

# A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach to Understanding History



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By

Kavous Ardalan

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This work is dedicated to my family.



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## PREFACE

This book is the ninth book that reflects the change in the way that I think about the world, and in writing it I hope that it will do the same for others. The writing of my first book<sup>1</sup> began a few years after I received my Ph.D. in Finance from York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. But, the origin of it goes back to the time I was a doctoral candidate and took a course in “Philosophy and Method” with Professor Gareth Morgan. At that time, I was exposed to ideas which were totally new to me. They occupied my mind and every day I found them more helpful than the day before in explaining what I experienced in my daily, practical, and intellectual life.

When in high school, I grew up overseas and I was raised to appreciate mathematics and science at the expense of other fields of study. Then in college, I was exposed only to Economics to receive my bachelor of arts. Afterwards, in order to obtain my master’s and doctoral degrees in Economics, I attended University of California, Santa Barbara and I received my specialized training in Economics. My further specialized studies in Finance at York University ended in a second doctoral degree. As is clear, throughout the years of my education, I was trained to see the world in a special narrow way.

Among all courses, which I took during all these years of training, one course stood out as being different and, in the final analysis, as being most influential. It was the “Philosophy and Method” course which I took with Professor Gareth Morgan at York University. It was most influential because none of the other courses gave me the vision that this one did. Whereas all the other courses trained me to see the world in one special narrow way, this course provided me with the idea that the world can be seen from different vantage points, where each one would be insightful in its own way. Over the years, constant applications of this idea in my daily, practical, and intellectual life were quite an eye-opener for me, such that, I naturally converted to this new way of thinking about the world. This happened in spite of the fact that my entire education, almost exclusively, trained me to see the world in a narrow and limited way. Since then, I have been writing based on this new approach, and the current book represents what has been accumulated since the publication of my first eight books.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ardalan (2008).

<sup>2</sup> Ardalan (2008, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021).



This book crosses two existing lines of literature; philosophy of social science and history. More specifically, its frame of reference is Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Morgan (1983), and applies their ideas and insights to various dimensions of history. Clearly, a thorough treatment of all the relevant issues referred to in this work is well beyond just one book. Within such limits, this book aims at only providing an overview, a review, a taxonomy, or a map of the topics and leaving further discussions of all the relevant issues to the references cited herein. In other words, the aim of this work is not so much to create a new piece of puzzle as it is to fit the existing pieces of puzzle together in order to make sense of it. To implement this aim, and given the specialized and abstract nature of the philosophy of social science, this book first discusses the framework of Burrell and Morgan (1979), and in this context, thereafter, the following chapters bring some of the important dimensions of history into focus. The chapters in this book put the pieces of puzzle together into the bigger picture. The choice of what to be included in the book and what to be excluded has been a hard one. In numerous occasions, it is decided to refer to some massive topics very briefly. In any case, this book is only an overview, but it provides a comprehensive set of references to avoid some of its shortcomings.

The main theme of the book is as follows. Social theory can usefully be conceived in terms of four key paradigms: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. The four paradigms are founded upon different assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Each generates theories, concepts, and analytical tools that are different from those of the other paradigms.

These four paradigms are not air-tight compartments into which all theories must be squeezed. They are heuristic devices which are created to make sense of the messy reality of any real-life phenomenon. They are merely useful constructs to aid understanding. They are not claimed to be the only constructs to aid understanding. They are not claimed to be the best constructs to aid understanding. They are only one such construct, among many possible constructs, to aid understanding. They provide an analytically clear and compelling map of the terrain. They help in differentiating the various perspectives that exist with respect to a given phenomenon. Their purpose is to help to understand differences, but not to make invidious comparisons. There is no one paradigm that can capture the essence of reality. Paradigm diversity provides enhanced-understanding. In intellectual as well as natural environments, diversity is a *sine qua non* of robust good health. There is no singular approach that, in its universality, can apprehend the totality of reality. Since academic models are inevitably the product of a partial viewpoint, they will always be biased, and hence a multiplicity of

perspectives is required to represent the complexity and diversity of phenomena and activities. The four paradigms provide a full-circle worldview.

The mainstream in most academic fields of study is based upon the functionalist paradigm; and, for the most part, mainstream scholars are not always entirely aware of the tradition to which they belong. Their understanding of different paradigms leads to a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of their academic field of study. Although a researcher may decide to conduct research from the point of view of a certain paradigm, an understanding of the nature of other paradigms leads to a better understanding of what one is doing.

Knowledge of any phenomenon is ultimately a product of the researcher's paradigmatic approach to that multifaceted phenomenon. Viewed from this angle, the pursuit of knowledge is seen as much an ethical, moral, ideological, and political activity, as a technical one. Each paradigm can gain much from the contributions of the other paradigms.

