AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS FOR QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Overview

Although qualitative methodologies in the Western scientific sense have been around since the 19th century, the prominence of positivist theories and quantitative methods has overshadowed them almost to exclusion until the 1960's (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, pp. 3-4). Qualitative evaluation was essentially the domain of the few who rejected the mainstream research approach of Western empirical science. The renewed interest in qualitative methodologies during the past 20 years may be viewed as a swelling of these heretical ranks brought about largely because of a dissatisfaction with the results produced by methodologies derived from the natural sciences. In speaking of these dissenters, Christians and Carey say:

> . . . there are some who think American social scientists have confused words with deeds, intentions with realizations, hopes with achievements, the fish story with the fish. As Anthony Giddes has recently written, 'On the available results, the social sciences are clearly a failure.' Moreover, such failure is not because the social sciences still await their Newton. It is an increasingly widespread view, particularly in Europe, that the subject matter of the social sciences is distinctively different from the natural sciences, thus creating a set of philosophical and methodological problems of a radically peculiar kind. There is considerable disagreement, of course, as to just what this distinctiveness entails but all roads lead to a common conclusion: there is no warrant for believing that the social sciences should imitate the natural sciences in form or method or even that they will ever achieve the same types of success.
>
> (Christians and Carey, 1981, p. 2)

This statement provides a fresh starting point for a look at what has gone under the banner of qualitative evaluation in the fairly recent past. For the purposes of this paper, there is no need to argue for the adoption of alternative methodologies in the social sciences, for this has

already been done (Christians and Carey, 1981; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Stake, 1978; Pilarzyk and Bharadwaj, 1979), with a rejection of positivism underlying almost all approaches to qualitative evaluation. However, Scriven identifies a very real problem when he says that ". . . dustbowl empiricism and radical behaviorism had their day, but the task for us now is principally to realize how much damage they have left behind that we have not yet noticed or reconstructed . . . (Scriven, 1972, p. 97)." "The major reason for the choice of topic for this paper is the view that the most serious damage done by Western science has primarily been at the epistemological level. That is, all methodologies currently accepted by the Western scholarly/scientific community are still based upon the enslaving belief of science that science itself is "the standard for all valid knowledge, with all other forms of human knowing strictly evaluated in terms of their approximation to natural science (Christians and Carey, 1981, p. 7)." Therefore, a major contention of this paper is that what has passed for qualitative methods in Western scholarship is not significantly different from positivism to be credited with "anti-positivist" origins, but is rather something that would be better called neo-positivism. As long as proponents of qualitative evaluation continue to share an epistemological basis with the positivists, they will not gain substantially different results.

General Objectives

The immediate purpose of this paper is to present an epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation. In the process of doing this, some general objectives associated with qualitative methodological research will also hopefully be accomplished. Specifically, the types of problems that

are best solved by qualitative evaluation will be generally outlined with some specific examples given. The meaning of the term "qualitative evaluation" should become clear when one understands the epistemological basis of the speaker, so the connection between knowing, evaluating, and meaning, regardless of context, should become apparent.

The presentation of a systematic method of evaluation must be preceded by the formulation of an internally consistent way of knowing. Although this is an attempt at epistemological theory building, it will often be illustrated by concrete, practical problems of evaluation. Therefore, the link between theory and practice should always be apparent, although a detailed presentation of a systematic method of evaluation based upon the epistemological foundations to be presented is beyond the scope of this paper. Finally, the product of this thesis should be viewed as <u>one</u> epistemological alternative illustrating merely that there are ways of viewing the world, significantly different from that of Western science, that have meaning and value in terms of practical consequences.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this paper are twofold: (1) the presentation of a sound and internally consistent epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation, and (2) the illustration of the wide-ranging effects and consequences of varying one's way of knowing (specifically in this case <u>via</u> a comparison between what is seen as the common epistemological basis of Western scholarship and the alternative to be presented). The mode of presentation will be an analysis of points that are seen as fundamental to epistemological theory building; some background to these points now follows.

Although there are a number of how-to-do qualitative research books around (Lofland, 1976; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975), most of them ignore, or merely imply, their epistemological bases. There are at least two important points inherent to this phenomenon: (1) it is a cart-before-the-horse approach that will lead to later problems, and (2) it makes one suspect that the form of qualitative evaluation presented does not vary considerably from the mainstream of Western empirical social science. If, in a particular instance, the first point is the case, then a reasonable course of action would be to step back and formulate an epistemological theory to give direction to the method. If, however, the second point is the case, it leads in two directions. The first place it leads is to results. Are the results, in the sense of optimum, practical, problem-solving consequences, the best attainable? If another way of knowing offers better results, then the epistemological basis for evaluation should be changed. The second direction this point leads is to the quantitative/qualitative question.

This point seems critical from an epistemological standpoint. Although various authors define the qualitative/quantitative question differently (Scriven, 1972; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975), they do not differentiate on epistemological grounds. In fact, some authors (Reichardt and Cook, 1979; Filstead, 1979) see the co-existent use of qualitative and quantitative methods as the natural choice, while others (Glaser, 1965) see a natural blending of the two methods as most desirable. From the point of view of this paper, these positions represent a fundamental epistemological conflict, since these authors deny a common epistemological basis to the two forms of evaluation. That is, one's way of knowing dictates

meaning/problem definition. Therefore, problem solution is only possible within the confines of the same way of knowing that defined the problem. This finally leads to a choice of defining qualitative and quantitative as having similar, different, or "don't know" epistemological bases. This last point, of confusion, seems to be dominant in the field of qualitative methodological research at present.

Another point that is central to the topic of this paper is the definition and valuation given to the terms subjective and objective. This point is intimately linked to the establishment of the kinds of standards for qualitative evaluation advocated by Fortner and Christians (1981). It is also a point that demands explication before one can decide whether the stranger (Jansen, 1980) makes the best observer, or whether a way of knowing must be understood in its own terms (Castaneda, 1974), by an insider. Finally, it is also a matter that must preceed a discussion of observer reliability (Scriven, 1972).

This introduction has purposely proceeded from a brief historical overview to the more specific qualitative/quantitative question to the more theoretical subjective/objective problem, because these topics all provided distinct points of reflection in viewing Western scholarship in an epistemological sense. These points will be used to illustrate the fundamental incompatibility of the way of knowing of Western scholarship with what will be defined as qualitative evaluation. They will also provide points of contrast for the presentation of an epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation that will significantly deviate from the Western scholarship tradition. Greeley provides a good starting point for this attempt.

> The great heresy of the contemporary Western world is that the only kind of knowledge that is to be taken seriously and trusted is discursive, cognitive knowledge, that which is acquired by man's practical or technical reason. Concomitant with this are the assertions that the only kind of truth is that which can be empirically verified, and the only kind of language fit for human communciation that of logically validated prose. In other words, that knowledge and language which is appropriate for discourse in the empirical sciences is the only one that is really worth developing in man, because it is the only one that can have any demonstrable validity.
>
> (Greeley, 1974, p. 58)

The initial question here is why one should dispute the way of knowing accredited to Western scholarship. The answer is that it has been found to be too limited to effectively deal with many of the social science research problems it confronts; especially in the realm of mysticism (Pilarzyk and Bharadwaj, 1979). In speaking about a particular group of social scientists, Greeley presents the current state of affairs.

> There is nothing in the skills of their discipline that enables them to accept as scientific evidence the testimony of those whose assertions cannot be subjected to empirical validation. Yet, to say that something cannot be empirically validated is not to say that it is not real, but merely that it cannot be empirically validated. In the agnostic shrug of the shoulders, typical of most of those who have studied mysticism since William James, there is an implicit denial of the possibility of a reality Out There of the sort the mystics claim to know. James, more sophisticated than most of his followers, is not all that sure.
>
> (Greeley, 1974, p. 79)

There appears to be many experiences other than the mystical which cannot be empirically validated, are quite real, and are (or should be) of central concern to the social sciences. These are the types of experiences which fall within the domain of qualitative evaluation. Therefore, this paper is seen as an outgrowth of the epistemology which underlies the kinds of evaluation methods used by mystical systems for centuries in dealing with the world of manifestations. It is an extension for Western

science; it is a way of knowing that has always encompassed problems of qualitative evaluation. It is an acceptance of intuition as a mode of knowing for many of the reasons Scriven (1972, pp. 108-109) cites as a modern scholar, as well as many of the reasons given by practitioners of mystical systems.

Conclusion

On viewing Western scholarship in historical perspective, irrespective of ideology or discipline, it appears to have one epistemological basis. The scholarship based upon this way of knowing has been unable to live up to its own expectations and promises (Christians and Carey, 1981, pp. 7-9). Therefore, it seems appropriate to look to other ways of knowing, especially those established long before Western science and possessing systematic, demonstrably effective ways of knowing, for solutions to contemporary problems. Perhaps some individuals merely accepted an easier, but less effective, definition of knowledge than others. This paper is an argument for the acceptance of the legitimacy of subjective qualitative evaluation as a valid form of research, with the thought always in mind that research (especially in the social sciences) is ultimately dedicated to the solution of practical problems. The acceptance of subjective qualitative evaluation will open new doors to many old, problem topics that were deemed too difficult or irrelevant for empirical science, and offer some (old?) solutions to these problems.

