



Intersections of Philosophy and Social Science: Exploring their Inextricable Relationship

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Abstract

This paper seeks to reassess the significance of philosophical inquiry, which, despite its historical importance, often remains marginalised in contemporary discussions. The relationship between philosophy and social science is symbiotic and mutually enriching. Philosophy provides the theoretical foundations, critical perspectives, and conceptual tools that inform social scientific inquiry, while social science research offers empirical data and real-world contexts that challenge and refine philosophical theories. This dynamic interaction contributes to a deeper understanding of human society and enriches both fields of study. To begin, let us delve into the etymological origins of the word "Philosophy". Etymologically, "philosophy" is derived from the Greek words 'Philein', meaning "to love", and 'Sophia', meaning "knowledge" or "wisdom". The Greeks believed that anyone seeking knowledge in any area could be considered a philosopher, as philosophy once encompassed nearly all forms of knowledge.¹ Despite the inherent value invested in philosophy, it has not received adequate recognition to justify its importance in contemporary discourse. It often faces the burden of constant justification, particularly within academic contexts, including social science studies. This raises questions about the role and subject matter of philosophy. Philosophy, as a subject, engages in critical inquiry into

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fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, ethics, and society. Its methodology requires ongoing justification within academic discourse, especially within the realm of social science studies. This paper aims to address some of these morally problematic questions and argue for the immense significance of philosophical inquiry in enhancing social science research. The objective of this paper is to highlight key insights that a philosophical examination of the social sciences can offer. By doing so, it aims to underscore the pivotal role of philosophical inquiry in advancing our understanding of human society and advocating for its integration into social science studies. A philosophical approach can critically assess the assumptions, methodologies, and ethical implications inherent in social science research, leading to more robust and reflective scholarship. For instance, philosophical analysis can challenge biases in sociological theories, offer deeper insights into ethical issues in psychological research, and question the epistemological foundations of anthropological studies. By incorporating philosophical inquiry, social scientists can attain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of human behavior and social structures, ultimately fostering a more ethical and reflective practice. This paper, therefore, argues for a closer integration of philosophical perspectives into social science disciplines to enhance their theoretical and practical contributions to understanding and improving human society.

Keywords: Philosophy, Social-science, Positivism, Dialogue

Philosophy as a Tool

Academic disciplines are typically distinguished by their subject domains and methodologies. Natural sciences, for instance, focus on observable phenomena considered as given in nature, employing empirical methods and emphasising verifiability and evidence. In contrast, philosophy transcends the mere presentation of objects, engaging in conceptual inquiries that delve into those objects' nature, essence, and purpose. Philosophy operates primarily at the conceptual level, probing into questions such as the essence of objects, their underlying principles, and the reasons behind their existence. It is concerned not only with the pure being of objects but

also with understanding and establishing the criteria for their validity. Conceptual investigation, or conceptual analysis, lies at the heart of philosophical inquiry. Concepts, the primary subject matter of philosophy, are the ideas or notions that exist within our minds. They serve as the building blocks of our thought processes, allowing us to interpret and make sense of the world around us. Unlike facts, which are objective realities existing independently in the world, concepts are mental constructs. While facts are studied and investigated by the natural sciences, concepts serve as the medium through which we comprehend and interpret these facts. In essence, while facts constitute the subject matter of science, concepts form the subject matter of philosophy. Concepts enable us to understand, interpret, and analyse facts, serving as the lens through which we perceive and make meaning of the world. Thus, philosophy plays a crucial role in critically examining and refining the concepts that underpin our understanding of reality.

Philosophy entails a deep investigation into concepts. When we refer to Philosophy within the context of a specific subject matter, it becomes a second-order inquiry. This inquiry seeks to delve into the aims, core assumptions, methods, and consequences associated with that subject matter. Additionally, it examines the boundaries and implications of these assumptions. Philosophy, often described as the "thinking of thinking," involves pursuits of critical thinking and analytic reasoning. Philosophers strive to elucidate and clarify concepts, pushing beyond surface-level understanding. In this process, philosophers aim to make the implicit explicit, delving beyond superficial observations. Philosophy commences with questioning, a fundamental aspect of philosophical inquiry. For example, when a child possesses conceptual knowledge of the colour blue, curiosity prompts questions such as "What is blue?" or "Why is something blue?" This questioning reflects a desire to deepen understanding and explore the intricacies of the world. Philosophy, therefore, begins with wonderment, as Plato articulated in his seminal work "Theaetetus."² Curiosity and the thirst for knowledge are defining characteristics of philosophical inquiry, propelling philosophers to seek deeper insights into existence and understanding.

