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Transcending Postmodernism

Morton A. Kaplan

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Transcending Postmodernism

Also by Morton A Kaplan

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Transcending Postmodernism

Morton A. Kaplan
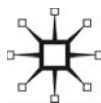*Professor Emeritus, University of Chicago, USA*

with

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Reader, University of Aberystwyth, UK

Foreword by Patrick A. Heelan

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To Azie, my wife, the light and joy of my life, who is much more intelligent than I am except on abstruse topics of academia

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Foreword

I am honored by Morton Kaplan's invitation to write a brief foreword for this extraordinary work. Morton and I are both professionally trained in physics and philosophy, and we both have addressed a common topic – the philosophical integration of 'worldly' scientific knowledge. We do so, however, in different but complementary ways. Kaplan searches for formal objective scientific theories and writes in the spirit of analytic philosophy. He finds, however, that analytics needs to be supplemented by pragmatics. The clarity of his analysis is wonderful. I write, however, in the complementary spirit of hermeneutical phenomenology focused on the correlative subjective philosophical context within which it is possible for the 'world' to be construed by scientists and others as 'objective'. The beauty, strength and success of Kaplan's work is, in my view, his awareness of the practical 'complementarity' of these approaches. He uses with ease philosophical arguments that transcend formal logic and that derive their meaning from the context of implied values and practical existential intentions. This argumentation is often hermeneutical and phenomenological.

One of the aspects that I noted as special in Kaplan's work was his move towards pragmatism. This was a hermeneutical move for reasons given above. Kaplan made such moves cleverly by relying on the reader's natural ability to make hermeneutical moves which come naturally in such situations; he did not display how they complement the logical analytic inquiry that he was making. What I mean is that Kaplan was able to bring his reader with him without implying that the structure of meaning-making that we buy into naturally goes beyond logical analysis, as if the reader were unaware both that Kaplan was using it, and that it was coherent with Main Street Anglophone logical analysis, which it is not. I think that this in itself is a mark of real genius – Kaplan's transcending the logical norm again and again, without making an issue of it.

I strongly endorse *Transcending Postmodernism* – not just because it is a bridge between the complementary schools of analytic and hermeneutical philosophy of science, but because of the extraordinary scholarship and exquisite clarity that it exhibits throughout.

<div style="text-align: right">Patrick A. Heelan</div>

Preface

Our postmodern philosophical period has produced two powerful but contending paradigms: one based on analytical theory and the other on pragmatic meanings or practice. They have their origins in Greek philosophy which, since its earliest days, has alternated between a quest for the correct designations of objects external to minds and a quest for the correct analytics to apply to the relations of objects. The quest that emphasizes pragmatics rests on meaning. Analytics, on the other hand, provides a foundation for theory. When these quests avoided major puzzles in past periods, a world view sometimes resulted within the orbit of which many different areas of knowledge had an understandable place.

The very first chapter stresses correlatives as the building blocks of qualitative knowledge. I will show that the polar terms of correlatives cannot be understood independently. This is true of correlatives such as analytics and pragmatics. It is also true of ontology and epistemology. For instance, the use of instruments that can read objects at the particle level changed judgments about the ontology of objects such as photons. In turn, these evolved designations produced modified understandings of how different instruments, whether neurological systems or electron microscopes, are related to objects that are external to agents.

Thus, the contrary terms of correlatives are related in an evolving process that rests on their complementary character *within the framework of a contemporary world view*. I will show throughout the first chapter that the polar terms of correlatives are *not independently meaningful*. The addendum to Chapter 3 illustrates this claim in detail with respect to the concept of freedom while the addendum to Chapter 1 shows in detail the complementarity between pragmatics and theory.

Epistemology, thus, is *not a subjective matter* that is distinct from a world of objects but a complementary part of an evolutionary *process that dialectically produces objects of knowledge*. Ontology and epistemology cannot be understood independently. They complement each other. And our understanding of them, as I will show in the first chapter, evolves dialectically.

Part I should be easily accessible to students. A deeper understanding of why my version of a post-postmodern paradigm is preferable to contemporary alternatives will be enhanced by familiarity with the technical

discussions of Part II on analytics, which center on mathematical logic and physics, subjects that often are central to the development of world views. Although undergraduate students, and even graduate students, who are not at least acquainted with the philosophy of science, may find Part II difficult, even the modest understanding of these technical issues that Part II provides will empower the understandings of the most engaged students.

