE “INCARNATION OF TRUTH IN THE WORLD”\*

**Alexander Antonovski** – DSc in Philosophy, senior research fellow. Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences. 12/1 Goncharnaya St., Moscow, 109240, Russian Federation. Assistant professor. Lomonosov Moscow State University. 1 Leninskie Gory, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation; e-mail: antonovski@hotmail.com

In his paper the author establishes some arguments against the thesis of professor Walter Schweidler. The latter defends the anti-representationalist claim that not every kind of knowledge is to evaluate on its truth and falsehood. The author maintains the opposite thesis that the all knowledge including the one about social premises of any kind of science may be evaluated (although not eventually proved) on their truth or falseness.

**Keywords:** truth, social philosophy of science, representationism, knowledge



## СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ НАУКИ КАК БЛЮСТИТЕЛЬ «ВОПЛОЩЕНИЯ ИСТИНЫ В МИРЕ»

**Антоновский Александр Юрьевич** – доктор философских наук, старший научный сотрудник. Институт философии РАН. Российская Федерация, 109240, г. Москва, ул. Гончарная, д. 12, стр. 1. Доцент. Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова. Российская Федерация,

В своей статье А.Ю. Антоновский выдвигает ряд тезисов в опровержение аргументации профессора Швайдлера, защищающего антирепрезентационистскую позицию. Последняя состоит в том, что не всякое знание может быть оценено с точки зрения истинности и ложности. Автор отстаивает противоположный тезис: всякое знание, включая то, что касается социальных предпосылок науки, может быть рассмотрено на предмет своей истинности или ложности.

**Ключевые слова:** истина, социальная философия науки, репрезентативизм, знание

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119991, Москва, Ленинские  
горы, д. 1 e-mail: antonovs-  
ki@hotmail.com

Prof. Schweidler has regarded several problems and each of them is highly relevant for the social philosophy of science.

The author defends the anti-representationalist claim that the formation of the proper names (and as a consequence – scientific terms or notions) cannot happen through certain ostensive pointing at some objects given here and now (like in B. Russell's theory or through perceptions which are generalized inductively or by means of Kantian apperception or Anschauung).

Schweidler suggests that in order to answer the question about the concepts formation we have to take into account the historical and socio-cultural background of the genesis of proper names which form the foundation and boundary of all classifications including the scientific ones.

For justification of this general approach Prof. Schweidler brings together several ideas that have to be regarded and evaluated in details.

## 1. The idea of the implicit knowledge in sense of Polanyi and Wittgenstein

The author claims that there is an important difference between a personal belief or propositional knowledge and some implicit or background knowledge of the language community in its historical development. The first one could be evaluated on its truth/falseness. The second one however – being the foundation for the first one – cannot be evaluated in this manner. It simply is as it is.

What is meant here is probably that some of proper names that were formed once in the past (through the mystic transition from so called “nature kinds” to personal names) now function as our common words and even as scientific concepts.

One question we might ask however is whether that knowledge of names (the historical naming of things in the past) is not the same as notorious analytical judgments of the type “Something is as it is” solely in a slightly modernized form “Something is as it was named”.

If it is so, then we seem to return to the Kantian a priori judgments, and also cannot do without this unloved apperception – although not in the mind but in the history of mind.

I would like to argue against the claim that such background knowledge has to be implicit. The fact of existence of our discussion here in Moscow itself presupposes a possibility of elucidation of the social ground of scientific knowledge.

And Prof. Schweidler could be sure that his reconstruction of such implicit knowledge has been expounded in his contribution sufficiently explicit, and we can evaluate and appreciate it as the true one.



This implicit knowledge undoubtedly exists but I do not see any reasons why it should not share the destiny of any other knowledge.

After all, every contemporary piece of knowledge existed once being realized in its implicit form (say, the water was known as a liquid, soaking and drinkable substance which was once named in some transition from “natural kind”) and now it could be realized explicitly (in its deeper structure) as a chemical formula –  $H_2O$ .

Whether it is implicit or not only depends on an observer. A chemist treats her subject matter in explicit form of her true or /false – propositions.

And an epistemologist does the same (also in the form of explicit true or false propositions) when she refers to these sociocultural premises of the knowledge acquiring. Some of these premises could be then evaluated as a useful or harmless, and scientifically valid (true). And the claim of Prof. Schweidler obviously expresses such implicit premise of science that could be formulated explicitly as follows:

The science has its roots in some transition from “natural kinds” by a historical naming of things by some proper names.

So, the social premises of any kind of science may be evaluated (although not eventually proved) on their truth or falseness.