THE THEORETICAL STRUCTURE

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide a systematic presentation of a logical chain of basic premises. These points are critical to the formulation of a sound and consistent epistemological theory upon which to base qualitative evaluation. The ultimate conclusion will be to identify a way of knowing that is internally consistent on a theoretical plane with the basic premises presented and that will be functionally viable and valuable regardless of the socio-cultural context. In the course of the attempt to accomplish these tasks, it will be necessary to challenge and substantially deviate from some of the most basic assumptions of modern Western scholarship.

Qualitative Evaluation: Basic Premises

Qualitative evaluation is distinctly different from quantitative evaluation. One of the most basic criterion for differentiating the two can be thought of in terms of "level" as opposed to "degree": qualitative evaluation is an assessment of the level of a quality (for example, self-confidence or humility); quantitative evaluation is an assessment of the degree of a quantity (for example, how many feet high a chair measures). The point here can perhaps better be stated by means of another example: concentration. If one were to ask virtually any individual if he knew the meaning of the word concentration, he would almost certainly say he understood the term. Furthermore, if one asked the "average" person to

"concentrate" on some object or thought, he would almost certainly make a specialized effort of some sort in a manner that would indicate that he had some sort of understanding of the experience of concentration that was being referred to by the word/symbol/concept. Now, if one were to ask the same questions of a highly experienced devotee of a mystical/metaphysical system or a person with psychokinetic abilities, for example, the response in terms of the person attaching a meaning to the word "concentration" and making a "specialized effort" would indeed most likely be an easily established fact. However, the experience of concentrating would be two completely different states; different in a qualitative sense. That is, the two states are not merely separated by the amount/degree of a quantity, but rather they are two totally different levels of experience that are commonly subsumed under the word/symbol concept "concentration" for ease (there seems to be, in general, a positive correlation between the use of general terms and the unquantifiability of a substance) in the orderly categorization of thought.

To return to the example of the chair then, it can be easily seen that the assessment of a chair is a matter of the degree of a quantity since the functional definition of a chair remains constant, and is a decidedly different type of evaluation when compared to the assessment of the level of a quality since the functional definition of "concentration" changes. Assessment does not necessarily mean measuring degree. Thus, this argument has been made to support the contention that there is a difference between the two forms of evaluation based upon the object of evaluation. This is not to say that one could not measure concentration by the number of feet a person with psychokinetic abilities could move an object, nor is it to say that one could not assess a chair in terms of its

Buddha-nature, but rather that the results of an assessment have meaning and value in terms of their practical consequences. In turn, the term "practical consequences" necessarily derives its meaning and value from the relative definition of the problem; if one asks "how," the reply must be "what for?" Therefore, the conclusion here would seem to be that the choice of method would be dependent upon which method promised to yield optimum practical results for problem solution. One's purpose as well as one's abilities determine which method of knowing is employed.

In research, conceptual systems are always used to transmit information. Therefore, qualitative evaluation is always limited by the representational system used by the observers. In other words, no conceptual system can ever re-present experience; an unconquerable research limitation which is essentially disregarded by Western scholarship because of an even more basic epistemological presupposition: knowledge can be conceptual. This is a major point which will be explored further, after a discussion of conceptual systems, methods, and the reliability of observers to which it is intimately linked.

Relying on a method, as is generally done in Western scholarship, is to rely on a conceptual system. This brings to the fore two main points: (1) it places the responsibility for the uppermost limit for the optimum practical value of information gained upon the conceptualization/method instead of upon the observers; and (2) it presupposes that conceptual understanding is knowledge. To begin with the first point, when a method is thoroughly taught to an individual as in an academic discipline, he becomes a trained observer/reporter, an expert, in that methodological specialty. Thus, with adequate conceptual understanding of a given subject area, he may apply his method in the analysis of the given subject. This

premise, then, demands that a closer examination of its two components, conceptualization/method and the reliability of the observer, be accomplished before proceeding.

The limitations of this viewpoint can be easily illustrated by means of an activity example, in this case an Asian martial art illustrates the point very well. If the hypothetical researcher studied the history, philosophy, and techniques of a particular martial art through common educational techniques (that is, books, films, etc.) in order to obtain an "adequate" conceptual understanding of the subject matter, and if the hypothetical researcher were then allowed to apply his chosen method (which may vary from psychological scales to the use of the case study) to a specific problem, could he make a decision of comparable validity (having meaning and value in terms of practical consequences) to that of a martial arts practitioner with 50 years of technical experience, a vague understanding of Asian history, and a practical learning of the philosophy involved? The answer, of course, would depend upon the problem. If the problem were to relate political developments to philosophical currents (a conceptual problem), the method trained researcher would probably fair better (in terms of practical information) than the experienced practitioner. However, if the problem were to evaluate an individual testing for a rank, with the main emphasis being on technical ability and attitude (i.e. qualities like self-confidence, humility, self-discipline, etc.), it is postulated here that the experienced practitioner would fair best. This illustrates two points that are commonly neglected in discussions of the reasoning (and underlying epistemological bases) employed in Western scholarship: (1) there is an important difference between evaluating concepts by concepts and evaluating experience by concepts;

and (2) the reliability of the hypothetical researcher/observer is limited not only by the fact that his understanding is purely conceptual, but also by the fact that his method is also conceptual; his way of knowing (conceptually) does not meet the demands of the object of evaluation. This, then, was the basis for the statement that the responsibility for the uppermost limit for the optimum practical value of information gained falls upon the conceptualization/method, for even if the researcher were the experienced practitioner, he would be limited by the conceptual method employed in evaluation.

One must, at this point, ask <u>why</u> this state of affairs is so favored by Western scholarship. The answer seems to lie with the comparative valuations given to subjective and "objective" evaluation. That is, reliability of observers is defined in terms of their "objectivity," which can simply be defined as agreement among observers. Therefore, the validity of the data is ultimately based upon this agremeent among observers, and thus the invalidity (in some situations) of the model assumptions inherent in a method based upon conceptual understanding is further compounded by the observer assumptions which accompany the implementation of the method. Some interesting points can most easily be made along this line by means of an example.

Suppose that the object of evaluation is an elephant, the best method of evaluation in this case being touch, since in this example the three observers will all be blind men. Now, further suppose that one blind man takes hold of the elephant's trunk, the other the tail, and the third a leg. The resulting description of an elephant would lead one to believe that elephants (or at least this elephant) was a long cylinder (this the observers could agree upon) of various thicknesses (this the observers

could not agree upon). Thus, according to Western scholarship, since the method was deemed appropriate or at least one of the best available, (although smell could have been used just as easily, and perhaps with more humorous consequences), the observers were trained in the method with a sufficient conceptual understanding (examining a hitherto unobserved life form), and agreement existed among the observers (to some extent), one must be led to certain conclusions and hypotheses for future research based upon the "objective" data gathered. The point: if the observers are always blind, the data gathered will not be based upon very different presuppositions (always using conceptually based methods), and the object/problem may never be effectively (with optimum practical consequences) assessed. Another shortcoming is that an holistic experience is probably more like an egg than like the quantifiable chair; once an egg is broken the parts do not reassemble into the whole. At best, this means of evaluation (piece-by-piece) will provide an effective assessment, in this case, only by the most roundabout route (that is, the bigger the problem the more blind men needed). To continue, it might be interesting to take another "look" at the elephant.

Suppose a sighted man arrives on the scene, engages the blind men in conversation, and presents his description of an elephant. Further suppose the blind men, clinging to their agreement among observers, ridicule the sighted man based primarily on the fact that he is one and they are three. In terms of Western scholarship, the sighted man offers a single (subjective) opinion while the blind men represent a consensus, a society's opinion, and therefore must be judged valid because of their "objectivity." In fact, if the sighted man could find no one to agree with him (his way of knowing), he might even be defined as crazy.

This example illustrates several points. The blind men are obviously using a method that does not give them an holistic perspective of their object of study. Epistemologically, their way of knowing was not the most effective way of knowing that could have been employed, although they did not have the capability to employ the most effective (now known) way of knowing. However, this must lead to the conclusion that if someone presents an alternative way of knowing that can be demonstrated (or even a way that has plausibility and is testable) to be more effective in evaluation in a particular instance, it must be considered the optimum (or at least a valid) way of knowing regardless of agreement. In other words, subjective evaluation can be more valid than "objective" evaluation; one might even say, and this will be developed later, that there is no "objective" evaluation.

If this analogy is further applied to an issue (for example, concentration) that is clearly best served by qualitative evaluation, then the next conclusion must be that the observers must be defined in terms of the qualities being assessed. The observers must be at, or have experienced, the level of the quality being examined in order to have reliability of observers. In other words, in qualitative evaluation the observers must possess experiential knowledge as opposed to conceptual understanding.