Because of the philosophically important differences between general theories and systems theories, this subject will be explored in Part III. And because the literature in the area of the theory of international relations suffers from a multitude of philosophical errors, I will use Part III to clarify these issues in a way that students can apply to discussions of theory throughout the social sciences.

Part IV deals with the analysis of different types of evolved systems from the perspective of complementarity. From the examination of international theory, constitutional law, and the character of the polity, the analysis draws upon complementarity to relate the subject matters to an appropriate world view.

I should stress that a world view is not a theory of the world. World views are not directly related to the analytic forms of theory I discuss in Chapter 6. They are pragmatic *assessments* of how theories and pragmatic knowledge mutually complement each other at a particular stage of knowledge. They lie in the realm of judgment. And they evolve as information changes. The second chapter uses the Fátima thesis and the Cargo Cult to show how world views, as distinguished from theories, can be formed, how they can evolve, and how they can be critiqued.

A world view can be used to judge how pragmatic assessments and analytics *complement* each other, at least until discrepancies require a revised world view. In the case of the Fátima thesis I show that the implied message is of doubtful truth-value in the contemporary world view, that it might have had considerable truth-value within a medieval world view, and that if certain types of events were to occur, its truth-value could become plausible.

The original accounts of two chapters in this book – one of which is on the nature of physical reality and the other on legal theory – originally were placed in a magazine I edited (*The World and I*). This is generally frowned upon. I offer no apology.

The essay on physical theory was vetted by Marcelo Alonso who later did one of the major papers for the United Nations Conference on '100 Years of Quantum Theory'. Marcelo told me that he had discussed the major issues of quantum theory in long conversations with Niels

Bohr when Bohr had been his house guest. He told me that my paper presented Bohr's position accurately and that he agreed with my criticism of the literature on the Copenhagen doctrine. I also gave a copy to Helmut Fritzsche, a professor of physics at the University of Chicago. He said he agreed with me and told me about the lecture by the noted physicist, Irving Langmuir, one part of which is quoted at the end of the first chapter.

I am not a student of constitutional law but I did read up on jurisprudence. Morris Cohen, on whom I wrote my dissertation, was famous for his articles on jurisprudence. I wrote a well-known book on international law with a former attorney general of the United States as my co-author. I was chosen to do a short biographical sketch on Philip Jessup for the *Yale Biographical Dictionary of American Law*. The magazine I edited, and in which these two chapters appeared, won a Silver Gavel Award from The American Bar Association for a series of articles on law that I supervised. Although none of the above proves I am right, I believe I was qualified to do the article on jurisprudence, which disagrees vigorously with each of the opposed positions of Professor Tribe and of my admired former colleague, Justice Scalia.

I am deeply grateful to Patrick A. Heelan, the William A. Gaston Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University, for writing a foreword for this book. He is a distinguished, and brilliant, philosopher who is an internationally-recognized authority on hermeneutics. The hermeneutic approach to philosophy is viewed by most philosophers as being inconsistent with analytical philosophy, which is a focus for my use of systems theory. In addition to his doctorate in philosophy Heelan has a doctorate in physics. He did post-doctoral work in theoretical physics with Schrödinger in Dublin and with my friend Gene Wigner at Princeton. That he has not taken exception to my skeptical comments in Chapter 5 on Schrödinger's quantum cat thought experiment encourages me.

I am grateful to Inanna. If this brilliant young scholar had not taken the trouble to convince me that at least one person in the field of International Relations understands my use of systems theory, I would not have produced this book. I would have assumed that any new statement of my position either would be ignored or, like my use of systems theory, force-fitted into positions I clearly rejected.

Inanna's challenges to me were crucial as I developed and retrofitted previous positions. I rewrote a few earlier articles and massively rewrote a few selected portions of a book, *On Historical and Political Knowing,* that was published by the University of Chicago Press. Inanna's introduction

adds greatly to the understanding of my philosophical position and is, in my opinion, a major original article in its own right. I also wish to thank Dr. Ranjan Chaudhuri for his very helpful clarifications of some passages in the text.