In the pursuit of answering and understanding certain questions, individuals often engage in the process of defining concepts. It's important to note that there isn't always a singular, definitive answer or definition in philosophy. Philosophical inquiries are characterised by their complexity and the presence of multiple perspectives and interpretations. This multiplicity of answers and interpretations contributes to the notion that philosophy carries a significant amount of baggage or presuppositions. Philosophical questions often lead to debates, dialogues, argumentation, and investigations. These activities form the backbone of philosophical inquiry, allowing for exploring diverse viewpoints and critically examining ideas. Debate and dialogue are considered essential components of doing philosophy, as they facilitate the exchange of ideas, the refinement of arguments, and the exploration of different perspectives. One example that illustrates the importance of debate and dialogue in philosophical inquiry is found in the methodology of Indian philosophy. Indian philosophical traditions often employ a method known as *Khandan-Mandan* or *Purva Paksha* and *Uttara Paksha*. In this approach, philosophical debates are structured into two camps: the *Purva Paksha* (or initial position) and the *Uttara Paksha* (or opposing position). Scholars engage in rigorous debate and dialogue to present and defend their respective viewpoints, leading to a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. Pugdilananda, a philosopher, underscores the significance of debate and dialogue in philosophical inquiry. By engaging in these activities, philosophers can challenge assumptions, clarify concepts, and arrive at more nuanced understandings of complex philosophical questions. Thus, debate and dialogue serve as vital tools for advancing philosophical knowledge and fostering intellectual growth within the discipline. According to Pugdilananda, "The *modus operandi* of the Indian Philosopher consists of three stages. The first is known as *purvapaksa* (Prior view), in which the philosopher presents his opponent's position along with the latter's arguments in defense of it; in the second, known as *khandana* (refutation), the philosopher refutes his opponent's position by systematic criticism and argumentation; and in the last, namely *uttarapaksa* (the subsequent view), he presents his own position along with the proofs and arguments in defense of it. The last stage is also called *siddhānta* (conclusion)." ³ This

illustrates how philosophy should be comprehended and how philosophical inquiry unfolds. It underscores the notion that engaging in philosophy should be seen as actively "doing philosophy" rather than simply studying it as a course. To further develop this paper, it's imperative to shed ample light on the concept of Social Sciences.

Advent of Social Science

Social science constitutes a branch of academic inquiry that delves into human behaviour within its social and cultural contexts. It encompasses disciplines such as Demography, Economics, Sociology, Political Science, Geography, and their sub-disciplines like Gender Studies, Labour Studies, and Media Studies. While some disciplines, like History, overlap with the broader domain of Humanities, they are often categorised within both Social Sciences and Humanities. Defined broadly, Social Science comprises a major category of academic disciplines concerned with society and the interactions among individuals within it. For instance, Demography examines populations and their changes over time, while Economics explores how individuals interact in the production and exchange of goods and services. Sociology investigates the organisation and understanding of human societies and social structures, while Psychology explores the human mind and how individuals and groups experience the world through emotions, ideas, and conscious states. At its core, social sciences focus on social phenomena, which are constructed by human beings. These phenomena may be independent of nature or may involve the application of human perspectives onto aspects of nature, imbuing them with meaning and significance. For example, societal organisation, class structures, economic theories, and religious beliefs are all human constructs that shape social phenomena. Without human beings, there would be no human society to study, making social phenomena inherently tied to human construction. However, even aspects of nature, such as rocks, can take on different meanings due to human interpretations. For instance, certain rocks may be considered symbols of divinity by some religious individuals, transforming them from natural phenomena into objects imbued with spiritual significance.