The ancient parable of six blind scholars and their experience with the elephant illustrates the benefits of paradigm diversity. There were six blind scholars who did not know what the elephant looked like and had never even heard its name. They decided to obtain a mental picture—that is, knowledge—by touching the animal. The first blind scholar felt the elephant's trunk and argued that the elephant was like a lively snake. The second blind scholar rubbed along one of the elephant's enormous legs and likened the animal to a rough column of massive proportions. The third blind scholar took hold of the elephant's tail and insisted that the elephant resembled a large, flexible brush. The fourth blind scholar felt the elephant's sharp tusk and declared it to be like a great spear. The fifth blind scholar examined the elephant's waving ear and was convinced that the animal was some sort of a fan. The sixth blind scholar, who occupied the space between the elephant's front and hind legs, could not touch any parts of the elephant and consequently asserted that there were no such beasts as elephant at all and accused his colleagues of making up fantastic stories about non-existing things. Each of the six blind scholars held firmly to their understanding of an elephant, and they argued and fought about which story contained the correct understanding of the elephant. As a result, their entire community was torn apart, and suspicion and distrust became the order of the day.

This parable contains many valuable lessons. First, probably reality is too complex to be fully grasped by imperfect human beings. Second, although each person might correctly identify one aspect of reality, each may incorrectly attempt to reduce the entire phenomenon to their own partial and narrow experience. Third, the maintenance of communal peace and harmony might be worth much more than stubbornly clinging to one's understanding

of the world. Fourth, it might be wise for each person to return to reality and exchange positions with others to better appreciate the whole of the reality.<sup>3</sup>

This book, as in my previous eight books, advocates a multi-paradigmatic approach that employs the method of juxtaposing heterogeneous viewpoints in order to illuminate more comprehensively the phenomenon under consideration. The multi-paradigmatic approach uses a systematic and structured method to explain the phenomenon from the viewpoint of each paradigm, and juxtaposes them in order to transcend the limitations of each of the worldviews.

My first book, entitled “On the Role of Paradigms in Finance,” applied the multi-paradigmatic approach to the following phenomena: (1) development of the academic field of finance, (2) mathematical language of the academic field of finance, (3) mathematical method of the academic field of finance, (4) money, (5) corporate governance, (6) markets, (7) technology, and (8) education.

My second book, entitled “Understanding Globalization: A Multi-Dimensional Approach,” applied, in the context of globalization, the multi-paradigmatic approach to the following phenomena: (1) world order, (2) culture, (3) the state, (4) information technology, (5) economics, (6) production, (7) development, and (8) Bretton Woods Institutions.

My third book, entitled “Paradigms in Political Economy,” applied the multi-paradigmatic approach to the following phenomena: (1) the state, (2) justice, (3) freedom, (4) democracy, (5) liberal democracy, (6) media, and (7) the great recession. These seven applications of the multi-paradigmatic approach continued to show that the multi-paradigmatic approach is very versatile in the sense that it can be applied to almost any phenomenon; and that the multi-paradigmatic approach can be applied not only to categorical concepts such as the state, justice, freedom, and media, but also to categorical and sub-categorical concepts such as democracy and liberal democracy, as well as practical categories such as the great recession.

My fourth book, entitled “Case Method and Pluralist Economics: Philosophy, Methodology, and Practice,” applied the multi-paradigmatic approach to education and economics, and noted that both the case method and pluralist economics emanate from the same foundational philosophy that views the world as being socially constructed and that both of them advocate pluralism. Therefore, the case method seems to be compatible and congruent with pluralist economics. To this end, the book discussed the philosophical, methodological, and practical aspects of the case method through their comparisons with those of the lecture method, which is commonly known

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<sup>3</sup> This parable is taken from Steger (2002).

and experienced by most people. The book also discussed pluralist economics through the exposition of the philosophical foundations of the extant economics schools of thought, which is the focal point of the attention and admiration of pluralist economics.

My fifth book, entitled “Global Political Economy: A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach,” applied, in the context of global political economy, the multi-paradigmatic approach to the following phenomena: (1) the driving force of globalization, (2) governance, (3) modernity, (4) finance, (5) regionalization, (6) war, and (7) democracy. These seven applications of the multi-paradigmatic approach continued to show that the multi-paradigmatic approach is very versatile in the sense that it can be applied to almost any phenomenon, both national or international, as well as local and global.