There is a reason for the personal style I adopt in this book. A life of philosophy is a life of continuing discovery. I believe that the present account of how I arrived at a post-postmodern paradigm will help others to understand it better than would an *ex cathedra* presentation.

I am also aware that portions of this book are repetitive. I have a good reason for this. Until Inanna proved to me that she did understand what I mean by systems theory, I had undergone an onslaught of critics who were convinced, and who convinced most members of the international theory subfield, that I understand systems theory as general and deductive. I eventually gave up trying to respond to critics whose versions of my position repeatedly astounded me while they ignored articles and books in which my positions were developed. My repetitions are intended to increase the likelihood that readers will accurately remember my earlier positions as I move on to other topics.

Introduction

The Unknown Kaplan: Synoptic Knowledge after Postmodernism[1]

Inanna Hamati-Ataya

When Morton Kaplan published *System and Process in International Politics* in 1957, the field of International Relations (IR) acknowledged it immediately as a groundbreaking contribution to the theorization of world politics. Kaplan proposed a systems approach to international processes that would enable IR to break with its loosely defined political-philosophical tradition and establish a solid, empirical basis for studying a particularly complex realm of reality. This work is still referenced today in IR textbooks, and almost half a century after its first publication the European Consortium for Political Research reprinted it as one of the first three volumes in its Classics series (Kaplan 2005[1957]).

However, what most, if not all, commentators on Kaplan's use of systems theory have failed to appreciate since the 1950s – and what the IR community still ignores today – is the underlying philosophy of knowledge and cognitive project that Kaplan had set out to develop on his own terms, independently of narrow and changeable disciplinary debates. And because of the modern academic compartmentalization of the different fields of knowledge, which prohibits a genuine engagement with interrelated problems in science, social science, and philosophy, Kaplan's cross-disciplinary contributions have remained largely invisible beyond the artificially delineated academic territories separating these interconnected fields of inquiry and their respective audiences.

This book offers Kaplan's synthesis on core issues of philosophy, theory, politics, and ethics, within a *synoptic* approach that reconstitutes the links contemporary academia has artificially erased, thereby providing us with a unified frame of reference for thinking about reality and our situated, historical knowledge of it. The philosophical approach Kaplan

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offers here specifically aims to transcend the divide between analytical and hermeneutic philosophies, and hence to bridge the gap between two philosophical traditions that, he argues, are equally valuable and necessarily complementary. In order to locate this book within Kaplan's six-decade-long reflections on a range of interconnected philosophical and practical issues of philosophy, science, and ethics, this introductory essay presents my interpretation of Kaplan's synoptic approach in a way that will hopefully highlight its importance and value to a wide audience among contemporary scholars and students of the social sciences and humanities.

Seven problems for a synoptic approach

To situate Kaplan's project within the relevant literature and delineate its synoptic dimension, I will start with a series of interdependent cognitive and praxical problems that define the contours and highlight the challenges of synoptic approaches to reality and knowledge.

Knowledge: foundations and processes

The question *How is knowledge possible?* is the starting point of epistemic inquiry. As Nietzsche argued, we tend to answer such questions by relying on dichotomous perspectives that we believe characterize the existential world as much as the logical/perceptual categories of our understanding. One of the main perspectives used to make sense of the origins, sources, and bases of our knowledge is that which distinguishes pure reason or *intuitus* from experience and the senses. The Kantian notion of *a priori* knowledge, defined as not knowledge that 'is independent of this or that kind of experience', but knowledge that 'is absolutely so of *all* experience' (Kant 2008), has constituted an important metaphysical principle that united various traditions from Greek philosophy to the European Enlightenment, and has provided an invaluable sense of certainty and security to the Western epistemic tradition. Even the development of the sciences in the 17th and 18th centuries and the underlying Baconian, Galilean, or Lockean philosophies that supported them did not manage to break the idea of the human mind's ability to produce 'justified true beliefs' independently of the subjective, material, and limited framework of our sensory apparatus.