The Philosophy of Social Sciences encompasses two primary aims. Firstly, it involves a second-order inquiry aimed at structuring the basis, assumptions, and scope of social inquiry, as well as critiquing the results or conclusions derived from such inquiry. For example, when embarking on a study of society, such as in sociology, it is essential to first establish the fundamental approach guiding the study before proceeding further. This process involves introspection and reflective analysis of the subject matter itself, addressing questions of what, how, and why the study is conducted. Understanding the philosophy of social science is important for several reasons. Firstly, it enables researchers to become aware of the underlying basis for their studies and the types of questions they seek to answer. Additionally, it elucidates the methods employed to seek these answers. By engaging in this kind of study, social scientists can make informed and conscious choices regarding the nature, activity, and scope of their research. This awareness and understanding are particularly crucial in the social sciences compared to the natural sciences. Unlike the natural sciences, where methods are comparatively well-established and progress is widely accepted and assured, the social sciences often grapple with greater methodological diversity and epistemological complexities. Therefore, studying the philosophy of social science equips researchers with the tools needed to navigate these challenges and make informed decisions in their research endeavours.

There are several key reasons for this, and these reasons can be elucidated through philosophical inquiry into the social sciences. Unlike the natural sciences, which deal with objective facts inherent in nature and independent of human consciousness, the social sciences focus on social facts, which are constructs shaped by human interpretation. As such, social facts are subject to interpretation, a conscious process that requires interpreters to understand their own situational and presuppositional aspects in order to interpret study findings effectively. The social sciences primarily concern themselves with human action – what people do and why they do it. However, human actions are deeply embedded in beliefs, desires, values, and intentions in a pluralistic manner. To comprehend these complexities, a detailed examination of human action is necessary. For example, consider the simple act of raising one's arm. This action could be intentional, such as raising one's arm voluntarily, or it could

be an involuntary response to an external stimulus, such as someone attacking them. Alternatively, it could be due to an external agent causing the individual to raise their arm, regardless of their intentions. Despite the identical outward action, each scenario involves distinct reasons for the action, highlighting the importance of understanding the rationale behind human behaviour. In order to navigate such complexities, a social scientist must engage in clear conceptual investigation using language as a construct to explain and interpret human activity. Additionally, they must undertake reflective inquiry into the actions themselves to grasp the underlying reasons behind specific behaviours. This process of reflection and introspection, unique to human beings, underscores the intimate relationship between philosophy and the social sciences. By delving into the intricacies of human action and interpretation, philosophy enriches our understanding of social phenomena and enhances the rigour of social scientific inquiry.

Why is Philosophical Enquiry - The Answer?

Human actions are inherently guided by rules, meaning that social actions depend on individuals' awareness and application of certain social norms or rules. Unlike the laws of nature, which dictate deterministic causal patterns in natural events, social actions rely on adherence to and interpretation of social rules. These rules are constructed by humans and are subject to both adherence and violation, evolving over time through human involvement. The evolution of social sciences and human society itself can be understood through an examination of their relationship with philosophy. For instance, consider the institution of marriage. Certain rules that are commonly accepted today, such as monogamous committed relationships between two individuals, were not always the norm. The concept of monogamy has evolved over time, with earlier societal norms allowing for different forms of marriage arrangements. Similarly, the definition of marriage has expanded to include unions between individuals of the same sex in some parts of the world, reflecting changes in societal values and norms. This illustrates that human actions and social development are inherently praxeological—that is, they involve conscious and purposeful behaviour, with each action being evaluative in nature.

Therefore, when investigating social phenomena in the social sciences, it is crucial to consider the purposive, communicative, institutional, perceptual, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of human activity within their proper context. A philosophical inquiry into the findings of the social sciences provides a perspective that helps elucidate the complex interplay of these various aspects of human behaviour and societal development. By delving into the underlying principles and assumptions guiding social inquiry, philosophy enriches our understanding of social phenomena and enhances the interpretive frameworks used in social scientific research.