My sixth book, entitled “Equity Home Bias: A Place-Attachment Perspective,” introduced “place attachment” as a new explanation for the “equity home bias” puzzle—the empirical finding that people overinvest in domestic stocks relative to the theoretically optimal investment portfolio. For this purpose, Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive review of the extant literature on the “equity home bias puzzle.” Chapter 2 provided an overview of the literature on “place attachment.” Chapter 3 crossed the two lines of research to provide “place attachment” as a new explanation for the “equity home bias puzzle.” Chapter 4 looked into the future of place attachment and its effect on the home bias. At first sight, my sixth book might not seem to have any relationship with the multi-paradigmatic approach. But it needs to be said that: (1) the qualitative methodology, rather than the quantitative methodology of mainstream finance, that is used in my sixth book stems from the teachings of the multi-paradigmatic approach, i.e., there are paradigmatically diverse research methodologies, and (2) the review of the literature on “place attachment,” which is provided in Chapter 2 of my sixth book, applies a multi-paradigmatic approach, i.e., there are paradigmatically diverse views on place attachment.

My seventh book, entitled “Understanding Revolution: A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach,” intended to show how a multi-paradigmatic approach can be used in order to better understand social revolution. The book started with the discussion of four broad worldviews, or paradigms. It, then, discussed several major social phenomena from the viewpoints of the four paradigms: (1) culture, (2) religion, (3) revolution, (4) Iranian revolution, (5) ideology, and (6) ideology of Iranian revolution. Its intention was to present the benefits and characteristics of the multi-paradigmatic approach. It also showed how the multi-paradigmatic approach helps a better and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. It,

finally, illustrated how the multi-paradigmatic approach substantively improves the analysis and understanding of social revolution and rectifies many extant controversies. With this background, the book introduced a comprehensive approach to the understanding of revolution.

My eighth book, entitled “Understanding Feminist Theories and Feminist Economics: A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach,” intended to provide an understanding feminist theories and feminist economics through a multi-paradigmatic approach. For this purpose, Chapter 1 discussed the four paradigms. Then, Chapters 2 through 7, in turn, apply the four-paradigmatic framework to the extant literature about six relevant dimensions of social life: human nature, feminist theories, family, patriarchy, discrimination, and feminist economics. Afterwards, Chapters 8 through 11, in turn, apply the four-paradigmatic framework to four relevant scholarly pieces of research: feminist research, feminist education, economics versus sociology, and men versus women. Chapter 12 concludes the book by recommending paradigm diversity. In this way, my eighth book showed, among other things, that the four-paradigmatic framework can be used not only as a classificatory device, but also as an analytical tool.

The current book, entitled “A Multi-Paradigmatic Approach to Understanding History,” crosses two existing lines of literature: social philosophy on the one hand and history on the other hand. The main theme of the book is as follows. Social theory can usefully be conceived in terms of four key paradigms: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. The four paradigms are founded upon different assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Each paradigm generates theories, concepts, and analytical tools which are different from those of other paradigms. The book emphasizes that the four views expressed are equally scientific and informative; they look at the phenomenon under consideration from a certain paradigmatic viewpoint. An understanding of different paradigms leads to a more comprehensive and a more balanced understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the subject matter. A multi-paradigmatic approach promotes self-reflexivity and reduces the risk of excessive dogmatism. Consequently, in the final chapter, the book concludes by recommending paradigm diversity. This book shows, among other things, the versatility and utility of the multi-paradigmatic approach.

In this book, chapters 2 through 8 discuss seven aspects of or events in history. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of or event in history and discusses that aspect or event from the four most diverse paradigmatic viewpoints: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. Each chapter allocates the same space, in terms of the number of book pages, to each of the four viewpoints, which is the same principle as

followed in my previous books as well. In each chapter, for each of the four paradigmatic viewpoints, a list of publications that share similar paradigmatic characteristics is offered, and then, one of them which is regarded as the “ideal-typical” publication is discussed in the section. That is, each of the four paradigmatic viewpoints is represented by a typical, “ideal-typical,” viewpoint. These four different perspectives should be regarded as typical polar viewpoints. The work of certain authors helps to define the logically coherent form of a certain polar viewpoint. But the work of many authors who share more than one perspective is located between the poles of the spectrum defined by the polar viewpoints. For instance, some critical realists believe that they offer a meta-theoretical perspective that subsumes all four paradigms treated in this book by explicitly theorizing the subjective-objective and the reproduction-transformation dialectics. The purpose of this book is not to put people into boxes. It is, rather, to recommend that a satisfactory perspective may draw upon several of the typical polar viewpoints.

The main purpose of this book is to see the philosophical differences between the four paradigmatic views expressed with respect to the phenomenon under consideration. Therefore, the book avoids distractions caused by literal reference to the literature, whether in terms of authors of scholarly manuscripts, dates of scholarly manuscripts, or the sources of sets of data used in scholarly manuscripts.