Thus, the return to that long-forgotten second presupposition of Western scholarship: conceptual understanding is knowledge. It is the position of this thesis to reject that presupposition, and instead, take the position that the only true knowledge, worthy of the name knowledge, comes from experience. Although conceptual understanding is effective for some purposes (as illustrated earlier), experiential knowledge is the only

knowledge base that is effective for subjects (for example, concentration) requiring qualitative evaluation. This position is ultimately based upon the nature of the subject area being evaluated, since subjects like concentration can only be evaluated by individuals possessing, or having possessed, that quality at the level they are assessing, and one can only attain that level through experience, not by learning a method.

This position then leads to a more complex issue: the ultimate epistemological basis of experiential knowledge. Perhaps the best way to begin is to distinguish within the realm of experiential knowledge between the rational/intellectual mode of knowing and the intuitive/nonrational mode of knowing. The former mode demands objective (agreement among observers), logical, particular knowledge within a socio-cultural context to assemble an understanding, while the latter mode is ultimately based upon a subjective, holistic, nonrational, all-encompassing knowledge of the Absolute (in the mystical sense) which transcends space/time limitations which is Understanding. In other words, the former is concerned with reality, while the latter is concerned with Reality. This raises two important questions: (1) is the knowledge of Reality gained in the latter case applicable to the reality of the rational/intellectual mode of knowing; and (2) is there a difference between intuitive insight and religious insight?

These two questions are closely intertwined and hopefully the following discussion will provide some explanation relevant to both points. Absolute understanding (mystical union) is a perspective that permeates the individual. Distinctions are made on a surface level, in the world of manifestations (the Taoists' te), but the Absolute (Tao) underlies all that is (and is not). The realm of distinction and the realm of non-distinction

are not different. Reality and reality are the same; the non-knowing (about Reality) is not different from the non-knowing (about reality). There is only one context, reality (although reality may well be multi-dimensional); the same senses bring one Enlightenment as well as illusion. By changing from reality to Reality one is changing perception (from a tunnel vision to a panoramic vision), not changing the world. This mystical union is a direct, unmediated, immediate experience beyond intellectual reasoning, the object is known from the objective point of view; there is a breakdown of the subjective/objective dichotomy. Insight is merely a perspective and in some Eastern traditions (Taoism and Zen Buddhism, for example), it is one of non-duality. It is this perspective, non-verbal, non-conceptual, lacking subjective/objective distinctions, that is usually termed religious insight.

The discussion above leads to some interesting points that in turn will hopefully lead to a statement of definition on the epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation. First, if an individual has religious insight, if one sees the Real person, the socio-cultural person is unimportant (ephemeral) in his differences. Then must one have a vulgar (rational/intellectual/socio-cultural) form of knowning to communicate and discuss problems within a socio-cultural setting? This could lead to the conclusion that there is no Real basis for qualitative evaluation, because one makes no distinctions (evaluations) within the context of Reality. Why worry about how the Truth is covered over when it is known (religious insight)?

The real problem here seems to revolve around the difference between asking about the nature of Reality as opposed to inquiring about the purpose of Being. The former is an epistemological question while the latter

is an ontological one, and although they are obviously related, since ultimately to Know and to Be are One, there is a difference between experiencing Reality/Being and understanding the purpose of existence. To know the nature of Reality is to have (a perspective) the religious insight described above (that is, unmediated), while to answer the question of the purpose of Being must always be an interpretation of the meaning of Reality which is an inconsistent use of terms, since a dichotomization is implied between purpose and non-purpose and existence and non-existence. How can an Absolute be analyzed in terms of a dichotomy? Furthermore, by saying that one understands the purpose of Being, as opposed to realizing one's True Nature, is to place oneself not in union with any Cosmic order, but on an equal plane with it. Thus, the main point: for the purposes of this thesis, to know the nature of Reality is religious insight; to take this knowledge and apply (interpret, give it meaning) it within a socio-cultural context will be termed intuitive insight.

Thus, it seems that religious insight (becoming one with the Tao, satori, or mystical union) can serve as the ultimate epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation in the world of manifestations (te) in the form of intuitive insight. Furthermore, it seems that the knowledge of Reality gained in the former case is applicable to the reality of the rational/intellectual mode of knowing. Of course, the basis for the conclusion of applicability in this discussion is the internal consistency of the foregoing model, but that was all it was intended to be. That is, it is merely a conceptual construct to explain the claims of virtually all mystical systems; namely, their knowledge has applicability and value regardless (in spite of?) of space/time limitations. It is ultimately this claim of applicability and value in reality that is put to the test by the

epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation described above, for it places the perception of Absolute Reality as the ultimate standard of knowing in place of agreement among observers.

BASIC PREMISES: EXPANSION VIA A COMPARISON TO OTHER VIEWPOINTS

In order to further explain the foregoing basic premises, this section will be an examination of some relevant writings in several academic disciplines. The object here is not an exhaustive, critical review of the various authors' works (let alone all of the literature pertaining to qualitative evaluation), but rather a selection of some of their major assumptions and premises, stated and implied, for the purposes of comparison and contrast to the basic premises stated above. This will hopefully explain in more depth the basic premises, illustrate their practical significance, make clear the differences between these premises and those commonly assumed in social science evaluation, and raise some questions about, and challenges to, the very bases of Western scholarship.

In The Interpretation of Cultures (1973), Clifford Geertz provides a number of relevant and interesting points for discussion, specifically in his opening chapter on "thick description." In describing his view of culture, Geertz says:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.
>
> (Geertz, 1973, p. 5)

Geertz then proceeds to give two examples that allow for many different interpretations to illustrate the complexity of ethnographic research, and the fact that interpretation, whether during the experience

or in the recounting, is always taking place, often several steps removed, interpretations upon interpretations.

These examples seem to support the contention that there is no "objective" evaluation, only subjective, but Geertz does not make this point. However, with this basis (subjective evaluation) recognized, the goal of education (training evaluators/interpretors) becomes teaching observers to be "good" at subjective evaluation. "Good" may mean agreement among observers, or comparison to an Absolute standard; either of these standards assumes a common epistemological basis among observers, be it "objective" (based either upon conceptual understanding or experience) agreement or intuition. How does one choose the epistemological basis, then? It depends upon the problem and what is being evaluated (when asked how, the reply must be what for?), with the implication being that there is a difference in outcome between the two ways in terms of practical consequences.

Analysis (of culture), according to Geertz, "is sorting out the structures of signification. . . and determining their social ground and import (Geertz, 1973, p. 9)," his interpretation "in search of meaning." This statement implies a number of significant points. If interpretation is based upon how one knows, which is subjective, then the meaning derived is personal. In other words, interpretation is the subjective knowing by which one derives meaning; thus, "objectivity" is merely an agreement of subjective knowing among observers, and if the mode of knowing is not the best for the task at hand, there may still be agreement in the form of similarly derived meanings manifested as like interpretations.

If meaning, then, is based upon how one knows, it should be made clear that there is not only the various types of knowing associated with

different cultural contexts and times as standards (with which Geertz would probably agree), but there can also be Knowing in an Absolute sense. The former ways of knowing are indeed public (social), the latter is indeed private (individual), yet available to everyone, and for the purposes of this thesis may be termed a private theory of meaning about which Geertz says:

> The generalized attack on privacy theories of meaning is, since early Husserl and late Wittgenstein, so much a part of modern thought that it need not be developed once more here. What is necessary is to see to it that the news of it reaches anthropology; and in particular that it is made clear that to say that culture consists of socially established structure of meaning in terms of which people do . . . things . . . is . . . [not] . . . to say that it is a psychological phenomenon, a characteristic of someone's mind, . . . "
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> (Geertz, 1973, pp. 12-13)

Meaning may consist of knowing in a similar manner ("objective") in a cultural context; meaning may also consist of Knowing in an individual (subjective), albeit Absolute, manner regardless of the cultural context. Thus, there is a difference between Geertz saying, "Culture is public because meaning is (1973, p. 12)," and saying culture is when public meaning is (exists). Meaning and knowing may exist privately (individually), since knowing is how one derives meaning.

With all of this discussion about ways of knowing, it is necessary to proceed to the manner in which Geertz views the experiential/conceptual problem, since this point is fundamental to a definition of knowledge.

> In short, anthropological writings are themselves interpreteations, and second and third order ones to boot. (By definition, only a 'native' makes first order ones: it's <u>his</u> culture.) They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned'--the original meaning of <u>fictio</u>--not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments . . . .

> Anthropologists have not always been as aware as they might be of this fact: that although culture exists in the trading post, the hill fort, or the sheep run, anthropology exists in the book, the article, the lecture, the museum display, or sometimes nowadays, the film. To become aware of it is to realize that the line between mode of representation and substantive content is as undrawable in cultural analysis as it is in painting; and that fact in turn seems to threaten the objective status of anthropological knowledge by sugesting that its source is not social reality but scholarly artifice.
>
> (Geertz, 1973, pp. 15-16)

Geertz does not ask the same question here that the preceeding basic premises would dictate. He seems to be saying that one's insight, or evaluation ("objective" or subjective), is a matter of interpretation within a socio-cultural context and cannot be divorced from it. The pertinent question is rather that the "mode of representation" (how?) is dictated by the problem and the "substantive content" (what for?) desired, so that there is no drawing of a line between the two; the former is dependent upon the latter (as well as the available ways of knowing). The threat to objective status then becomes the difference between experiential knowledge and conceptual understanding, how well a symbol system may re-present an experience. Conceptualizations cannot be objective. They are a construct of reality, they do not re-present reality; reality exists as experience. Earlier, Geertz (1973, p. 15) makes the point that ". . . the object of study is one thing and the study of it another" and that the line between the two "tends to get blurred." It gets blurred because concepts are equated with experience instead of realizing that concepts are merely "a making" (fictio), indeed "merely 'as if' thought experiments."

Now for a look at how Geertz deals with this threat to "objective status" that he has broached; he continues:

> It does threaten it, but the threat is hollow. The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its author's ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home

> like a mask or a carving, but on the degree to which he is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement--what manner of men are these?--to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise. This raises some serious problems of verification, . . . of how you can tell a better account from a worse one. But that is precisely the virtue of it. If ethnography is thick description and ethnographers those who are doing the describing, then the determining question for any given example of it, . . . is whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones. It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers."
>
> (Geertz, 1973, p. 16)

Geertz confuses the issues when he makes the "threat" to "objective status" a qualitative vs quantitative question as he implies above. The threat is very real, but is a threat to the status and value of conceptualizations. The anthropologist can never "clarify" if he does not have an experiential knowledge of the culture he is examining; without this knowledge (that is, having only conceptual understanding), he is merely a recorder of observable physical phenomena and what he is told by the natives, not an interpreter capable of explaining the meaning of an act (differentiating a wink from a twitch, for example) within a specific socio-cultural context. Interpretation (evaluation) has the most meaning (most value in terms of the practical consequences it has for clarifying whatever is going on) when it is based upon experiential knowledge, although the transmittal of the experience will never equate with the experience due to the shortcomings of conceptualizations. It is much closer (placing the responsibility for the uppermost limit of optimum practical consequences on the observer rather than the method), however, if the interpreter/evaluator has an experiential knowledge of what he is examining, rather than merely having a (conceptual) method to follow.

After having neglected the points raised above, Geertz (1973, p. 17) descends into just another "analysis of parts" in the typical manner of decrying another person's "partial" theory and replacing it with one of his own, instead of addressing larger issues involving basic assumptions of Western scholarship which he takes for granted. In the process of doing this, Geertz broaches one of these assumptions that will be taken issue with here, and that will result in the rejection of the concept of culture as the fundamental basis for anthropology. In speaking of culture he says:

> . . . There is little profit in extricating a concept from the defects of psychologism only to plunge it immediately into those of schematicism.
>
> Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior--or, more precisely, social action--that cultural forms find articulation. They find it as well, of course, in various sorts of artifacts, and various states of consciousness; but these draw their meaning from the role they play (Wittgenstein would say their 'use') in an ongoing pattern of life, not from any intrinsic relationships they bear to one another. . . Whatever, or wherever, symbol systems 'in their own terms' may be, we gain empirical access to them by inspecting events, not by arranging abstracted entities into unified patterns."
>
> (Geertz, 1973, p. 17)

The manner in which Geertz views states of consciousness and the significance he attaches thereto is so radically different from the position taken in this thesis as to be virtually reversed. In other words, consciousness gives meaning to life, is the perspective from which one interprets life. Thus, evaluation will yield different information (interpretations) depending upon the state (level, not degree) of consciousness of the evaluator and the subject of evaluation, with the implicit premise that the evaluator must be at, or has gone through, the level he is evaluating. It is more accurate in this schemata then, to say that states of consciousness give meaning to the cultural forms that find articulation in social action (more primarily, with social action being the

basis for cultural forms). States of consciousness are the most basic units underlying social action, which in turn formed cultures, and which now find their articulation in social and societal action. The logical extension is to analyze human existence in terms of states of consciousness, which are transcultural, rather than being bogged down in examining culturally distinct histories that all reflect basically the same state of consciousness. The key to escape this continuing cycle of events would rather seem to lie in the mystical systems which are found in virtually all cultures, and which in fact purport to offer this key. It seems illogical that, although all of the earth's major religions have been founded by those capable of the mystical experience and virtually all cultures have been influenced by this manner of Knowing, Western scholarship ignores this mode of knowing in its search for knowledge.

Perhaps part of the answer may be derived from a look at the subjective/objective distinction via the implications and valuations inherent to it. In speaking of theory, Geertz presents several points:

> The besetting sin of interpretive approaches to anything . . . is that they tend to resist, or to be permitted to resist, conceptual articulation and thus to escape systematic modes of assessment. You either grasp an interpretation or you do not, see the point of it or you do not, accept it or you do not. Imprisoned in the immediacy of its own detail, it is presented as self-validating, or, worse, as validated by the supposedly developed sensitivities of the person who presents it; any attempt to cast what it says in terms other than its own is regarded as a travesty--as, . . . ethnocentric.
>
> For a field of study which, however timidly, . . . asserts itself to be a science, this just will not do. There is no reason why the conceptual structure of cultural interpretation should be any less formulable, and thus less susceptible to explicit canons of appraisal, than that of, say, a biological observation or a physical experiment--no reason except that the terms in which such formulations can be cast are, if not wholly nonexistent, very nearly so. We are reduced to insinuating theories because we lack the power to state them.
>
> (Geertz, 1973, p. 24)

Interpretive approaches resist conceptual articulation because interpretation is ultimately based upon experience, and not all experience lends itself to conceptual articulation. However, they do not "escape systematic modes of assessment;" they merely escape "objective" modes of assessment, but other (subjective) modes of assessment are scorned by Geertz. Why?

In anthropology (and social sciences in general), all observers are not trained to analyze by the same set of standards because no one can agree on a set of "objective" standards (which are really only subjective standards that all of the observers share) like in the physical sciences. Why? It is easy enough for most people to agree on the dimensions of a chair because it is a common and easily shared experience, and the nature of reality it implies is also easily agreed upon; thus, "objective" quantification suits the purpose nicely. However, it is not so easy for even two people to find the same meaning in the philosophy of Castenada's Don Juan, for example, so the evaluation remains subjective, individual--though this says nothing about its worth (its power to clarify?), since agreement among observers does not indicate any more value than the interpretation given by one person (that is, three blind men and one sighted). This lack of agreement is mainly due to the implications agreement would have for the nature of reality, thus showing the vast differences among men in their perceptions of reality, or better, how close they are (level of consciousness) to perceiving Reality. In other words, the egalitarian implications of this approach threaten the hierarchical structure of Western scholarship.

The acceptance of the validity ("by the supposedly developed sensitivities of the person who presents it") of subjective (the possibility

of one sighted man being more accurate than three other men) opinion reduces the status of the "expert/scholar" by leveling his ethnocentric claim to correctness which is based on the validity of "objectivity." If the object of ethnographic research is to clarify, then it must be asked what is being clarified and for whom? The answers to these questions will determine whether a first order (native) interpretation, subjective as it may be, may transmit the most meaning. The acceptance of this approach steals the claim to correctness (validity) from the expert who is merely an expert of (conceptual) methods, and gives validity to a person with experiential knowledge and a systematic mode of assessment (although not an "objective" one). The more fundamental egalitarian implication here is that difference is not necessarily better or worse, merely different. The rejection of this premise by Western scholarship is but an indication of a state of mind, a perspective, which underlies virtually all Western thought.

In The Study of Man (1958), Michael Polanyi provides a number of classic examples which illustrate The Hierarchy, according to Western scholarship, with an arrogance born only of those who see themselves as "chosen." For example, Polanyi says:

> Viewed in the cosmic perspective of space and time, the opportunity for engaging on works of the mind may have a special appeal to us. For so far as we know, we on this earth are the only bearers of thought in the universe. Nor has this gift been a feature of terrestrial life from the start. Five million centuries of evolution, groping upwards along numberless paths, have led to this result only in us, in us human beings. And ours has as yet been a brief venture. After five million centuries of evolution, we have been engaged only for fifty centuries in a literate process of thought. It has all been the affair of the last hundred generations or so.
>
> This task, therefore, appears to be the particular calling of literate man in this universe. This is the perspective in which I want you to consider all that I have said so far, and what I yet propose to say later.