Furthermore, human actions are influenced by ethical considerations, socio-political philosophical concepts, and norms rooted in religion. For a more fruitful pursuit in the social sciences, it is highly recommended, and even necessary, to cultivate awareness of these concepts and to develop an understanding of the philosophy of mind, religion, and related areas. Philosophy can be seen as occupying an intermediate position between theology and science, as Russell posits in his "History of Western Philosophy." Like theology, which consists of speculations on matters as to which definite knowledge has so far been unascertainable, science appeals to human reason rather than to authority, whether that of tradition or that of revelation. All definite knowledge so I could count belongs to science whereas all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belongs to theology. But between theology and science there is No Man's Land⁴, exposed to attack from both the sides; this No Man's Land is philosophy.

From the perspective of philosophical inquiry into the field of social sciences, one can trace the evolution of human society from theocentric to human-centric. These inquiries are deeply related to and helpful in the sociological disciplines. No single approach to social inquiry can capture all aspects of social reality. However, a form of unification of the social sciences can be posited by envisioning the various methods as participating in an ongoing dialogue with each other. Following the achievements of natural science and the scientific method, the renowned sociologist Auguste Comte introduced Positivism to the domain of the social sciences. According to him, "The only way to reconcile independence with

social union, and thereby to reach true liberty, lies in obedience to the objective laws of the world and of human nature; clearing these as far as possible of all that is subjective, and thus rendering them amenable to scientific demonstration. Of such immense consequence to society will it be to extend the scientific method to the complex and important phenomena of human nature"⁵.

This implies that we employ the same scientific method as natural scientists to study society, aiming to attain definite and objective knowledge in the social sciences while minimising subjective biases. Auguste Comte believed adopting this approach would help eliminate speculative and subjective knowledge in the social sciences. It is acknowledged that the positivist approach aids in testing theories through empirical methods, such as collecting data to test hypotheses and drawing conclusions based on findings. Naturalism has proven highly effective in fields like political science, economics, and psychology. However, there are several shortcomings to consider. Most notably, social sciences lack the law-like regularities found in natural sciences. Social facts necessitate a praxeological approach; they are driven by reasons rather than causes and require interpretation for understanding, rather than analysis based solely on causal grounds. Wilhelm Dilthey advocated for the hermeneutic approach, recognising that social phenomena are subject to interpretation. However, interpretations are susceptible to the subjective biases of the interpreter and can lead to speculative outcomes that naturalists seek to avoid. Post-modern thought has shifted towards cultural and historical relativism, asserting that knowledge and truth are relative to a particular period and culture. Consequently, no objective viewpoint can be established, whether through naturalism or interpretation. Currently, there is no consensus on the appropriate approach to investigating the social world, as the discussion above on social science methods and their limitations illustrates.

Take the example of behaviourism, developed extensively by Skinner, in psychology. He has to assume that the conscious mental faculty of humans does not play a part in behaviour, and instead, all behaviour is a function and consequence of external stimuli from the environment.⁶ While this helps us study group behaviour and draw generic conclusions about it, one needs to be aware of the critical

assumption, and thus, the subsequent limitations of the direction of study one is performing, else, the conclusions would end up being limited and dogmatic. On the other hand, the psychoanalysts focus mainly upon the subjective interpretation of a person's conscious, which has very little in common with the behaviour studies. Another example in the field of economics. Neo-classical economics is one of the most popular approaches to determine prices, outputs, income distributions, supply demand, etc. in the field of micro-economics. However, the critical assumption of this theory, is the belief in rational choice, i.e., it assumes that populations behave rationally and uniformly in a given condition. This would be a Utopian situation, and in reality, populations behave more randomly, as a result of emotions, tastes and preferences. Thus, any rigid neo-classical economic study would have a normative bias in its conclusions that needs to be accepted and accounted for by the researcher, lest the knowledge be of little value. 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.