This book is unique due to its especial characteristics as follows:

- It is systematic and methodic: It discusses each of the seven aspects/events of history from the same four paradigmatic viewpoints. This method of analysis can be applied to any phenomenon, i.e., each phenomenon can be viewed from these four perspectives. This method is, indeed, versatile and resilient.
- It is fundamental and applied: It applies four fundamental viewpoints to each of the seven aspects/events of history.
- It is fair and unbiased: In each chapter, it allocates the same number of pages of the book to each paradigmatic viewpoint.
- It is enlightening: It provides four different views with respect to the same phenomenon, and therefore, it provides a broader and a balanced understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.
- It is multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival: It regards and treats any phenomenon as being multi-dimensional, and in addition, it looks at each dimension of the phenomenon from four various multi-paradigmatic perspectives. There are other books about history, but their explanations are made from a specific viewpoint.

However, this book emphasizes as many aspects/events of history as a book's space allows, and, in this way, proposes a comprehensive approach to the understanding of history. Moreover, the approach used in this book, when learned, can be applied to any other phenomenon.

- It is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary: It is based on philosophy, incorporates sociology and humanities, and goes on to include discussions about economics, culture, and politics.

In terms of the audience for this book, one can say that this book will be useful to everyone in society. As a textbook, it can be used in upper-level undergraduate and master-level courses in a variety of disciplines because the book discusses various fundamental aspects/events of human history. Especially, this book will be useful to students in Sociology, Social Studies, Liberal Studies, Humanities, Political Science, and Philosophy. This book can be used as either the main text or a supplementary reading. This book is about fundamental aspects/events of human history, and therefore, it can be used in any country.

The writing of the chapters of this book involved extensive work over several years. It required peace of mind and extended uninterrupted research time. My deepest expressions of gratitude go to my wife Haleh, my son Arash, and my daughter Camellia for their prolonged patience, unlimited understanding, sustained support, constant cooperation, and individual independence during all these long years. I hold much respect for my late parents (Javad and Afagholmolouk) who instilled in their children (Ghobad, Golnar, Alireza, and Kavous) the grand Ardalan family's values of respect, openness, and love of learning, among others. I sincerely appreciate the heartfelt support of my in-laws (Farideh, Parviz, and Houman) who have always been in close contact with us since the formation of my immediate family.

The ideas expressed in this work are based on the teachings, writings, and insights of Professor Gareth Morgan, to whom the nucleus of this work is owed. Needless to say, I stand responsible for all the errors and omissions. I would like to thank Professor Gareth Morgan who taught me how to diversely view the world, and accordingly inspired my work.

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Kavous Ardalan, Ph.D.  
 Professor of Finance  
 School of Management  
 Marist College  
 Poughkeepsie, New York 12601  
 U.S.A.

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# CHAPTER 1

## FOUR PARADIGMS

Social theory can usefully be conceived in terms of four key paradigms: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. The four paradigms are founded upon different assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Each generates theories, concepts, and analytical tools which are different from those of other paradigms.<sup>1</sup>

All theories are based on a philosophy of science and a theory of society. Many theorists appear to be unaware of, or ignore, the assumptions underlying these philosophies. They emphasize only some aspects of the phenomenon and ignore others. Unless they bring out the basic philosophical assumptions of the theories, their analysis can be misleading; since by emphasizing differences between theories, they imply diversity in approach. While there appear to be different kinds of theory, they are founded on a certain philosophy, worldview, or paradigm. This becomes evident when these theories are related to the wider background of social theory.

The functionalist paradigm has provided the framework for current mainstream academic fields, and accounts for the largest proportion of theory and research in their respective academic fields.

In order to understand a new paradigm, theorists should be fully aware of assumptions upon which their own paradigm is based. Moreover, to

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<sup>1</sup> For the literature on paradigms, see Bottomore (1975), Burrell (2002), Burrell and Morgan (1979), Clark (1985), Denisoff (1974), Eckburg and Hill (1979), Effrat (1973), Evered and Louis (1981), Friedheim (1979), Gioia and Pitre (1990), Goles and Hirschheim (2000), Guba (1985), Guba and Lincoln (1994), Hassard (1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 2013), Holland (1990), Jackson and Carter (1991), Jackson and Carter (2008), Jennings, Perren, and Carter (2005), Jick (1979), Kirkwood and Campbell-Hunt (2007), Knudsen (2003), Kuhn (1962, 1970a, 1970b, 1974, 1977), Lammers (1974), Lehmann and Young (1974), Lewis and Grimes (1999), Lincoln (1985), Martin (1990), Maruyama (1974), Masterman (1970), McKelvey (2008), Mir and Mir (2002), Morgan (1990), Okhuysen and Bonardi (2011), Parsons (1967), Ritzer (1975), Romani, Primecz, and Topcu (2011), Schultz and Hatch (1996), Shapere (1971), Siehl and Martin (1988), Snizek (1976), Steinle (1983), van de Berge (1963), White (1983), and Willmott (1990, 1993).

understand a new paradigm one has to explore it from within, since the concepts in one paradigm cannot easily be interpreted in terms of those of another. No attempt should be made to criticize or evaluate a paradigm from the outside. This is self-defeating since it is based on a separate paradigm. All four paradigms can be easily criticized and ruined in this way.

