

Context and Naturalism in Social Epistemology
Lyudmila A. Markova, Russian Academy of Sciences

Two notions, context naturalism and, are the subjects of analysis of both Ilya Kasavin ("Reply to Rockmore", 2013) and Tom Rockmore ("Kasavin on Social Epistemology and Naturalism: A Critical Reply", 2013). I agree with many of Kasavin and Rockmore's points — especially with those that concern the difficulties in the classical (traditional) epistemology.

Context

Rockmore writes (2013):

I agree with Kasavin that context is indeed problematic. Yet I would like to resist the effort either to free cognitive claims from context or, on the contrary, to absorb the former into the latter. ... The proper relationship seems to me to be a kind of constitutive tension that can never be overcome and which must be construed not in general but rather on a case-by-case basis in order to understand the weight of the particular cognitive claim (11).

Kasavin (2013) refines his understanding: "... [T]he context of science is the whole scope of its current sociality and its cultural history — a kind of independent reality accompanying science during its temporal existence" (26). "... [T]he quantity of alternatives is limited at a given moment" (28).

In each of above quotations there are phrase that do not belong to classical epistemology as important to it — Rockmore's "case-by-case basis", "particular cognitive claim", and Kasavin's "current sociality", "limited at a given moment". These, and other, notions indicate the feature of social epistemology to deal with the specific and private, but not with general. That is why such notions as cultural or scientific history (as a whole), educational process, previous experience, and so on, do not form a context in the frame of social epistemology. Of course, all these factors always play important roles in the process of scientific investigation. But in the 20th and 21st centuries to understand their roles it is necessary to analyze how they are transformed in specific conditions, in a particular place and in a given time, and in conditions where there are many other contextual elements, often having nothing in common with science. And, at the same time, new knowledge arises from this collection of diverse components of context. Thus, the basis of new knowledge is not science. Here, new knowledge is not deduced from the past knowledge. The border itself between context and knowledge is displaced inside knowledge. This is the main feature, to my mind, of the context in social epistemology.

We can observe quite another situation in traditional epistemology. The very notion of "context" is not used in the analysis of knowledge. And this is understandable. Both nature and all social circumstances as a context are outside of logic, they are independent of it. Logical structure is derived from past knowledge, not from context. A strict border

exists between knowledge and surrounding world, which is independent of knowledge. Only under such conditions the problem of the scientific truth exists. Any discussion of this problem cannot help us to understand social epistemology.

Naturalism

As to naturalism, its significance also is not the same in traditional and social epistemology. In the first case, we deal with the surrounding world. For human beings it is necessary to have knowledge of the laws of nature for creating his artificial world; machines, facilitating, first of all, his physical work.

In the second case man creates machines, which help him in his intellectual activity, machines, which reproduce a person's ability to think. To do this you need to know how the human brain works, brain as a physical organ. Nowadays, many researchers investigate the human brain hoping to find thought or, at least, its roots. But that goal is impossible. The laws of thinking and physical laws of brain functioning are not common. I don't know what can be the way out, but I suppose that the relation between the brain as a natural thing, and thought, is not the same as between nature as an object of scientific study in classical science and the obtained knowledge. The brain and thought are not independent from each other.

In classical science ideas continue to exist (Karl Popper's "world three") even if the material world disappears. And the nature continues to be even if the mankind vanishes. In this sense, they are independent of each other. But the brain as a physical thing without thought cannot exist, and vice versa, the possibility of a concrete human being to think, to obtain knowledge without the brain is quite impossible. We may consider the brain as a "context of human thinking". Such an approach could give, to my mind, interesting results, but it needs to be discussed.

With regard to the discussion of Kasavin and Rockmore I would pay attention to the definition of naturalism by Rockmore (2013):

Naturalism is an extreme form of contextualism in which nature or the whole of nature is the context. Naturalism differs from social epistemology in that there is in principle no social aspect. "Social" refers to the dimension that depends on the human in all its forms" (9).

I agree with this definition of naturalism — if it is understood as referring to the classical science. But in the social epistemology context is of a different kind. In this case I agree more with Kasavin (2013): "... the context of science is the *whole scope of its current sociality and its cultural history...*" (original emphasis, 26). I know Kasavin's work and I think that he does not attract to this discussion some of his own ideas that could be useful in this case; for example, his interest in such notions as sense, discourse, language, speech, context, and his case studies in the history of science.

Naturalism in social epistemology is not the attitude of knowledge to the whole of nature that is independent of all human features. Naturalism in social epistemology is the relationship between knowledge and the human brain as a physical thing that depends on human thinking.

To my mind it is better not to discuss much about the "truth" for the understanding of social epistemology, where this notion does not play any serious role. I agree with Rockmore, when he writes that the relationships between context and knowledge seems "to be a kind of constitutive tension" (11), but I do not think that it "can never be overcome" (11). Rockmore shows himself the possible way for establishing such a relationship, which "must be construed not in general but rather on a case-by-case basis in order to understand the weight of the particular cognitive claim" (11).

The logic of thinking differs in different historical eras. If, from 17th century to the beginning of the 20th century, rationality was focused on generally, now it deals with the private and the special. And this does not mean that we are immersed in empiricism. The purpose of logic is to establish the relationship between the things that keep their peculiarity and individuality. The movement in this direction we can see in such trends of philosophy as logic of dialog, logic of culture, intersubjectivism, studies of communication. Context in social epistemology is something like the beginning of these type of relations.

Contact details: Markova.lyudmila2013@yandex.ru

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