The other major effort of philosophy of social science is to critique the social sciences with the aim of enhancing their ability to explain the social world or otherwise improve our understanding of it. (Such as the influential text, *The Idea of a Social Science*, by Peter Wilch). This way, philosophy of social science is both descriptive and prescriptive.⁷ It serves to be a critical transformational enterprise that guides the further development of the social sciences, or any subject matter it reflects upon. For instance, the development from the positivist to the hermeneutic and then to the critical theory and post-modernist view of social sciences is part of the evolving narrative of the understanding as well as the approach to social sciences, and this activity itself is philosophical in nature. Thus, the question of the history of social sciences and its development is actually a question of its philosophy. To counter this, one can argue that, ultimately, as long as the results of the study are beneficial, the fundamental assumptions and limitations in the study need not be understood. One can indulge in the study and allow the results to speak for themselves. But this claim cannot be made in the field of social sciences, or for that matter, even natural sciences. And to drive

this argument further, unlike natural sciences, where causal laws are established by scientific method, which are then known to be universal and consistent (in most cases, exceptions exist), the social sciences are very different.

The aim of social sciences is to make social facts intelligible, i.e., to uncover their meanings and significance. Thus, the apparatus required to perform such an activity is quite like the Wittgenstein idea of Language games, where he specifies that there is no one word meaning that holds true in all cases but is only used in reference to family resemblance.⁸ It involves identifying the real, as opposed to the apparent, meanings of social institutions and continually questioning the beliefs and basis for these meanings, and evolving meaning along the way. One needs to identify the constitutive rules in society, and the regulative rules or principles over and above them, and continually identify how social facts play out on the basis of these rules, and how the rules get modified, rejected or transformed from time to time, and for what reasons. This would essentially become a perpetual conceptual investigation that tries to uncover the nature of society. This is precisely the aim of philosophy: to understand the essentially contested concepts and make the evident a little more evident. Thus, philosophy and the social sciences are wedded to each other. This is how philosophy helps reorient the direction of study toward new frontiers, as well as provide directionality in the existing domain of study. Thus, no social scientist can afford to ignore the philosophy of social science or any other compartment of philosophy.

The assumption that philosophy, as an elite, second-order inquiry, can provide the grand narrative or distinct method by which all other first-order disciplines and activities can clarify themselves, their behaviours, beliefs, and identities is unnecessary. It is not the academic discipline of philosophy that enables such an exercise, but rather the adoption of the philosophical attitude itself within the social sciences that fosters enrichment and evolution. Firstly, self-reflective awareness of the values inherent in each inquiry within the social sciences should be an integral part of the broader human conversation. Every social scientist must reflect upon the assumptions and foundations of their research to gain a deeper understanding of the social world. Secondly, continual

critique and identification of limitations in the assumptions and methodologies employed in the social sciences are necessary to facilitate their evolution. This ongoing process enriches human understanding of the social world, allowing for refinement and advancement in our comprehension of human behaviour and society.

Critical Remarks and Conclusion

The goals and primary characteristics of successful social science remain only partially understood, which raises numerous complex questions about the nature of knowledge and the objectives we pursue through these disciplines. The underlying narrative suggests a profound inquiry into whether social knowledge can be considered objective or if it inherently remains relative. This dilemma brings us to consider whether social science can indeed provide objective knowledge or if it inherently exists as an anarchical discipline where relativism prevails, leading to a scenario where "anything goes" and any proposition can be proven. In exploring these questions, it's crucial to acknowledge that the nature of social knowledge is deeply embedded in human contexts, which are inherently diverse and dynamic. Unlike the natural sciences, where objective and replicable results can often be obtained through controlled experiments, the social sciences deal with phenomena that are influenced by an array of cultural, historical, and individual factors. This complexity challenges the notion of objectivity within social science, as the knowledge produced is often contingent on specific contexts and perspectives. One key aspect to consider is the epistemological foundation of social science. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, delves into questions about the nature and scope of knowledge, including its limits and validity. In the context of social science, epistemological debates often revolve around whether it is possible to attain objective knowledge about social phenomena or if all knowledge is constructed and therefore relative. This debate is central to understanding the challenges and possibilities within the field.