These four paradigms are of paramount importance to any scientist, because the process of learning about a favored paradigm is also the process of learning what that paradigm is not. The knowledge of paradigms makes scientists aware of the boundaries within which they approach their subject. Each of the four paradigms implies a different way of social theorizing.

Before discussing each paradigm, it is useful to look at the notion of “paradigm.” Burrell and Morgan (1979)<sup>2</sup> regard the:

... four paradigms as being defined by very basic meta-theoretical assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorizing and *modus operandi* of the social theorists who operate within them. It is a term which is intended to emphasize the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together in such a way that they can be usefully regarded as approaching social theory within the bounds of the same problematic.

The paradigm does ... have an underlying unity in terms of its basic and often “taken for granted” assumptions, which separate a group of theorists in a very fundamental way from theorists located in other paradigms. The “unity” of the paradigm thus derives from reference to alternative views of reality which lie outside its boundaries and which may not necessarily even be recognized as existing. (pages 23-24)

Each theory can be related to one of the four broad worldviews. These adhere to different sets of fundamental assumptions about; the nature of science—that is, the subjective-objective dimension—and the nature of society—that is, the dimension of regulation-radical change—as in Ex. 1.1.<sup>3</sup>

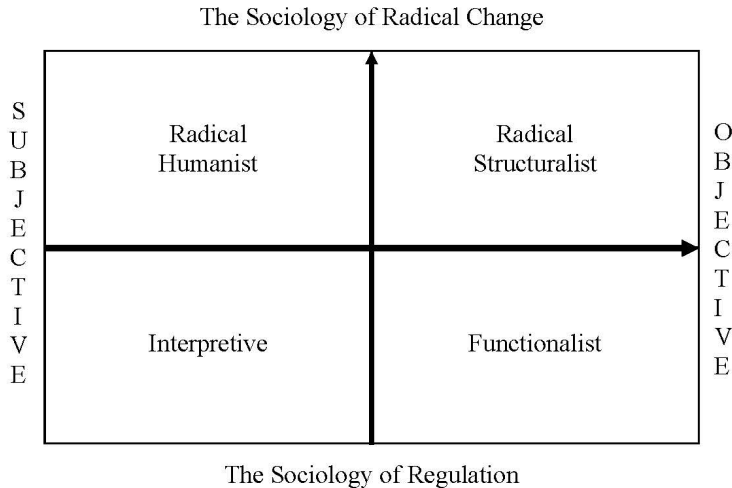
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<sup>2</sup> This work borrows heavily from the ideas and insights of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Morgan (1983) and applies them to history. Burrell and Morgan (1979) state “The scope for applying the analytical scheme to other field of study is enormous ... readers interested in applying the scheme in this way should find little difficulty in proceeding from the sociological analyses ... to an analysis of the literature in their own sphere of specialised interest.” (page 35)

<sup>3</sup> This can be used as both a classificatory device, or more importantly, as an analytical tool.

**Ex. 1.1: The Four Paradigms**

Each paradigm adheres to a set of fundamental assumptions about the nature of science (i.e., the subjective-objective dimension), and the nature of society (i.e., the dimension of regulation-radical change).



Assumptions related to the nature of science are assumptions with respect to ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology.

The assumptions about ontology are assumptions regarding the very essence of the phenomenon under investigation. That is, to what extent the phenomenon is objective and external to the individual or it is subjective and the product of individual's mind.

The assumptions about epistemology are assumptions about the nature of knowledge. That is, they are assumptions about how one might go about understanding the world, and communicate such knowledge to others. That is, what constitutes knowledge and to what extent it is something which can be acquired or it is something which has to be personally experienced.

The assumptions about human nature are concerned with human nature and, in particular, the relationship between individuals and their environment, which is the object and subject of social sciences. That is, to what extent human beings and their experiences are the products of their environment or human beings are creators of their environment.

The assumptions about methodology are related to the way in which one attempts to investigate and obtain knowledge about the social world. That is, to what extent the methodology treats the social world as being real, hard,

and external to the individual or it is as being of a much softer, personal, and more subjective quality. In the former, the focus is on the universal relationship among elements of the phenomenon, whereas in the latter, the focus is on the understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies, and interprets the situation which is experienced.