## 2. Symbolic life and capacity of classification

The author claims that the nature should be regarded as a reservoir of “nature kinds” (“stock of designations”) that serves as a condition of the socio-cultural processes and, at the same time, as a ground for logical process of naming.

But here we locate ourselves onto the level of very uncertain causality. What is the cause and what is the effect? Do some natural kinds (say, the names of animals and plants as the types of things that could be realistically considered for such role) produce the required capacity of classifications? Or does this classificatory capacity, on the contrary, generates these “natural types” – as it was stated in the nominalistic approach?

According to Schweidler and also Levi-Strauss, it is the system of natural classifications that has once determined social hierarchies and development of personality of their members through its symbolic mediation.

But given that we do not have all the required anthropological data why should we not share Emile Durkheim’s view that, just on the contrary, the available social hierarchies (say, system of kinship or neighborhoods or settlements), i.e. available “classification of men”, determines “the classification of things”. In any case, neither the natural kinds nor the social hierarchies could appear without this already existing (even minimal) capacity of classification.



The author also argues that there were some natural forces that ensured logical and also social “connection between natural kinds and proper names” and therefore formed the capacity of classification.

The difficulty here seems to me to be that these natural kinds (as all “ideal types” in sense of M. Weber) are always performed as media of a certain observer. And such an observer uses those means in order to construct her observed objects. The natural kinds as such (birds, mammals, penguins) cannot be found in the nature outside the observing perspectives. The observer cannot simply select such natural kind as the penguin. It should first choose its observing optics i.e. the required instrumental distinctions, for example mammalian/not-mammalian or egg-planting/not egg-planting. Only depending on this choice of an observer the penguin would be constructed as a “natural kind” (say, as a bird or as a mammal).

There is another issue with this idea that I would like to raise. If we remain on the level of “assigning proper names” (as we do, according to the proclaimed idea of sociocultural determination of knowledge), then how could we pay attention to the main scientific task which is to explicate unobserved correlations and generalizations?

How should we explain the reduction of some empirical correlation (say, the laws of the ideal gas with all its everyday-known variables – heat, pressure, volume) to the deeper level of the Kinetic Molecular Theory, some variables of which have no observed correlations in everyday or social-cultural reality?

Such empirical values as heat, pressure, volume could be very well regarded as undoubted consequences of socio-cultural dynamic of a language community. But other basic variables of the molecular theory often have no connections with those language communities whatsoever.

My worry is that this would force Prof. Schweidler to confine his interest to the justification of science at the level of the phenomenal (and not the theoretical) grounds of sciences.

### **3. Idea of the phenomenal justification of science**

The main thesis is as follows: “all scientific knowledge is grounded not in any theoretical capacity of the total dissolution of phenomena”... “but..., on the contrary, the relation of our whole conceptual system of science to the world we live in is rooted in our practical manners and strategies”.

I would have to disagree with this view because the thesis that all scientific knowledge is grounded on the capacity of the theory to do the total dissolution of every phenomenon would be equally correct. What is left of any concrete phenomena in the laws of Newton – except for such qualities as material points with mass, acceleration, position in the space and time?



I agree that naming of things by proper names and resulting taxonomies and descriptions of phenomena form a very important part of the science, and exactly here we could reveal the impact of the language rules of everyday praxis of the language communities. Nevertheless any science in its significant aspects consists of the theoretical praxis of reduction of these phenomena to some unobserved (= not previously named by any historical communities) ideal objects and models that often have nothing in common with everyday images and representations and the language rules.

#### **4. Following the language rules as a factor of inclusion into the science community**

Schweidler writes: “The rules we are following in our linguistic contact with the world can never be found in ...actual representation of external objects in an individual subject, because these rules are embedded in the historical background of our speaking community and in the implicit knowledge about the world which is always already contained in our forms of immediate perception”.

I would readily agree with the statement that the rules of uses of language expressions should be located and searched in the history of the long and successful application of such words and their meanings. Thus, words like “green”, “plus”, and “water” have a long “track record” in the history of language rules development and can be evaluated as really “entrenched predicates” in sense of Nelson Goodman and as pretty adequate as far as common language rules concern.

This successful “track record” really distinguishes them from some strange words like “grue” (Goodman) and “quus” (Kripke), and “twater” (Putnem) that could be logically correctly used in the language of science instead of traditional “green”, “plus”, and “water”. Here Professor Schweidler has his right to refer to the historical generation of language rules as a social solution of a logical problem.