> If this perspective is true, a supreme trust is placed in us by the whole creation, and it is sacrilege then even to contemplate actions which may lead to the extinction of humanity."
>
> (Polanyi, 1958, p. 69)

At another point, Polanyi says:

> We shall ascend . . . by a further step of appreciation to the highest level in the hierarchy of living beings, which is our own, the level of man. Animals may be lovable, but man alone can command respect, and in this sense we humans are the top of creation. To deny this would be to repudiate the unique responsibilities which this position entails ."
>
> (Polanyi, 1958, p. 59)

This incredibly anthropocentric basis for Western scholarship adhered to by its practitioners, whether expressed or implied, has a number of significant implications for this explication of the basic premises presented earlier. When he speaks of "sacrilege," Polanyi certainly gives credence to the idea that man made God in his own image, not to mention his statement that "humans are the top of creation." Although it would be difficult to make a statement concerning causality, this point certainly seems tightly entwined with the whole Judeo-Christian traditions, and from the traditions that gave man the certain (and only) ways to eternal salvation and dominion over the plants and animals, come a scholarship that must have the only ("objective") way of knowing, whose thought must be of the highest level, and that must pronounce judgment of right and wrong, correct and incorrect, significant and insignificant, over all that comes within its purview. For all that is yet left for man to explain, it is only necessary for him to discover the proper method, and the process of education, advancing more complex conceptualizations, will accomplish that task, or as Polanyi put it:

> The distinctive qualities of man are developed by education. Our native gift of speech enables us to enter on the mental life of man

> by assimilating our cultural heritage. We come into existence mentally, by adding to our bodily equipment an articulate framework and using it for understanding experience. Human thought grows only within language and since language can exist only in a society, all thought is rooted in society."
>
> (Polanyi, 1958, pp. 59-60)

Enough has been said in reply to Geertz concerning the validity of private theories of meaning and the inadequacies of language to re-present experience, however, there is another implication contained in Polanyi's statement. Conceptualizations (education in Polanyi's sense) gain their meaning from a progressive building, one atop another, and are ultimately devoid of meaning to the individual if they are not traceable to other conceptualizations which link him with experience (as well as the symbols used will allow). True knowledge (that is, experientially gained), on the other hand, gains its meaning from the effect it has on the state of one's consciousness. In other words, technological "knowledge" is progressive from one man to another; knowledge affecting one's spirit, or consciousness, is progressive within the individual. This is not necessarily to say that consciousness has reached its limit (the contrary is hopefully true); however, a rise in consciousness on a mass level only indicates a rise in the consciousness of each individual. It is not collectivizably increased like physical strength. So what? The manner in which one pursues knowledge, and how one knows, and the goals aimed at, differ considerably depending upon one's orientation toward ideas like consciousness, power, and man's place in the whole scheme of things. Western scholarship has generally neglected the idea of consciousness as an area of concern, defines power in temporal terms, and is anthropocentric. Thus, these factors have shaped the manner in which knowledge has been pursued--"objectively" (agreement among observers) and conceptually has

been the "how" of Western scholarship, and the goal has been the "advancement (?)" of man.

It is necessary at this point to stake out an area of ideas that is a positive statement which may be compared with what has been discussed thus far. To begin with man's place in the scheme of things, with the primary assumption that there is some sort of all-encompassing scheme of things, it is necessary to understand his role as just another part. This says nothing about the direction of the scheme of things by a divine being so a hierarchy is not implied, rather, there appears to be some fundamental principles which manifest themselves, microcosmically and macrocosmically, in everything known to man. Thus, these principles imply some sort of order and if man regards himself as a part of that order, then he must realize his integral part of, yet basic insignificance to, the whole scheme of things. The conclusion that he must come to then, is that he does not know the answers, he knows some of the answers, and that perhaps some men know some different answers than others, and that perhaps even other forms of life know some different answers. Therefore, terms like higher and lower, primitive and civilized, have meaning only if they are applied to the state of technology of which, and at which, specific life forms are capable. These kinds of terms, however, do not apply when knowledge is viewed in terms of levels/states of consciousness, for although there are different levels, they are represented in life forms that are all part of the whole, and therefore none takes precedence over the others.

When this perspective is applied to scholarship, the idea of consciousness becomes of central concern, power is defined in spiritual terms, and man takes a place very different from the one Polanyi gives him. These factors will then shape the manner in which knowledge will be

pursued. Subjectively and experientially is the "how," and the goal becomes the knowledge gained from the study of the levels of consciousness and the myriad forms in which it manifests. This perspective then provides a basis for a scholarship that can learn from other life forms, not merely about them, and offers the potential of innumerable ways of knowing that can be of practical value to man in his effort to continually grow. For the individual, this perspective provides the basis and encouragement for a value system which is oriented toward personal growth and development by making this a recognizable (and infinite) goal with its own intrinsic rewards. It will be this perspective and this type of individual that will form the basis for a discussion of social order and society that will significantly deviate from the Western sociological tradition.

The main purpose of this subsection is to illustrate the extensive consequences of one's way of knowing to the formation of a social order, the construct of society, and one's perception of both. This discussion is seen as fundamental to an understanding of the serious implications that acceptance of the basic premises would have for one's viewpoint on Western civilization. This is not to say that what follows is the only interpretation and application of the basic premises to the social order and society, but that it is one that is hopefully logical and plausible.

In The Social Construction of Reality (1967), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann begin by saying:

> The basic contentions of the argument of this book are implicit in its title and subtitle, namely, that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs . . . It will be enough, for our purposes, to define 'reality' as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away'), and to define 'knowledge' as the certainty

> that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics."
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 1)
>
> It is our contention, then, that the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such 'knowledge.' And insofar as all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintaned in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted 'reality' congeals for the man in the street. In other words, we contend that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality."
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 3)

Epistemology in this thesis is concerned with the analysis of the construction of reality, and the use of Reality as an Absolute standard. To define knowledge socially is to analyze but a small part; the socially accepted construction of reality in any culture is much narrower than the concerns of epistemology in this thesis, simply because this social definition demands agreement among observers. The differences in these approaches reflect a number of fundamental differences in basic premises.

It has been asserted earlier that knowledge can be developed and maintained by the individual. The transmission of knowledge is an entirely different question. If knowledge is defined in experiential terms and seen as progressive within the individual, then there can be no transmission of knowledge, but rather the guiding of one individual by another to ways through which and the former may seek knowledge. Although an individual's interpretation/perception is partially formed by his societal context, it seems unfair to link all of his knowledge to this perception, since it may be altered (as various systems claim to do) by the use of hallucinogens, meditation, and so forth. All of these experiences are individual by which one gains self-knowledge that is not socially transmitted. Experiential

knowledge, gained by contemplactive introspection, seems at least as valuable (in terms of practical consequences) as socially defined knowledge (agreement among observers). Thus, the knowledge of reality which one has can agree with others or disagree depending primarily upon whether an experience has been shared. Of course, one is defined as insane if no one agrees with him, but this state of affairs merely illustrates the relative valuations given to objective versus subjective opinions and can easily change. An interesting case in point:

> In a subtler way, the protective efforts of the self-appointed sane influence the whole field of psychiatry and psychology. The clinical diagnosis of psychopathology is too often a form of social control. If other people make us nervous by the foreignness of their queer talk and odd behavior, we give them tranquilizing drugs, lock them away in custodial institutions.
>
> I once witnessed an ironically enlightening instance of the cultural definition of insanity, and of the power politics of psychiatric social control. At the time when I was on the staff of a New Jersey State Mental Hospital, a strange man appeared on a street corner in Trenton, wearing a long white sheet and quietly muttering 'gibberish.' His very presence threatened the certitude of sanity of the community at large. Fortunately, for the sheeted man's own good, a policeman was called by some saner citizen. So it was that this poor man was able to be brought under the protective lock-and-key of his local Asylum.
>
> His efforts to explain his strange behavior were offered in vain, since it was clear that he was a loony, or to be more scientific, he was diagnosed into the catch-all garbage can of a syndrome known as Schizophrenia, Chronic Undifferentiated Type. It would have been difficult for anyone to acquit himself well in that diagnostic staff situation, since the patient was assumed to be crazy until proven sane, unrepresented by counsel, and not even told that anything he said could be used against him.
>
> One further limitation was in play, accruing epiphenomenally from the sociology of American medicine. Foreign-trained physicians are not allowed to practice medicine in this country until they have demonstrated competence both in English and in medicine. So far, so good. However, in the absence of such proven competence, they are permitted to work as resident psychiatrists in state mental institutions. I have seen irascible (but otherwise normal) citizens diagnosed as confused psychotics, adjudged incompetent, and denied their civil rights and their freedom on the basis of their inability to understand the incompetent mouthings of ill-trained resident

> psychiatrists whose own command of English was so limited that I could not understand them either.
>
> Fortunately, for the white-sheeted, gibberish-muttering patient in question, the hospital Visitors' Day began the very next morning. Evidently he had called home and made his plight known. That morning twenty other people wearing white sheets arrived at the hospital. Equally strangely clad, they were also equivalently incomprehensible to the psychiatric staff. It turned out (to the resident psychiatrist's amusement) that these men and women were all members of the same small rural church sect, a religious group who defined their identity in part by clothing themselves in the purity of white cloth, and by being divinely inspired to talk in tongues. The psychiatrist in this case, being a practicing Roman Catholic (who weekly ate and drank the body and the blood of Jesus Christ) thought they were a queer bunch indeed. Heaven help him should he ever wander into a community in which his own religious affiliations would be equally obscure. The patient was released that afternoon. One such man is a lunatic. Twenty constitute an acceptable and sane community.
>
> (Kopp, 1976, pp. 93-95)

Is this a definition of knowledge and reality (socially defined and constructed), that allows for institutionalization of those who cannot find people to agree with them (even if they are not dangerous to others, for anyone can be defined as being dangerous to himself), upon which to base a civilization's scholastic inquiry, or better yet, a "civilization?"