The following centuries, however, produced a rich literature that critiqued cognitive views based on absolute identifications. Conventionalism, pragmatism, social constructionism, and the sociology of knowledge have shown how both endogenous and exogenous factors

contribute to (shaping) our understanding of reality. Kant himself may be viewed as having initiated a mild form of 'interpretationism' with his assertion that 'the order and regularity in the appearance, which we entitle *nature*, we ourselves introduce'. Nietzsche took this view to its extreme, setting knowledge and all beliefs associated with its existence, validity, and purpose as the sophisticated yet primal expressions of a basic human impulse – the 'will to power' (Nietzsche 1998). Between these two views, different forms of 'empirical interpretationism'[2] have flourished, which all seem to have directly grown out of Hegelian philosophy. Hegel himself did retain the notion of an *absolute*, total knowledge as the expression of the ultimate actualization of the Spirit's consciousness of itself and the world. But his acknowledgment of the reification of actual *historical* concepts led to the development of various philosophies that grounded human understanding in the particularities of the circumstances of human life. Marx's and Mannheim's respective conceptions of 'ideology' opened the door to sociological modes of explanation of the nature and content of knowledge, reaching beyond the influence of endogenous, mental structures, to that of exogenous, socio-economic structures of material existence.

Modern philosophers, on the other hand, had to incorporate the epistemic developments that had revolutionized the pure sciences, especially those undermining belief in self-evident truths, including mathematical ones. The evolution of physical theory – non-Euclidean geometry, the theory of relativity, quantum physics – showed that conceptual and empirical changes could affect the most fundamental axioms and givens of earlier systems of thought and theories. These developments constitute the basis of many post-positivist philosophies, which focus on the conventional aspect of knowledge or on the more specifically social and historical character of its constitution and content.

In the final analysis, the question – *how is knowledge possible?* – remains. It is difficult to envisage a philosophy that can take into account all the different constitutive elements of human knowledge – and the more restricted forms of epistemologies that are concerned with what makes knowledge 'valid' and beliefs 'true' or 'justified' cannot relieve us from the sense of insecurity and doubt that results from the empirically supported acknowledgement of the historicity of knowing.

Historical knowing: views from somewhere

As long as the possibility of univocal, absolute identifications is a given, cognitive debates are restricted to the more technical, analytical, and formal problems of the philosophy of science. The shattering of the

traditional notion of objectivity and of the absoluteness of knowing opens these debates to existential problems that lead to a revaluation of the most deeply constitutive elements of our collective consciousness.

A transition from a paradigm of absolute knowledge to one of historical knowledge occurs in Hegel's *Logic* (1969). Hegel attempted to reconcile the two by resorting to a dialectic that preserved the linear temporality of the human cognitive progress, thereby providing hope that the incompleteness and relativity of historical knowing would not preclude the possibility of true identity in the Absolute.

Marx famously asserted that he stood Hegel on his feet, whereby he meant that he reversed the causal relation between historical consciousness and historical progress that Hegel had posited by grounding the structures of historical thought in the material structures of human existence. However, the problematic relationship between the historical and the absolute remained, now transposed into the dichotomy between 'false/distorted consciousness' or 'ideology', which Marx restricted to the owning class alone, and 'true consciousness', of which historical materialism itself was the first manifestation (Marx and Engels 1998, 2008). But the grounding of true knowledge in empirical reality could only be asserted with the introduction of a metaphysical element (Hegel) or a dual historical process (Marx), neither of which could be proved empirically or deduced logically from either idealist or materialist premises.

Sociological explanations of knowledge are thus confronted with the question of the validity of knowledge. Mannheim (1936) acknowledged that the sociology of knowledge is primarily concerned with the conditions of the (social) determination of knowledge rather than those of its (epistemic) validity. The purpose of *Wissenssoziologie*, then, was to relate the content of specific modes of thinking to the characteristics of the social milieus in which they appeared and made sense, much as Dewey's pragmatism later found a connection between Greek philosophy and the social structures of Greek society (Lavine 1950).

Contemporary science studies also show that social factors influence the emergence and propagation of scientific concepts, theories, and methodologies, and that some of the most widely acknowledged 'scientific revolutions' were more directly made possible by social rather than intellectual developments. This famously led Feyerabend (1982) to promote 'anarchy' as a realistic alternative for the process of scientific discovery, whereby magic, speculation, and religion would be granted as much credence as the most highly regarded scientific hypotheses. Historical knowing, therefore, breaks the notion of a single world that humans are universally and fittingly equipped to grasp independently

of their social loci – loci that are neither ideologically, nor intellectually neutral. Consequently, in addition to the revaluation of the classical distinction between knowledge and opinion, the historicity of knowledge makes the question of cognitive progress a problematic one.