The difficulty however seems to be that science radically changes the everyday sense of its concepts. The best-known instances of such a transformation are the changed meanings of “space”, “time”, and “matter” in the General Relativity Theory (in comparison to their previous everyday meanings). And secondly, the main interest of the advanced science consists in finding the new rules for applying new concepts. The proclaimed legitimation of these old traditional predicates by means of their social and cultural “rootedness” is very important in discrimination of such “new-comers” as “grue”, “quus”, and “twater”. But this legitimacy refers exclusively to the some framework notions and concepts and by no means to some new and actual scientific knowledge.



## 5. The idea of the “symbolic pregnancy” of perception (articulation of intuitive world)

According to Schweidler “everything that we call the identity of concepts and significations, or the constancy of things and attributes, is rooted in this fundamental act of finding-again”... in “metonymical relation between the individual and the life of the sociocultural community by which science receives the irreducible basis which Cassirer calls “the intuitive world”.

I cannot agree with the proclaimed availability of the irreducible world as a ground of contemporary science.

There is nothing that science could not reduce to some deeper layers or levels or compounds of reality. Moreover this Metonymy as the manifestation of sociocultural patterns and meanings (symbolic life) and their transition into the human perception (biological life) cannot be an exclusion from this of scientific practice. It is exactly this dissolutive capacity of science that makes it possible to observe things that have no connection with the common human perception and traditional or sociocultural notions.

Thus, for instance we, of course, could still speak about the idea of in-divisible atom as a concept rooted in everyday life, but also in mythical, philosophical and even political images. But how can we maintain that our perception of atom (or rather of its effects on the technical instruments of its observation) could be symbolically mediated by means of social and cultural symbolical forms (Cassirer)? We can only wonder how far the contemporary science (in constructing its objects) withdraws from the capacity of human perception.

## 6. About means of the indirect communications: the bodyness (Merleau-Ponty) and the truth as aletheia (Heidegger)

“The picture of the world which we draw from our knowledge is a product of our body and its acquired abilities and therefore a witness of the forms of life that we, as bodily beings, have inherited from the sociocultural community from which we stem”- claims Professor Schweidler together with Merleau-Ponty.

Thus (and I would share this view) the body manifests as the principal condition of knowledge and at the same time – as blind spot of the human cognition.

But should we stop here in our searches for such latent premises of cognition? I would add to these invisible communicative tools also the main instrument of communicative construction of science, namely truth



or rather distinction between truth and falsehood as one of latent means of scientific communication (Niklas Luhmann) which in its turn forms the blind spot of science.

The truth is what we are fully entitled to define as a symbolic form which mediates the access to the perceived world in the sense of Cassirer. Precisely this symbolic form (or the selection mechanism) allows us to characterize one piece of knowledge as a new, scientifically relevant, and also worth of communicating in further communication and another one as false, and also worth of rejecting.

I agree with Prof. Schweidler that the truth cannot be considered as the representational fact/judgment-relation. It should be understood purely in terms of constructivism as a symbolic medium of communication, as its implicit symbol (a filter and an evolutionary mechanism for the knowledge selection) and a way of constructing the scientific social system.

However, why should this truth/false-distinction be regarded as an implicit and blind spot of scientific communication? It is so because a regular researcher usually knows pretty well which belief is true but he or she doesn't know what it means to be true. All processed knowledge should be accepted as true per definition and this truth is latent (or *zuhanden* in sense of Heidegger). And solely falsehood, error or mistake could become explicit for the researcher (or *vorhanden* in the Heidegger's sense) because the detected falsehood can trigger some reflexive mechanism of correction of scientific communication. Only now it becomes evident that not all knowledge is true as it was presupposed by the standard ("tripartit") definition of knowledge. So the latent becomes the patent (and *Zuhandenes wird zum Vorhandenen*). And in this sense the truth could be really understood as a-letheia.

## **Conclusion: Philosophy of Science as a Guardian of Science**

In the last part of Prof. Schweidler's paper he discusses a very interesting idea of the reflexivity of science which is capable to reconstruct the implicit knowledge as its own ground, and eventually to make explicit what once was implicit. It is an institution of special appointment with special responsibility – to follow "the incarnation of truth in the world". It is the social philosophy of science that can be regarded as this special scientific communication observing in its communications this implicit ground of the common scientific communication. It manifests in the function of the "guardian of scientific community". Thus, what is functioning as the blind spot of the science and its implicit ground becomes patent and accessible for this part or subsystem of science.



Nevertheless precisely this approach contradicts the proclaimed requirement to search for historical and sociocultural factors in the contemporary names and concepts of science. It seems to be incompatible with the special status of the contemporary science as a peculiar observer – as a product of the long out-differentiation of the communication of a very special kind that uses its unique tools or the communication media. And that media are not used by any other language community in our society.