To continue:

> Sociological interest in questions of 'reality' and 'knowledge' is thus initially justified by the fact of their social relativity . . . It follows that specific agglomerations of 'reality' and 'knowledge' pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts. The need for a 'sociology of knowledge' is thus already given with the observable differences between societies in terms of what is taken for granted as 'knowledge' in them. Beyond this, however, a discipline calling itself by this name will have to concern itself with the general ways by which 'realities' are taken as 'known' in human societies.
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 3)

Knowledge and reality are defined by societies in terms upon which all of the observers (who count) can agree. The people who formulate and

lead any society agree, explicitly or implicitly, on basic premises they deem important. Therefore, their level of subjective knowing (state of consciousness) should be the focus of study, since agreement among people with varying ways of knowing can result in extremely different constructs of society. Thus, this thesis differs with Berger and Luckmann in that epistemology is herein concerned with the analysis of the states of consciousness of people, individually and collectively, and the resulting (interpretation) construction of reality which may lead to the formation of societies with very different bases, as well as very different perceptions of the bases of societies; both points will be developed later.

After staking out the territory of the sociology of knowledge as the "analysis of the social construction of reality (1967, p. 3)," Berger and Luckmann give a brief summary of the history of this field to clarify what they share with the past and how they deviate from it. A few brief comments on some of the major theoretical differences are in order.

> There has been general agreement to the effect that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises. It may thus be said that the sociology of knowledge constitutes the sociological focus of a much more general problem, that of the existential determination (Seinsgebundenheit) of thought as such. Although here the social factor is concentrated upon, the theoretical difficulties are similar to those that have arisen when other factors (such as the historical, the psychological or the biological) have been proposed as determinative of human thought. In all these cases the general problem has been the extent to which thought reflects or is independent of the proposed determinative factors.
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 4-5)

This last sentence is referring to the same "analysis of parts" approach that Geertz decried earlier, and, like Geertz, they propose another (sociological) analysis of parts. Why? How do they justify it?

Then begin by saying:

> It is likely that the prominence of the general problem in recent German philosophy has its roots in the vast accumulation of historical scholarship . . . of the nineteenth century in Germany . . . It is hard to dispute the claim of German scholarship to the primary position in this [scientific historical scholarship] enterprise. It should, consequently, not surprise us that the theoretical problem thrown up by the latter should be most sharply sensed in Germany. This problem can be described as the vertigo of relativity. The epistemological dimension of the problem is obvious. On the empirical level it led to the concern to investigate as painstakingly as possible the concrete relationships between thought and its historical situations. If this interpretation is correct, the socilogy of knowledge takes up a problem originally posited by historical scholarship--in a narrower focus, to be sure, but with an interest in essentially the same questions.
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 5)

Berger and Luckmann differentiate between the epistemological dimension and the empirical level to justify an analysis of parts. This position must be rejected in the formulation of a sound epistemological basis for qualitative methods, for it is a further subdivision of the relativity of the sociology of knowledge, and is therefore not transculturally viable. That is, the historicist recognizes the relativity of perspectives on human events (the te). This is a fact which Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 7) recognize as part of the heritage of the sociology of knowledge, but instead of understanding historical/social situations in their own terms, as they suggest, another solution is to search for underlying principles, or the Principle (Tao). The point that all of this leads to is found in Berger and Luckmann's comments on Scheler:

> His final aim was the establishment of a philosophical anthropology that would transcend the relativity of specific historically and socially located viewpoints. The sociology of kowledge was to serve as an instrument toward this aim, its main purpose being the clearing away of the difficulties raised by relativism so that the real philosophical task could proceed.
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 7-8)

The sociology of knowledge cannot accomplish its aim (transcending relativism), primarily because it is sociology, a discipline that examines relations, parts. Thus, the relative nature of the discipline, its arbitrary classifications, and its lack of interest in transcultural methods of knowing make the sociology of knowledge inappropriate as a starting point for the formulation of an epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation. Berger and Luckmann support this contention with their construction of a sociology of knowledge.

> In other words, the interest of the sociology of knowledge has been on epistemological questions on the theoretical level, on questions of intellectual history on the empirical level.
>
> We would emphasize that we have no reservations whatsoever about the validity and importance of these two sets of questions. However, we regard it as unfortunate that this particular constellation has dominated the sociology of knowledge so far. We would argue that, as a result, the full theoretical significance of the sociology of knowledge has been obsured.
>
> To include epistemological questions concerning the validity of sociological knowledge in the sociology of knowledge is somewhat like trying to push a bus in which one is riding. To be sure, the sociology of knowledge, like all empirical disciplines that accumulate evidence concerning the relativity and determination of human thought, leads toward epistemological questions concerning sociology itself as well as any other scientific body of knowledge. As we have remarked before, in this the sociology of knowledge plays a part similar to history, psychology, and biology, to mention only the three most important empirical disciplines that have caused trouble for epistemology. The logical structure of this trouble is basically the same in all cases: How can I be sure, say, of my sociological analysis of American middle-class mores in view of the fact that the categories I use for this analysis are conditioned by historically relative forms of thought, that I myself and everything I think is determined by my genes and by my ingrown hostility to my fellowmen, and that to cap it all, I am myself a member of the American middle class.
>
> Far be it from us to brush aside such questions. All we would contend here is that these questions are not themselves part of the empirical discipline of sociology. They properly belong to the methodology of the social sciences, an enterprise that belongs to philosophy and is by definition other than sociology, which is indeed an object of its inquiries.

> The sociology of knowledge, along with the other epistemological troublemakers among the empirical sciences, will "feed" problems to this methodological inquiry. It cannot solve these problems within its own proper frame of reference.
>
> We therefore exclude from the sociology of knowledge the epistemological and methodological problems that bothered both of its major originators. By virtue of this exclusion we are setting ourselves apart from both Scheler's and Mannheim's conception of the discipline, and from the later sociologists of knowledge (notably those with a neo-positivist orientation) who shared the conception in this respect. Throughout the present work we have firmly bracketed any epistemological or methodological questions about the validity of sociological analysis, in the sociology of knowledge itself or in any other area. We consider the sociology of knowledge to be part of the empirical discipline of sociology. Our purpose here is, of course, a theoretical one. But our theorizing refers to the empirical discipline in its concrete problems, not to the philosophical investigation of the foundations of the empirical discipline. In sum, our enterprise is one of sociological theory, not of the methodology of sociology.
>
> (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 13-14)

Although there are several other major theoretical differences with Berger and Luckmann if the discussion were to remain within the context they define as the sociology of knowledge, it seems more beneficial to proceed to a positive construct of society and the social order based upon the basic premises. In pursuing that approach, these differences with Berger and Luckmann will become implicitly apparent.

At this point, an hypothetical application of the basic premises to the formulation of, and one's perception of, society and the social order (as well as the position of the individual within these contexts) will give a clearer picture as to how these premises might affect everyday life. Initially, this demands a conceptualization of the nature and role of society. Beyond this, it requires that a distinction be made as to what constitutes social interaction as opposed to societal interaction and societal intra-action, social responsibility contrasted with societal

responsibility, and the corresponding role of the individual, as well as a recognition of the values espoused, in each category.

In essence, this is a discussion of two completely different perspectives based upon one's orientation toward consciousness, power, and man's place in the scheme of things: the one reflecting and feeding Western civilization, the other will become clear in describing the application of the basic premises. It must be kept in mind that the following discussion is one interpretation of the application of the basic premises discussed above. Any synthesis of these premises is highly personalized. Therefore, this discussion should illustrate the freedom within the structure for one to assemble the components at a personal (subjective/private) level of understanding, instead of a definite (methodological) statement on how to apply the premises in all situations. It should be clear by now that black and white, step-by-step rules are not a part of this philosophy, and so this synthesized application should illustrate a natural blending of the premises without implying that there is only one interpretation in a given situation.

There are two types of power: temporal and spiritual or personal. There are, and always have been, men who value one type of power or the other in virtually all societies. The man who values spiritual/personal power is exemplified by Castaneda's (1971, 1974) "man of knowledge," although the distinction between the psychotic and the shaman prophet is oftentimes merely the cultural context (LaBarre, 1974, p. 266). It is this distinction between temporal power and spiritual/personal power that forms the basis for the following theoretical construct.

If society is viewed as an organizational structure, then the source of this structure must be examined in order to determine its purpose.

There have been, and still are, many traditions throughout the world where social organization revolves around men of personal power. European witchcraft serves as the most convenient example, for it has evolved from an open and valued tradition to all in society to a persecuted and closed tradition with benefits to only a few practitioners (Buckland, 1971; Glass, 1965).