Progress: transcending the relative

As long as the univocality and absoluteness of identifications are asserted, progress in knowledge likely will be viewed as a linear process that rests on our ability to transcend merely technical and methodological problems. Scientific growth would then follow a form of evolutionary progress, whereby concepts, theories and paradigms compete, and those that are most 'fit' to explain reality are selected on the basis of common frames of reference that set the standards for the formulation of hypotheses, the conduct of experiments, and the anticipation of predictable results. But evolutionary epistemologies ascribe to scientific growth a certain 'blindness' that mirrors the processes whereby genetic selection occurs in nature (Thagard 1980), thereby failing to see that cognitive process is governed by specific, practical *purposes* that are absent from biological selection.

On the other hand, historical explanations of the growth of knowledge tend to be excessively deterministic and teleological, ascribing to the historical process a finality that is governed by the actualization of human self-consciousness. Along with Hegel, who believed that each particular historical stage of knowing resulted dialectically from a previous, less developed one, Comte (1880) adhered to a linear temporality whereby the very establishment of intellectual disciplines reflected the development of the human mind itself, gradually moving away from 'theological' and 'metaphysical' modes of explanation to 'positive' ones, of which sociology was the final culmination. The influence on Marx of both Hegel's dialectic and Comte's positivism resulted in his adherence to a dual temporality wherein 'false/distorted consciousness' evolved with the evolution of the means of production, while 'true consciousness' emerged from the inherent contradictions between the ideology of the ruling class and the material conditions and aspirations of the oppressed one.

This existential need to identify the 'laws' that govern the development of our understanding of the world is obviously related to a general aspiration for progress and a belief in a meaningful, ordered future wherein humans are not merely under the illusion that they are moving away from past ignorance, but confident that they are capable of solving current and future problems exponentially as their knowledge grows.

Linear-progressive views of knowledge, in addition to their adherence to the classical conception of objectivity, thus convey an undeniably tele-ological view of existence, already implied in the very notion of scientific *growth*.

Without assuming *progress*, contemporary science studies explore logical, psychological, or sociological explanations of scientific or cognitive *change*, where 'new scientific knowledge derives logically from previous knowledge…, from the mental structures and procedures of scientists' or from their 'organization and social interests' (Thagard 1994). Doubtless, all of these factors need to be taken into consideration in order to grasp the *big picture*. This, however, would require that we look into the ways wherein the structures and processes of the mind, the individual and collective structures of the human psyche, and the structures and processes of socialization, are intertwined. The least one can say is that the big picture can no longer be arrived at by using monocausal, reductionist explanations, or by following the contemporary academic division of labor. Interdisciplinary knowledge has therefore become a necessary prerequisite for the understanding of both the synchronic and diachronic aspects of knowing.

Theory: making sense of the existential

While epistemic questions constitute an essential aspect of any cognitive inquiry, most scientists in the physical and social sciences are not interested in unmasking the logical, mental, or social factors that explain why they do what they do – they wish to just get on with research, with the hope of *explaining* (predicting) reality.

While some believe that explanation entails an understanding of the essence of things (Plato, Descartes, Duhem), explanation in the scientific era is mainly concerned with determining how singular occurrences fall within general patterns of behavior, or *laws*. Hempel and Oppenheim (1948) proposed a *deductive–nomological* (DN) account of explanation, where a singular event – the *explanandum* – is logically related to a set of propositions – the *explanans* – which include at least one statement of a scientific law, as well as the boundary conditions under which the law applies: the event to be explained thus follows deductively in an *if–then* argument, in the form of a (retrospective) prediction wherein the *explanandum* is shown to necessarily have happened. This type of explanation, also known as the *covering law model* (the law covers the pattern of which the *explanandum* is a singular occurrence), has constituted the principal theory of explanation used to describe what both physical and social theories do when they claim 'why' a particular event occurs.