The assumptions related to the nature of society are concerned with the extent of regulation of the society or radical change in the society.

Sociology of regulation provides explanation of society based on the assumption of its unity and cohesiveness. It focuses on the need to understand and explain why society tends to hold together rather than fall apart.

Sociology of radical change provides explanation of society based on the assumption of its deep-seated structural conflict, modes of domination, and structural contradiction. It focuses on the deprivation of human beings, both material and psychic, and it looks towards alternatives rather than the acceptance of *status quo*.

The subjective-objective dimension and the regulation-radical change dimension together define four paradigms, each of which share common fundamental assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Each paradigm has a fundamentally unique perspective for the analysis of social phenomena.

## **I. Functionalist Paradigm**

The functionalist paradigm assumes that society has a concrete existence and follows certain order. These assumptions lead to the existence of an objective and value-free social science which can produce true explanatory and predictive knowledge of the reality “out there.” It assumes scientific theories can be assessed objectively by reference to empirical evidence. Scientists do not see any roles for themselves, within the phenomenon which they analyze, through the rigor and technique of the scientific method. It attributes independence to the observer from the observed. That is, an ability to observe “what is” without affecting it. It assumes there are universal standards of science, which determine what constitutes an adequate explanation of what is observed. It assumes there are external rules and regulations governing the external world. The goal of scientists is to find the orders that prevail within that phenomenon.

The functionalist paradigm seeks to provide rational explanations of social affairs and generate regulative sociology. It assumes a continuing order, pattern, and coherence and tries to explain what is. It emphasizes the importance of understanding order, equilibrium and stability in society and the way in which these can be maintained. It is concerned with the regulation

and control of social affairs. It believes in social engineering as a basis for social reform.

The rationality which underlies functionalist science is used to explain the rationality of society. Science provides the basis for structuring and ordering the social world, similar to the structure and order in the natural world. The methods of natural science are used to generate explanations of the social world. The use of mechanical and biological analogies for modeling and understanding the social phenomena are particularly favored.

Functionalists are individualists. That is, the properties of the aggregate are determined by the properties of its units. Their approach to social science is rooted in the tradition of positivism. It assumes that the social world is concrete, meaning it can be identified, studied, and measured through approaches derived from the natural sciences.

Functionalists believe that the positivist methods which have triumphed in natural sciences should prevail in social sciences, as well. In addition, the functionalist paradigm has become dominant in academic sociology. The social world is treated as a place of concrete reality, characterized by uniformities and regularities which can be understood and explained in terms of causes and effects. Given these assumptions, the individuals are regarded as taking on a passive role; their behavior is being determined by the social environment.

Functionalists are pragmatic in orientation and are concerned to understand society so that the knowledge thus generated can be used in society. It is problem orientated in approach as it is concerned to provide practical solutions to practical problems.

In Ex. 1.1, the functionalist paradigm occupies the south-east quadrant. Schools of thought within this paradigm can be located on the objective-subjective continuum. From right to left they are: Objectivism, Social System Theory, Integrative Theory, Interactionism, and Social Action Theory.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Interpretive Paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm assumes that social reality is the result of the subjective interpretations of individuals. It sees the social world as a process which is created by individuals. Social reality, insofar as it exists outside the

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<sup>4</sup> For classics in this literature see Blau (1955, 1964), Buckley (1967), Comte (1953), Durkheim (1938, 1947), James (1890), Mead (1932a, 1932b, 1934, 1938), Merton (1968), Pareto (1935), Simmel (1936, 1955), Skinner (1953, 1957, 1972), and Spencer (1873).

consciousness of any individual, is regarded as being a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings. This assumption leads to the belief there are shared multiple realities which are sustained and changed. Researchers recognize their role within the phenomenon under investigation. Their frame of reference is one of participant, as opposed to observer. The goal of the interpretive researchers is to find the orders that prevail within the phenomenon under consideration; however, they are not objective.

The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is, at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanations within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity. Its analysis of the social world produces sociology of regulation. Its views are underwritten by the assumptions that the social world is cohesive, ordered, and integrated.

Interpretive sociologists seek to understand the source of social reality. They often delve into the depth of human consciousness and subjectivity in their quest for the meanings in social life. They reject the use of mathematics and biological analogies in learning about the society and their approach places emphasis on understanding the social world from the vantage point of the individuals who are actually engaged in social activities.

The interpretive paradigm views the functionalist position as unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, human values affect the process of scientific enquiry. That is, scientific method is not value-free, since the frame of reference of the scientific observer determines the way in which scientific knowledge is obtained. Second, in cultural sciences the subject matter is spiritual in nature. That is, human beings cannot be studied by the methods of the natural sciences, which aim to establish general laws. In the cultural sphere human beings are perceived as free. An understanding of their lives and actions can be obtained by the intuition of the total wholes, which is bound to break down by atomistic analysis of functionalist paradigm.