The primary reasons for this have been fear and greed. The fear in the recent past has come primarily from ignorance, but in the more remote past fear came from those unwilling or unable to cultivate their personal power. Their fear arose out of their impotence, and turned them to temporal power for two reasons: it was more easily attained than personal power, and it could be used to "control" those with personal power. In other words, it is proposed here that a society is a banding together of the weaker individuals in a population in order to increase their power individually through joint action.

Synonymous to power are prestige and influence, be it in a physical, political, or economic context, and with this basis one may begin to perceive an elementary picture of the nature of society as well as its role. If the role of society is to increase the power, prestige, and influence of the weak, the converse is also true. That is, it must place limitations on those individuals who do not need to collectivize in order to have a sufficient quantity of these temporal posessions due to the fact that they value another kind of power. From this need to limit and control everyone who does not have the same set of values comes the question of how much, and this is where greed enters the picture.

In the example of witchcraft, the practitioners went from highly respected and valued members of the community (Buckland, 1971, p. 18) to

being put to death for their values (Buckland, 1971, pp. 29-39; Harrison, 1973, p. 259). The greed and fear of the Church knew virtually no bounds in this case (Harrison, 1973, p. 197; Buckland, 1971, p. 34). In other societies the degree of acceptance of those who choose the path of personal power can be seen in their relative status: from shaman prophet to psychotic. The remarkable fact here is that, although all of the world's major religions have been founded by men who were classified as shaman prophets, some societies now reject the possibility that these men (and their way of knowing) still exist, and brand all claimants as psychotic while other societies see them as valuable and central to their communities.

The inherent nature of an organizational structure founded upon such principles as fear and greed bodes ill to those unwilling to accept its dictates, as was shown by the witchcraft example. If it is taken that a society has insecurity and a lust for power as the reason for its existence, then it must continually strive to satisfy these needs, and hence come the regulations and laws.

> Rule a nation with justice.
> Wage war with surprise moves.
> Become master of the universe without striving.
> How do I know that this is so?
> Because of this!
>
> The more laws and restrictions there are,
> The poorer people become.
> The sharper men's weapons,
> The more trouble in the land.
> The more ingenious and clever men are,
> The more strange things happen.
> The more rules and regulations,
> The more thieves and robbers.

Therefore the sage says:
I take no action and people are reformed.
I enjoy peace and people become honest.
I do nothing and people become rich.
I have no desires and people return to the good and simple life.

(Lao Tsu, 1972, p. 57)

By extension, the way to better the overall environment for the people who compose a "fear and greed" society is to make the organizational structure (which promotes their needs) better. This is the rationale which makes the distinction between societal and social so important.

When the grat Tao is forgetten,
Kindness and morality arise.
When wisdom and intelligence are born,
The Great pretense begins.

When there is no peace within the family,
Filial piety and devotion arise.
When the country is confused and in chaos,
Loyal ministers appear.

(Lao Tsu, 1972, p. 18)

Social interaction is any interchange between individuals on an interpersonal level, while societal intra-action is any interchange between an individual and the organizational structure (or its representatives). By extension, social responsibility is that obligation to help another human being which an individual feels toward other individuals on an interpersonal level, while societal responsibility is that obligation to help maintain the organizational structure which an individual feels toward that structure. Finally, societal interaction is any interchange between two organizational structures or their representatives. Thus, the role of the individual and the values attached to each category are extremely different.

The relationship to the individual is this: the social order can only be improved by improving the individual which ultimately means raising his state of consciousness, while the societal order can (supposedly) be improved by improving the organizational structure. In other words, at the individual level the distinction between social and societal is based upon an individual's self-knowledge and the accompanying judgments based upon experience in the former case, as opposed to the overriding valuation given to the opinion (agreement) of others in the latter case. Within the social order one may be an individual to the extent of forming his self-image totally by subjective knowledge as long as his behavior does not threaten the survival of others, while one looks to others (agreement) for one's self-image within the societal order, and may even behave in a manner that threatens the survival of innocent others and even the whole species if that behavior "improves" the societal structure (feeds the fear and/or greed). To pursue the point further, one finds that such a society and its supporters must use and emphasize external (temporal) rewards, while a social order based upon the pursuit of self-knowledge has primarily intrinsic rewards available to its practitioners.

Human beings <u>are</u> social (not societal) animals, and when that fact is recognized, so is the individual's personal responsibility for all of his actions (which are relieved by a societal structure). It is out of the fear and uncertainty of not knowing that this tremendous responsibility on the individual for all of his actions is avoided by the believers in the "social" stock of knowledge, for they fear such an awesome responsibility as the construction of their own private theory of meaning/reality (for they may construct one with which no one agrees, and thus are defined as crazy by present standards). It is a far easier and less painful task

(requiring no introspection) to adopt the dictates of others, as well as the fact that the societal structure is served by those who conform. However, from the acceptance of this personal responsibility comes man's freedom to transcend societal restrictions (a fact that makes it distasteful to those in power in a society), for only if one has the same values and goals as the people in "power" does one conform, since it is clear that social responsibility and individual choice are not a matter of being representatives of society, but rather a matter of individual responsibility. Thus, the "threat" to society is that one's individual responsibility may lead him to value his opinion over that of others, since he recognizes that three opinions are not necessarily more valid than one, so he may view himself as the only sighted man.

The question that remains is how one tempers this insight? If social responsibility is a synonym for species survival adaptability, then individuals may have private theories of meaning, as long as they do not threaten this basic tenet. In other words, private theories of meaning are not necessarily formed by predetermined social input, but may be formed upon personal experience (that is, through the use of hallucinogens, meditation, etc.) as long as they do not threaten species survival.

Conclusion

The purpose of this section has been to show the effects of a way of knowing upon specific academic disciplines, scholarship in general, and society as a whole. The general reason for this approach has been to illustrate the extensive and similar effects of a way of knowing in a variety of contexts, as well as its influence upon other ways of knowing. The immediate reasons for this approach have been to suggest that the

epistemological basis which underlies Western scholarship may not be the best (in terms of practical consequences) basis for qualitative evaluation, and to illustrate the theoretical consequences of employing other ways of knowing. In concrete terms, this approach rejects the common, overriding valuation given to temporal power and technological advancement as goals, their anthropocentric basis, and their "objective," conceptual methods. In their place, the suggested approach values the raising of consciousness and the concomitant development of spiritual power originating from a recognition of man's place in the scheme of things and a desire to live in harmony with nature. The necessary methods would be subjective and experiential, and the rewards would be intrinsic to the goals. Survival adaptability for the species seems to be the standard by which to evaluate ways of knowing and societal formations. The pressing question now is whether this approach can produce in terms of practical problem solving.

CONCLUSIONS

Where do the basic premises lead? The definition of qualitative evaluation implied is not a set one, but a functional one that is a fluid guide. It points, it does not delimit; a fact dictated by the nature of the types of problems that demand qualitative evaluation (i.e. having many variables that are not easily defined). Whether the foregoing presentation can be considered to provide a sound and consistent epistemological basis for such a definition must be decided by putting it into operational form and demanding that it produce results. If it succeeds in producing practical, problem solving results, it will be an example of a way of knowing that is significantly different from that employed by Western positivistic social science, and that is better suited than it in solving certain contemporary problems. However, if it fails to offer problem solution that is significantly more effective than that now offered (a fact which does not mean the exploration of other ways of knowing should stop), it will have failed by not producing results, and thus introduce a long lacking standard to Western scholarship which has been given a backseat to "scientific method."

To adhere to methods which are empirically testable and repeatable looks to the method and not to the results for legitimacy. For example, suppose the statement is made by an experienced martial arts practitioner that there is an intangible called "fighting spirit," and that he can somehow "feel/sense" if a person has it. The Western scientific tradition would call for a definition of this "spirit stuff," and a much more "objective" methodology than "feeling/sensing." The martial artist would

probably have difficulty defining either his term "fighting spirit" or his methodology to the satisfaction of Western social science.

Undaunted, the social "scientist" would probably come up with a statistically validated personality inventory of some sort to define and measure this particular quality. The point: although the social scientist's method would be empirically testable and repeatable, his results would probably be less meaningful (in terms of practical consequences) than the insights of the martial artist (who bases his insight on experiential knowledge). Before this statement illicits a cry of "unsubstantiated generalization" by positivistic social scientists, it must be remembered that the failings of the "everything can be measured" approach have led to the necessity for more qualitative approaches, and the problem outlined above is the type which has stumped those who try to measure.

One reason given by Western scholarship for the adherence only to methods which are empirically testable, repeatable, and cumulative is a stated desire to keep people from "re-inventing the wheel." This implies that there is only one definition of progress. In other words, another basis for this position could be the fear that someone might not "re-invent the wheel."