Proponents of objective social science argue that despite the complexities, it is possible to develop methodologies and frameworks that allow for a degree of objectivity. They emphasise

the importance of rigorous scientific methods, such as empirical observation, statistical analysis, and the use of controlled experiments where possible. By adhering to these methods, social scientists can aim to produce findings that, while not entirely free from bias, are robust and reliable enough to be considered objective within certain parameters. However, critics of this view highlight the inherent subjectivity in the study of social phenomena. They argue that social science is inextricably linked to human interpretation and meaning-making processes, which are influenced by the researchers' own backgrounds, biases, and theoretical frameworks. This perspective suggests that social science cannot escape its interpretive nature and that all knowledge produced is, to some extent, relative. From this standpoint, the goal is not to achieve objectivity but to embrace the plurality of perspectives and understand how different contexts shape our understanding of social phenomena.

The notion of social science as an anarchical discipline where "anything goes" stems from the idea that, without a clear epistemological foundation, the field could devolve into a relativistic enterprise. This view is often associated with the work of philosopher Paul Feyerabend, who famously argued against the strict methodological constraints in science, advocating for a more pluralistic and open approach.⁹ While Feyerabend's ideas have been controversial, they raise important questions about the flexibility and openness required in social science to accommodate diverse methodologies and perspectives. Feyerabend argued against the notion that science should be governed by a single, universal method. Instead, he championed a more pluralistic and open approach to scientific practice, suggesting that the progress and success of science often result from the use of diverse, and sometimes unconventional, methods. His stance was rooted in the observation that many significant scientific breakthroughs did not adhere strictly to established methodologies. For instance, Galileo's revolutionary contributions to astronomy involved methodological departures from the Aristotelian norms of his time. Feyerabend's advocacy for methodological pluralism is grounded in the belief that rigid adherence to a single method stifles creativity, innovation, and the natural evolution of scientific knowledge. He posited that a more flexible and inclusive approach allows for the incorporation of multiple perspectives, which can enrich scientific inquiry and lead

to more comprehensive understandings of complex phenomena. This argument is particularly pertinent to the social sciences, where the subjects of study—human behaviour, societies, cultures—are inherently multifaceted and influenced by a myriad of factors that cannot be neatly controlled or predicted. In social science, Feyerabend's ideas encourage the acceptance and integration of various methodologies, ranging from quantitative methods such as statistical analysis and experiments to qualitative approaches like ethnography and case studies. Each of these methods offers unique insights and contributes to a more holistic understanding of social phenomena. For example, quantitative methods can identify broad patterns and correlations, while qualitative methods provide deep, contextual insights into human experiences and social processes. By valuing methodological diversity, social scientists can cross-validate their findings and mitigate the limitations inherent in any single approach.

Unifying the diverse approaches within social science to offer a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the social world is indeed a formidable challenge. The field encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, and more. Each of these disciplines has its own methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and areas of focus. To achieve a unified understanding, it is essential to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue. Interdisciplinary approaches can bridge the gaps between different social science disciplines, allowing for a more holistic understanding of social phenomena. By integrating insights from various fields, social scientists can develop more comprehensive models that account for the complexity and interconnectedness of social systems. For example, understanding a social issue like poverty requires insights from economics, sociology, and political science, among others. Interdisciplinary research can provide a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of such issues. Furthermore, methodological pluralism, the acceptance and integration of multiple methods and approaches, can enhance the robustness of social science

research. By employing a variety of methods, researchers can cross-validate their findings and address the limitations inherent in any single approach. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and ethnography, can provide deep insights into individual experiences and social contexts, while quantitative methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis, can identify broader patterns and correlations. The combination of these methods can lead to a richer and more reliable understanding of social phenomena.

The evolution of social science to push the boundaries of human knowledge further requires an openness to new theories, methods, and perspectives. Social science should be adaptive and responsive to the changing social world, incorporating emerging trends and technologies. For instance, the rise of big data and computational social science presents new opportunities for analysing social phenomena at an unprecedented scale. By leveraging advanced data analytics and machine learning techniques, social scientists can uncover patterns and insights that were previously inaccessible. Moreover, social science should strive to be more inclusive and participatory. Engaging with diverse communities and stakeholders can enhance the relevance and impact of social science research. Participatory research approaches, which involve communities in the research process, can ensure that the knowledge produced is grounded in the lived experiences of those being studied. This can also address power imbalances in the research process, giving voice to marginalised groups and ensuring that their perspectives are considered.