Cultural phenomena are seen as the external manifestations of inner experience. The cultural sciences, therefore, need to apply analytical methods based on “understanding;” through which the scientist can seek to understand human beings, their minds, and their feelings, and the way these are expressed in their outward actions. The notion of “understanding” is a defining characteristic of all theories located within this paradigm.

The interpretive paradigm believes that science is based on “taken-for-granted” assumptions; and, like any other social practice, must be understood within a specific context. Therefore, it cannot generate objective and value-free knowledge. Scientific knowledge is socially constructed and socially sustained; its significance and meaning can only be understood within its immediate social context.

The interpretive paradigm regards mainstream social theorists as belonging to a small and self-sustaining community, who believe that society exists in a concrete world. They theorize about concepts which have little significance to people outside the community, who practice social theory, and the limited community whom social theorists may attempt to serve.

Functionalist social theorists tend to treat their subject of study as a hard, concrete and tangible empirical phenomenon which exists “out there” in the “real world.” Interpretive researchers are opposed to such structural absolutism. They emphasize that the social world is no more than the subjective construction of individual human beings who create and sustain a social world of intersubjectively shared meaning, which is in a continuous process of reaffirmation or change. Therefore, there are no universally valid social rules. Interpretive social research enables scientists to examine social behavior together with ethical, cultural, political, and social issues.

In Ex. 1.1, the interpretive paradigm occupies the south-west quadrant. Schools of thought within this paradigm can be located on the objective-subjective continuum. From left to right they are: Solipsism, Phenomenology, Phenomenological Sociology, and Hermeneutics.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. Radical Humanist Paradigm**

The radical humanist paradigm provides critiques of the status quo and is concerned to articulate, from a subjective standpoint, the sociology of radical change, modes of domination, emancipation, deprivation, and potentiality. Based on its subjectivist approach, it places great emphasis on human consciousness. It tends to view society as anti-human. It views the process of reality creation as feeding back on itself; such that individuals and society are prevented from reaching their highest possible potential. That is, the consciousness of human beings is dominated by the ideological superstructures of the social system, which results in their alienation or false consciousness. This, in turn, prevents true human fulfillment. The social theorist regards the orders that prevail in the society as instruments of ideological domination.

The major concern for theorists is with the way this occurs and finding ways in which human beings can release themselves from constraints which existing social arrangements place upon realization of their full potential. They seek to change the social world through a change in consciousness.

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<sup>5</sup> For classics in this literature see Berkeley (1962), Dilthey (1976), Gadamer (1965), Garfinkel (1967), Hegel (1931), Husserl (1929), Schutz (1964, 1966, 1967), Winch (1958), and Wittgenstein (1963).

Radical humanists believe that everything must be grasped as a whole, because the whole dominates the parts in an all-embracing sense. Moreover, truth is historically specific, relative to a given set of circumstances, so that one should not search for generalizations for the laws of motion of societies.

The radical humanists believe the functionalist paradigm accepts purposive rationality, logic of science, positive functions of technology, and neutrality of language, and uses them in the construction of “value-free” social theories. The radical humanist theorists intend to demolish this structure, emphasizing the political and repressive nature of it. They aim to show the role that science, ideology, technology, language, and other aspects of the superstructure play in sustaining and developing the system of power and domination, within the totality of the social formation. Their function is to influence the consciousness of human beings for eventual emancipation and formation of alternative social formations.

The radical humanists note that functionalist sociologists create and sustain a view of social reality which maintains the *status quo* and which forms one aspect of the network of ideological domination of the society.

The focus of the radical humanists upon the “superstructural” aspects of society reflects their attempt to move away from the economism of orthodox Marxism and emphasize the Hegelian dialectics. It is through the dialectic that the objective and subjective aspects of social life interact. The superstructure of society is believed to be the medium through which the consciousness of human beings is controlled and molded to fit the requirements of the social formation as a whole. The concepts of structural conflict, contradiction, and crisis do not play a major role in this paradigm, because these are more objectivist view of social reality, that is, the ones which fall in the radical structuralist paradigm. In the radical humanist paradigm, the concepts of consciousness, alienation, and critique form their concerns.

In Ex. 1.1, the radical humanist paradigm occupies the north-west quadrant. Schools of thought within this paradigm can be located on the objective-subjective continuum. From left to right they are: Solipsism, French Existentialism, Anarchistic Individualism, and Critical Theory.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For classics in this literature see Bookchin (1974), Fichte (1970), Goldmann (1969), Gouldner (1954a, 1954b, 1970, 1973, 1976), Gramsci (1971), Habermas (1970a, 1970b, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1976), Horkheimer (1972), Lukacs (1971), Marcuse (1954, 1964, 1966, 1968), Marx (1975), Meszaros (1970, 1971), Sartre (1966, 1974, 1976), and Stirner (1907).