But the DN account was criticized for separating the logic of prediction from that of causation: as shown by Scriven (1959b), it may explain why, in the Darwinian model, certain genetic traits evolve, by causally relating them to the benefits they confer to those who hold them, but it cannot predict that particular traits will be selected. *Causal* approaches to explanation thus aim to establish a symmetrical relation between the logic of explanation and that of prediction.

Causal explanatory knowledge also requires a determination of the level of explanation aimed at: to explain why a tree fell during a storm, some variables are sufficient to account for the occurrence of the event, while additional ones are necessary to explain why the tree fell exactly the way it did. The use of counterfactual analysis enables us to distinguish the causes that are relevant at a specific level from those that are relevant at other levels of explanation. The selection of competing theories is then made on the basis of their *explanatory power* – their ability to subsume the largest number of phenomena under the simplest system of relevant causal relations – as well as their *predictive power* – which implies that they can sustain the test of falsification.

In the social sciences, things are complicated by the nature of the subject-matter: the number of possible relevant variables, the levels of analysis, and the elements of human will and freedom preclude a strict use of the covering-law model. Since the subject and object of inquiry share the same nature, the definition of scientific problems, the formulation of hypotheses, and the observation/measurement of events entail a great deal of circularity that is made more problematic by the linguistic medium of scientific communication.

The 'Behavorial Revolution' in American social sciences and the passionate debates it led to testify to the difficulty of reaching a consensual, operational view of explanation that would satisfy the requirements of scientific investigation *and* take into account the specific nature of human behavior. In this respect, explanation is often said to fall short of its expected objectives, and is therefore often 'downgraded' to *understanding* or *interpretation*: implied in these alternatives is social science's permeability to, and/or dependence on, *judgment* and *valuation*, which are often viewed as constituting a fundamental obstacle to the production of objective knowledge as defined in the physical sciences.

Values: between knowledge and judgment

As soon as we ask whether values and judgment are included in or constitutive of theory, the 'problem of values' (Hamati-Ataya 2011) and the fact–value dichotomy emerge. Epistemically, statements of fact are

said to be different from statements of value or 'value-judgments' since they 'define what is', while value-judgments 'do not have for object the nature of things' but 'their worth in relation to persons' (Durkheim 1953, p. 80). Implied in this opposition is that there can be no objective or intersubjective consensus on the validity of values: people can agree over the *occurrence* of a phenomenon, but not its *meaning* or *worth*, which depends on and remains restricted to the valuating subject.

This dichotomy, then, implies that within an objectivist conception of objective knowledge science can produce meaningful propositions about facts alone: it can therefore not determine what is (more/most) valuable but rather only who values what, or what values explain what behavior. Since 'to judge the validity of...values is a matter of faith' that 'involves will and conscience, not empirical knowledge' (Weber 1949b, pp. 55, 54), Scientific Value Relativism (Brecht 1959) establishes a distinction between *empirical* and *normative* theory.

Against this position, value-cognitivism aims to empirically establish the possibility of 'universal value-judgments' or show that value-judgments are grounded in human nature as revealed by needs/desires. Although a move away from philosophical/normative explanations requires an understanding of anthropological and psychological processes, social studies actually supply 'evidence' that supports both positions, showing that there exists both a 'great variety' and 'a great deal of agreement' over value-judgments (Nelson 1978); and no hard evidence has yet impressed social scientists to the point of appeasing their need for empirical certainty.

The implicit assumption underlying this debate equates *objectivity* with *universality*, since it posits that if science could prove that universal value-judgments exist, it would justifiably conclude that values themselves are universally true. The non-cognitivist view is therefore epistemically inconsistent, since it assumes with regards to 'values' something that is never similarly assumed for 'facts' – that fluctuations in their singular manifestations make them unknowable. This dual standard often leads value-cognitivists to reverse the criticism by extending cognitive skepticism to facts themselves, thereby offering subjectivist, perspectivist, or nihilistic conceptions that shatter the status of science as a distinct, legitimate, and/or superior type of knowledge. The paradox is that what non-cognitivists typically refuse to grant values in general – objective foundations – they do grant to exclusively one – truth – while in their attempts to establish objective foundations for values, value-cognitivists have to either deny truth such foundations, or accept a consistent relativism that defeats their purpose.