Unscientific and ineffective are not necessarily synonymous. Understanding is equated to mean "how" something happens, and will be expressed in terms that reflect one's way of knowing the phenomenon (a simple example, if a person is deaf, he may use visual imagery, while a blind person would use auditory imagery). Explanation is equated to mean "why" something happens, and may be expressed in scientific or unscientific terms. However, neither of these terms, understanding or explanation, says

anything about the effectiveness of a methodology in solving problems. Moreover, they say nothing about methodological systematics; some methods appear unsystematic only because the observer does not possess the necessary perspective (way of knowing) to understand the system. What all this leads to are the results (in terms of practical consequences) of an inquiry.

To return to the "fighting spirit" example, it would be necessary to identify two groups of equal technical ability, one group possessing "fighting spirit" and the other group without it, by each method of assessment (martial arts practitioner method and social scientist method). Then, it would be necessary to have individuals, upon whom agreement was not reached, fight each other in order to test the methods. The unfeasibility, from several standpoints, of this test is obvious. However, the point is that only by examining such concrete results can one judge the relative merit of a method of evaluation. The problem: the criterion of "results achieved" forces one to see a clear-cut success or failure in terms of problem solution. Although Western social science admits that nothing can be definitely proven by its methods, it seldom points out the near impossibility of definitely refuting anything. This is seen repeatedly in the never ending journal debates over sampling error, statistical methods employed, and so forth.

Qualitative evaluation demands that the criteria of success of a method stem from results achieved in practical problem solution. Adherence to scientific method should not be allowed to serve as a justification for research (funding). Thus, the researcher has a much more personal stake in the problem, and the reliability and validity of the method, as seen via the results achieved, are equated with the researcher's personal judgment.

This conclusion has thus far attempted to point out some of the general effects on scholarship that would result from the adoption of the epistemological basis for qualitative evaluation presented as the main purpose of this thesis. In conjunction with this attempt, the areas outlined earlier as general objectives have also been addressed. This leaves only the more general consequences of adopting this epistemological basis to be concluded, and that will now (hopefully) be accomplished by means of an example that highlights many of the characteristics of Western contemporary society.

What does the term "mentally retarded" mean? Are people so-labelled inferior, or merely different in their way of knowing? For example, "mentally retarded" people are now used on repetitious assembly line jobs that are too boring for the "normal" worker, but upon which the "retarded" worker concentrates intently. This brings to mind Zen Buddhism which teaches one to meditate, or concentrate, to the utmost upon the task at hand, whatever it is. There are a number of stories of monks who became Enlightened while performing such "trivial" tasks as sweeping a walkway. This Enlightenment is the breakthrough which a Zen monk attempts (through meditative discipline) in order to escape the limitations of the rational/intellectual/conceptual mode of knowing. He achieves a mode of knowing which purportedly shows him the underlying similarity of things (as opposed to their external differences), and which manifests in a tranquil mental state capable of intense concentration based upon a philosophy of living every moment to its fullest, regardless of the task at hand. Perhaps the "retarded" person is merely born without the encumbrance of the rational/intellectual/conceptual mode of knowing. Although the Zen monks are viewed as "different" in Japanese culture, they are certainly regarded

as men of great learning within the context of their way of knowing; a way of knowing which has applicability and value in everyday life, but in a very different manner than Western scientific "knowledge."

There is an extension of this view of the "retarded" person which offers a different insight into his actions than the "intelligence" oriented one which has labeled him retarded. Could it be that his natural ability lies in the area of concentration, and that the mundane banalities of everyday materialistic life do not interest him? In other words, he does not "socialize" like everyone else, because it is not important to him. Therefore, he is not easily offended by the status given him in the value scheme of others, because he does not share that value scheme. Those who value rational intelligence and give it a superior place over other ways of knowing may be merely different, not better or worse. In fact, in other cultures the intellect is recognized as having many limitations, or as Suzuki expresses it:

> A 'view' or 'thought' is the outcome of intellection, and wherever this is found this creativity of the Unborn or the Unconscious meets all sorts of obstacles. This is the reason why the Zen master advises us not to cherish even one 'thought' or 'view,' negative or affirmative, concerning birth-and death as well as nirvana. The intellect is meant for utilitarianism, and whatever creativity it may have operates within this limit and never beyond it.
>
> (Suzuki, 1973, p. 141)

The point of intelligence referred to above brings up an interesting question involving the experiential/conceptual distinction. Why is it so widely accepted that men of "average" intelligence can create a technique which will measure "superior" intelligence? This system seems to operate on the premises that intelligence is a matter of quantity as opposed to it being regarded as a quality, and that (rational, intellectual) intelligence is the basis for a way of knowing superior to all others. As was

illustrated above, the latter opinion is not universally held, and the former is certainly a matter for conjecture. The point of this discussion is to call into question the (experiential versus conceptual) basis of a method which appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a method based upon rational/intellectual/conceptual "knowledge" is used to assess one's inherent potential to gain that type of "knowledge," then it assumes the primary importance of that knowledge, and in practical terms (by labelling someone as "retarded") rejects other ways of knowing as inferior. Regardless of this judgment, if intelligence is conceived as a qualitative state, it is illogical to assume that a man of "average" intelligence can measure the "superior" intelligence of another.

This example of the "retarded" person must eventually lead one to ask "why" such a narrow perspective has dominated Western society. Thomas Szasz (1970) offers an explanation which fits nicely into the "fear and greed" societal model presented earlier, and meshes also with Kopp's idea (quoted earlier) that when people act "funny" they are a threat. They must be drugged or locked away to "get their minds right." All of this seems to reflect a need for a hierarchy, and a rejection of the premise that someone, or something, can be different, not better or worse.

For the present purpose, it is sufficient to say that the qualitative researcher must be able to extricate himself from the limitations described above. The researcher must be open to discovery of himself (in the sense of personal character development) if he is to succeed at qualitative evaluation. This is the greatest challenge to the qualitative researcher. Therefore, the only people to whom qualitative evaluation will yield significant, practical results are the ones who want to gain some personal

insight. Qualitative evaluation then becomes an attempt to understand (or better, Understand) oneself.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As stated earlier, the need and rationale for qualitative methods of evaluation have already been adequately presented in the past two decades. This is not to say that more theoretical work is not needed to better clarify the purposes, expectations, results, definitions and so forth which are associated with those methods, for it is needed. Much has been left unsaid in the form of particulars from many different disciplinary and experiential perspectives. It is, however, time to state that "bandwagon scholarship" that merely reiterates twenty year old contentions in trite phrases (i.e. Kelly, 1980) simply will not be acceptable. Substantive practical research that closely ties theory to application and that strives for the resolution of social problems is needed. This implies longitudinal research of complex phenomena that does not fit the mold of short-length, particularistic journal articles. Two suggestions for research direction will follows.

This thesis has concerned itself with epistemological theory--building, not evaluation technique, and the formulation of specific techniques is the next step toward theory testing. The place to look for these techniques would seem to be the philosophical systems which have formed the majority of the epistemological theory presented herein. How have they, in their many forms, been transmitted from generation to generation?

Although relatively new to Western academia, qualitative evaluation has been central to the master/disciple relationship in many other cultures. Where students in the West have generally come to receive their

recognition and acclaim from the public and public institutions (a recognition of their "expertise"), the recognition in systems in other cultures (that are far removed from Western academe, but value qualitative evaluation) comes in the form of more teachings by the master, as a result of deeper personal insight by the student. This type of student/teacher relationship and its implied emphasis on the subjective, holistic evaluation of the self-knowledge of another is a starting point for research into techniques of qualitative evaluation. This situation inherently contains the fact that the teacher has experienced what he has evaluated, for there is no place in this type of system for those who fit the old axiom of: "Those that can, do; those that can't, teach."

The use of this traditional student/teacher relationship contains several aspects of qualitative methods beyond technique which need examination. The extension of successful evaluation of personal development to a broader scale leads one to social interaction, and then the subject of generalizability must be examined. The subjects of observer bias and standards for identifying the quality and usefulness of an account are also questions broached by this approach. Finally, this model exposes points that may be regarded as serious short-comings of this approach (for example, the length of time required to do high-quality evaluation [get results]).

A method imposes order from without; a search for underlying principles recognizes the fundamentals of the natural order within a specific context. A search for underlying principles is an attempt to simplify (not to make simplistic) in order to organize and ultimately understand (Understand?) the world of manifestations (te). Qualitative evaluation may

ultimately be a search for underlying principles. Once these principles are "discovered" by Western scholarship, in depth descriptions may be seen as verifications. Descriptive accounts become both a tool of discovery, and verification, and rediscovery and verification, as one matures and gains deeper insights into the many levels (not degrees) of the principles. Thus, qualitative evaluation becomes a search for, and understanding of, non-judgmental universals (for example, Taoist ideas of yielding, humility, tranquility, and so forth).

In summary, future research trends in qualitative methods can no longer recognize the boundaries of Western positivistic social science, but rather must substantially deviate from many of the major tenets which underlie those boundaries. Furthermore, the standard of "results achieved" must be pushed to the forefront of criteria guiding research. Finally, a humanism that goes far beyond the narrow confines of Western "civilization" is needed before such attempts can be made or understood.

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