## IV. Radical Structuralist Paradigm

The radical structuralist paradigm assumes that reality is objective and concrete, as it is rooted in the materialist view of the natural and social world. The social world, similar to the natural world, has an independent existence, that is, it exists outside the minds of human beings. Sociologists aim at discovering and understanding the patterns and regularities which characterize the social world. Scientists do not see any roles for themselves in the phenomenon under investigation. They use scientific methods to find the order that prevails in the phenomenon. This paradigm views society as a potentially dominating force. Sociologists working within this paradigm have an objectivist standpoint and are committed to radical change, emancipation, and potentiality. In their analysis they emphasize structural conflict, modes of domination, contradiction, and deprivation. They analyze the basic interrelationships within the total social formation and emphasize the fact that radical change is inherent in the structure of society and the radical change takes place though political and economic crises. This radical change necessarily disrupts the *status quo* and replaces it by a radically different social formation. It is through this radical change that the emancipation of human beings from the social structure is materialized.

For radical structuralists, an understanding of classes in society is essential for understanding the nature of knowledge. They argue that all knowledge is class specific. That is, it is determined by the place one occupies in the productive process. Knowledge is more than a reflection of the material world in thought. It is determined by one's relation to that reality. Since different classes occupy different positions in the process of material transformation, there are different kinds of knowledge. Hence class knowledge is produced by and for classes, and exists in a struggle for domination. Knowledge is thus ideological. That is, it formulates views of reality and solves problems from class points of view.

Radical structuralists reject the idea that it is possible to verify knowledge in an absolute sense through comparison with socially neutral theories or data. However, they emphasize that there is the possibility of producing a "correct" knowledge from a class standpoint. They argue that the dominated class is uniquely positioned to obtain an objectively "correct" knowledge of social reality and its contradictions. It is the class with the most direct and widest access to the process of material transformation that ultimately produces and reproduces that reality.

Radical structuralists' analysis indicates that the social scientist, as a producer of class-based knowledge, is a part of the class struggle.

Radical structuralists believe truth is the whole, and emphasize the need to understand the social order as a totality rather than as a collection of small truths about various parts and aspects of society. The economic empiricists are seen as relying almost exclusively upon a number of seemingly disparate, data-packed, problem-centered studies. Such studies, therefore, are irrelevant exercises in mathematical methods.

This paradigm is based on four central notions. First, there is the notion of totality. All theories address the total social formation. This notion emphasizes that the parts reflect the totality, not the totality reflecting the parts.

Second, there is the notion of structure. The focus is upon the configurations of social relationships, called structures, which are treated as persistent and enduring concrete facilities.

The third notion is that of contradiction. Structures, or social formations, contain contradictory and antagonistic relationships within them which act as seeds of their own decay.

The fourth notion is that of crisis. Contradictions within a given totality reach a point at which they can no longer be contained. The resulting political, economic crises indicate the point of transformation from one totality to another, in which one set of structures is replaced by another of a fundamentally different kind.

In Ex. 1.1, the radical structuralist paradigm occupies the north-east quadrant. Schools of thought within this paradigm can be located on the objective-subjective continuum. From right to left they are: Russian Social Theory, Conflict Theory, and Contemporary Mediterranean Marxism.<sup>7</sup>

## V. Conclusion

This chapter briefly discussed social theory, its complexity, and diversity. It indicated that theorists are not always entirely aware of the traditions to which they belong. The diversity of theories presented in this chapter is vast. While each paradigm advocates a research strategy that is logically coherent, in terms of underlying assumptions, these vary from paradigm to paradigm. The phenomenon to be researched is conceptualized and studied in many different ways, each generating distinctive kinds of insight and understanding. There are many different ways of studying the same social phenomenon, and

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<sup>7</sup> For classics in this literature see Althusser (1969, 1971), Althusser and Balibar (1970), Bukharin (1965), Colletti (1972, 1974, 1975), Dahrendorf (1959), Marx (1973, 1976), Marx and Engels (1965, 1968), Plekhanov (1974), and Rex (1961, 1974).

given that the insights generated by any one approach are at best partial and incomplete, the social researcher can gain much by reflecting on the nature and merits of different approaches before engaging in a particular mode of research practice.

Social knowledge is ultimately a product of the researcher's paradigmatic approach to this multifaceted phenomenon. Viewed from this angle, the pursuit of social knowledge is seen as much an ethical, moral, ideological, and political activity, as a technical one. Researchers can gain much by exploiting the new insights coming from other paradigms.

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