The problem is therefore intimately related to scientific objectivity. Nowadays, most social scientists agree that values should not pollute (the study of) facts: 'value-freedom', which requires that the scholar 'keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts…and *his* own practical evaluations' of them (Weber 1949a, p. 11), is meant to protect science from bias and ideology. Most techniques offered to achieve this 'detachment', since Durkheim's command to 'treat social phenomena as things' (Durkheim 1966), are rooted in positivism. Weber's *Verstehende* sociology also sought to identify the 'meaning' actions have *for social agents* by reconnecting them to their intended effects *independently* of the observer's assessment of their rationality and worth. The mainstream view, then, considers that values are problematic only insofar as they introduce *bias* in practical research, regardless of whether/how they influence cognitive interests (Nagel 1961; Kaplan 1964): the problem becomes one of 'value-control'. In other words, although values can, by definition, not be *known* directly, they can nevertheless be 'filtered', since they pollute what *can* be known – facts.

Falsificationism offers standards for such an endeavor, by relating the factual basis of scientific propositions to the rules of experimental testing (Popper 1959). However, as Kaplan has noted, what counts as a falsification depends upon the rest of the existing body of knowledge. Moreover, this belief in the 'neutrality of techniques' was criticized as the 'illusion that "axiologically neutral" operations are also "epistemologically neutral"' (Bourdieu et al. 1968), thereby further challenging the assumption that a materialist approach to hard 'facts' could prevent the 'pollution' of science by valuations and judgment.

The critique of positivism's obsessive attachment to facts as *givens* is also supported by science studies, which demonstrate that rationalism was often an obstacle to the development of science, and that knowledge is partly socially determined and can therefore not merely be subsumed by the logic of objective inference and reasoning. Beyond mere individual values, it is the whole 'ideological apparatuses' (Althusser 1984) and 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1997) that give meaning and purpose to the social system in which science operates and from which it speaks that have taken center-stage. Accordingly, one wonders to what extent science can still claim legitimacy against ideology.

Action: feeding back reality

It is said that one of the purposes of science is *control*, by which is meant control of that reality which we strive to *explain* and *predict*. Control, however, falls in the realm of action or praxis and is therefore governed

by judgment and freedom. While theories that follow the covering-law model might allow for an accurate prediction of expected results, most of what is investigated in the social sciences and humanities needs to involve human judgment more intensely and more problematically than the most difficult problems of physical science. The logic of social action thus blurs the comfortable epistemic line between knowledge and judgment.

As Weber would put it, science is an activity that is rationally guided by both purpose (interest) and value (truth), and therefore follows two different types of normativity. The question of knowledge-based social action thus feeds on the fact–value/is–ought dichotomies and the view that descriptive and normative discourses are not only different from each other (Hume 1978 [1739]) but that what ought to be can also not be deduced from what is (Hare 1963). This opposition was crucial for classical sociologists in defining the nature and role of science as opposed to philosophy and ideology. This was as true for the positivists (Comte, Marx, Durkheim) as it was for Weber, who viewed sociology as concerned with the 'analysis of facts' and incapable of providing guidance for the establishment of socio-political norms required to guide social action. The acknowledgment of science's inability to determine judgment therefore supports the view that knowledge of values (as norms) cannot be grounded in knowledge of (values as) facts. It follows that science cannot justify normative statements *if* these imply *axiological preferences*. This also leads to a deontological distinction that segregates the ethos of 'scientific man' from that of 'political man' (Weber 2004).

From this perspective, the only obligation that results from scientific knowledge is *rational*, not *axiological*. By revealing the causalities that underlie social phenomena, science delimits the realm of rational action in a *hypothetical*, not *categorical,* manner: 'it cannot tell anyone what he *should* do – but rather what he *can* do' (Weber 1949b, p. 54), without, however, guaranteeing that he *will*. The normative dimension of science is thereby reduced to a practical means–end relation, for it cannot express preferences among different ends, nor assume any *telos* grounded in a natural order of things. Social action, therefore, remains based on exogenous principles involving human judgments that cannot be supported objectively or intersubjectively and thus fall within the realm of ideological conflict.

