

An Account on the Praxeological Foundations of Epistemology by a Theoretical Physicist

Tuukka Pensala

June 28, 2021

A claim is either a claim of interpretation, a claim of causality or a claim of truth. Claims of interpretation are historicist and their status of correctness is impossible to prove. Claims of causality are empiricist and their status of correctness can be proven only in one direction, by falsification, or in the case of a negation of a falsifiable claim, a confirmation. Claims of truth are a priori and each has a way of proving its correctness or incorrectness. These three categories cover all claims. The negation of any claim stays in the same category. An epistemology classifies any claim to one of these three categories.

The empiricist epistemology classifies all claims to the category of causality. The historicist epistemology classifies all claims to the category of interpretation.

The historicist epistemology prevents its disciple to claim that it is certainly correct, because no historicist claim is certainly correct. The empiricist epistemology prevents its disciple to claim that it is certainly correct at all times, because falsifiable empirical claims about the future can be only provisionally correct, and negations of falsifiable empirical claims can be certainly correct only if the falsification already happened, after which the claim says nothing about the future. Therefore, the historicist or the empiricist epistemology can not be claimed to be true without self-contradiction. This applies to all epistemologies that distribute claims only between the empiricist and historicist categories.

It is therefore necessary for a valid epistemology to admit some claims to be claims of truth which by their nature can be proved to be either correct or incorrect. A valid epistemology must be a rationalist one, admitting the existence of a priori knowledge.

The existence of a priori knowledge is self-evident for anyone not lost in abstract thought. Such knowledge is for example sensory experience. Sensory experience

of something can not be interpreted or falsified to be anything else. In the moment that it is experienced it is clearly, exactly and certainly that what it is and as such it is a priori aspect of reality.

Also, it is common sense that not all claims are claims of truth. Not everything can be known with certainty. Instead, the correctness of some claims are up to interpretation or falsification.

It therefore seems obvious that a valid epistemology must not leave any epistemological claim category empty.

To derive this, let us introduce the action axiom, which states that humans engage in purposeful behavior. This axiom can not be refuted without performatively affirming it, so it is true a priori.

Taking action presupposes that the actor 1) has a sensory experience, 2) interprets the sensory experience and 3) assumes a causality connecting the interpreted state of affairs to the desired outcome. In every action one sees the dots, connects the dots and predicts the next dots. Therefore the capability to act necessarily includes understanding of the three epistemological categories. By acting, one performatively affirms that the three categories are indeed non-empty and useful. To further study a valid epistemology, one can further explicate on the a priori nature of action, that is, further practice praxeology. *[2022-07-23 remark: The previous characterization is incorrect. Interpretation is a kind of action, so it's incorrect to say that it happens in every action. Instead, the three epistemological categories are mirrored in every action like this: 1) Understanding has rigorous conceptual structure that one always presumes to be correct. This is the apriorist part. 2) Choice is a category of action, so actor's understanding contains understanding about choice. This is the historicist part. 3) Choice is understood to make a difference, so it in turn implies understanding of causality. This is the empiricist part. The truthfulness of an apriorist claim is determined by "is it impossible to understand otherwise?", the plausibility of a historicist claim is determined by "is it easy believe in?", and the provisional truthfulness of an empiricist claim is determined by "did the predicted thing happen?" I now realize that this and the latter core insight of this article are quite opaque and have a lot to unpack.]*

To make an even stronger claim, we note that everything that one consciously does is action. Even staying still, thinking, or only focusing one's attention towards an interesting part of one's sensory experience is action. This implies that all separate aspects in one's experience correspond to some possible action. It is also necessarily true that the possibility of all possible action is sensed, because action that one is unaware of is impossible to choose.

Therefore there is a one-to-one correspondence between all aspects of one's experience and possible action that one can take. The resolution of one's experience is determined by the different ways one can act.

Therefore it is action that is the essence of all understanding, and it is praxeology that is the correct foundation for epistemology and for the correct, rationalist philosophy.