Philosophy plays an indispensable role in addressing the complex questions and guiding the development of social science disciplines by providing a framework for critical reflection on their foundational aspects. Philosophical inquiry helps social scientists to examine and question the assumptions underlying their theories and methodologies, ensuring that these assumptions are sound and justifiable. Through debates about epistemology, philosophy delves into the nature and scope of knowledge, challenging social scientists to consider how they know what they know and the limits of their understanding. Ontological debates push social scientists to reflect

on the nature of the social reality they study, prompting questions about what kinds of entities and structures exist and how they interact. Ethical discussions compel social scientists to consider the moral implications of their research practices and findings, ensuring that their work promotes social good and avoids harm. By engaging with these philosophical debates, social scientists can clarify their theoretical foundations, leading to more rigorous, coherent, and ethically informed research. This critical engagement ultimately strengthens the validity and impact of social science, fostering a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the social world.

Philosophy also encourages a critical examination of the values and purposes underlying social science, prompting reflection on the ultimate aims of social research and its potential contributions to broader societal goals. This reflective process involves questioning the implicit and explicit values that guide research agendas, methodologies, and interpretations of findings. Philosophy urges social scientists to consider not just the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, but how their work can address pressing social issues and contribute to the common good. For instance, critical social theories like feminism, critical race theory, and post-colonialism fundamentally challenge dominant paradigms that often marginalise or overlook the experiences of oppressed groups. These theories scrutinise the mechanisms of power, inequality, and oppression that shape social phenomena, thereby expanding the scope of social science to include diverse perspectives and experiences. By bringing attention to social justice issues, these philosophical perspectives advocate for transformative change, pushing social science to understand the world and improve it. This critical examination and incorporation of diverse viewpoints enrich social science, making it more inclusive, equitable, and impactful in addressing real-world problems.

In conclusion, the quest for objective knowledge in social science is fraught with complexities and debates. While it may be challenging to achieve complete objectivity, striving for methodological rigour and epistemological clarity can enhance the reliability and validity of social science research. Embracing methodological pluralism, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and engaging with diverse communities can provide a more

comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the social world. Philosophy, with its critical and reflective approach, plays a crucial role in addressing the foundational questions of social science, guiding its development, and opening new avenues for inquiry. As social science evolves, it must remain adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to the changing social landscape, pushing the boundaries of human knowledge and contributing to a more just and equitable society.

The pursuit of successful social science involves grappling with its complex and often partially understood goals and characteristics. Central to this pursuit is the challenge of balancing cognitive and practical objectives while addressing the inherently relative nature of social knowledge. This relativity raises critical questions about the possibility of achieving objective knowledge within social science, or whether it risks becoming an anarchical discipline where any proposition might be proven. Objective knowledge in social science can indeed be attained, but it requires a nuanced understanding of objectivity that acknowledges context and complexity. Systematic and rigorous methodologies, peer review, and continuous scholarly scrutiny are essential to ensuring the robustness and reliability of social scientific findings. Fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and integration is crucial to unify the diverse approaches within social science. Social science encompasses various disciplines, each with distinct methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Promoting methodological pluralism and creating platforms for dialogue among scholars from different fields can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. By synthesising diverse perspectives, social science can capture the multifaceted nature of social realities more effectively.

In light of these challenges, the evolution of social science necessitates embracing innovative research methods and remaining responsive to the changing social landscape. This includes adopting mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques and leveraging technological advancements such as big data analytics and computational social science. Addressing contemporary issues like globalisation, digitalisation, and social inequalities ensures that social science remains relevant and capable of informing policy-making and practical interventions.

Philosophy plays an indispensable role in this evolutionary process by examining foundational questions about the nature of social knowledge, objectivity, and methodological validity. Engaging with these philosophical inquiries enables social scientists to develop a more critical and reflective understanding of their practices, leading to more rigorous and coherent research. Philosophy clarifies the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying social scientific theories, providing a framework for assessing their strengths and limitations. This philosophical grounding strengthens the foundations of social science, fostering its progressive development and expansion into new branches. Thus, philosophy not only enhances the rigour of social science but also opens avenues for its future growth, ensuring that it continues to push the boundaries of human knowledge.

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