However, since Marx's statement that the purpose of philosophy is to change reality and not merely describe it, social scientists have grown more aware of the moral responsibility of science. A great part of this ethos is associated with 'critical' sociology as a paradigm of engaged/

activist scholarship that adheres to and reinforces the view that science itself is neither ideologically neutral, nor inherently different from other competing discourses that claim a monopoly on social truths. In addition to Marxist narratives, pragmatism and constructivism have complicated things by arguing that representations of reality are constructed by perceptions *and* goal-oriented action. This extends the relationship between theory and practice beyond the mere problem of the self-fulfilling *Oedipus effect* of theory (Popper 1957). If it is indeed correct that reality is changed as we interact with it and that we understand it only insofar as we do, then the rules governing what *is* become more problematically intertwined with those governing what *ought to be*: purpose, interest, and judgment are hence more intrinsically part of understanding than classical views on knowledge claim, which requires a *reflexive* inquiry into the *reflectivity* of knowledge.

Reflexivity: looking back at the knowing self

The golden age of positivism – and its reassuring beliefs in objectivity, the universality of being and understanding, and progress – is now over. The most extreme alternatives to the positivist dream/nightmare have pushed us to the edge of nihilism and its offspring – from the philosophy of the absurd to existentialism and fanaticism. Relativity has taken over, providing easy justifications for errors of judgment, inconsistency in actions, and the devaluation of human responsibility.

Since it seems impossible for us to go back to the golden age of certainty our ancestors enjoyed without falling into a pathological condition of cognitive and moral denial, the *reflectivity* of knowledge needs to be addressed, not evaded. Just as a mirror reflects light, our knowledge of existential reality is reflective of a multitude of individual and collective, ideational and material, mental and historical structures and processes. Epistemically, the situation is similar to our knowledge of particles: as soon as we attempt to study them with the available techniques, we interfere in their states of being so that our resulting knowledge is as reflective of our interactions with them as it is of their presumed independent existence. Instead of addressing this problem, contemporary philosophy evades it by dividing cognitive labor between objectivist and critical theory, thereby consecrating the idea that the *validity* of knowledge and its *determination* cannot be simultaneously addressed within the same epistemic frame of reference. The problem, then, is that different orders of discourse are necessary to account for the different dimensions of both reality and our knowledge of it.

The paradigm of objectivity and universality was existentially comfortable. Yet it also led to the de-sacralization of human responsibility, mainly because the 'good' and the 'just' were *de facto* encompassed – and hence, annihilated – by the universally, absolutely 'true'. If contemporary post-positivist philosophies are to lead us to a more realistic but also better world, they have to give us hope that the deconstruction and unmasking of these illusory categories and structures of our understanding can lead to a responsible, pragmatic, and realistic cognitive ethos. An alternative view to the intellectual and academic division of labor that characterizes contemporary science is one that calls for the *reflexivity* of thought as a response to the *reflectivity* of knowledge and reality. *Cognitive reflexivity* entails the establishment of an epistemic frame of reference wherein social determination and epistemic validity can be addressed as equally significant and mutually informative inquiries; *moral reflexivity* entails that our understanding of the ways wherein our knowledge is produced feeds back into our dynamically evolving judgments of the good, the just, and the valuable – that is, into our purposeful, consequence-bearing actions – including knowledge as such.

A synoptic view of knowledge, then, (re)establishes the pragmatic relationship between thought, judgment and action; subject and object; science, history, and ethics. It invites us to reconsider the unity of academic disciplines not merely on the basis of an alleged unity of knowledge, but on the basis of the common world we inhabit and the common, yet differentiated, condition we share. Few philosophers have attempted such a synoptic view since Aristotle, and it has not previously been fully articulated in any single published work by Morton Kaplan, although many elements of just such a view can be found scattered throughout his writings. The essays presented in this book unify and unravel the truly and consistently synoptic thought-frame that Kaplan spent a lifetime developing, and of which I will now attempt to offer a synthesis.[3]

Kaplan's Synoptic Project

The second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the 20th witnessed radical philosophical developments. Whereas cognitive change in the previous eras since the Scientific Revolution had mainly come about through empirical discoveries, the developments that were to shake some of the most fundamental axioms of previous knowledge were based on both experimental and conceptual revolutions that altered significantly the main premises and givens of existing