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**METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES OF HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH  
AND EXPERTISE: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL RISKS**

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**Abstract**

This paper deals with the modern methodological strategies of humanitarian researches in the context of practical use of modern science. The authors give the idea that the methodology requires tools of cultural and historical epistemology, with the help of which the scientific community could examine socio-cultural risks arising from applied researches.

**Keywords:** philosophy of science; methodological strategies; socio-cultural risks; expert community.

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**МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ГУМАНИТАРНЫХ  
ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ И ЭКСПЕРТИЗА:  
ОЦЕНКА СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНЫХ РИСКОВ**

The most urgent question of modern science and philosophy is the methodological potential of the cultural and historical epistemology – a new epistemological area, gaining today in increasing authority in the various fields of humanitarian researches. This trend has served as the basis for the development of methodological approaches in psychology, political science, and historical researches. The need for the development of such new approaches is due to the fact that science changes along with rapidly changing socio-economic reality, and then – the methodological principles of application of cognitive tools. Science has now become a powerful social and economic subsystem of society, aimed at practical and technological application of the results of cognitive performance. An increasingly important and often decisive role in the activity of scientists is played now by the factors of external social and cultural determination of their cognitive activity. In addition, practically oriented science features the prevalence of interdisciplinary researches, which methodological parameters are determined better by the effectiveness of the applied result than by disciplinary methodological norm. In this connection, the ideas of full social relativity of scientific knowledge have come to the forefront in the philosophical and methodological reflection over the science.

Accordingly, the philosophical and methodological reflection over science has almost entirely lost the concept of truth, and hence the claim to perform methodological functions that normalize scientific cognition. Historical and scientific reconstruction of unique (i.e. inimitative) cognitive

situations – the so-called case studies have gained a wide ground. Meanwhile, the absence of universally valid methodological standard means actual blurring of science as a cultural phenomenon. And since it is obvious that modern science gives no reason for the restoration of hard positivistic normativism, it can only go about finding fundamentally new methodological approaches. This is the role the cultural and historical epistemology claims, which opens new possibilities for the realization of methodological features of reflection over science. It concentrates on problems associated with the change in the role and status of science in modern society, with the emergence of new communication tools, transformation of intrascientific and general cultural communications, etc. Consideration of these problems is the central task of the methodology formed on its basis, and its purpose – formulation of intrascientific guidelines for interdisciplinary research that can open a research prospects, not ended with the immediate pragmatic needs, i.e., able to overcome the destructive for science, opportunistic relativization of cognitive activity.

In terms of methodology itself, this kind of transformation of research is found in the fact that the standard methodological norms are converted to methodological guides, cognitive tools, and only in this capacity perform their normalizing functions, i.e., only being directly involved in the actual case study. In this situation, verification, falsification and even logical consistency lose their status as the absolute standard of scientific character – they take methodological meaning only as a tool for

identification of new knowledge. And they contribute to the fact that the acquired knowledge discloses also its social significance that goes beyond the pragmatic tasks formulated by a client. This feature of the methodological guidelines functioning is clearly revealed in the researches directly dealing with the vital parameters of the human. However, striking examples of a similar situation can be found today everywhere in the science, particularly in the field of social and humanitarian studies.

Pragmatic market orientation narrows the scope of epistemological interest in knowledge. The interests of the customer do not include the support for research leading to uncertain results, and moreover, not pragmatically staying within the process order. But as soon as the question arises in society about the side effects of the application of the results, their comprehensive assessment requires the expansion of research context, the use of all the existing array of scientific knowledge. Modern society, which has already a rich experience in the sad consequences of the use of the proposed innovations in science, urgently requires exactly this kind of peer review of scientific achievements [see: 1; 2]. This is also a cause for the state support for expertise, allowing to move the scientific activity beyond the scope of private and industrial purposes. In these contexts, valuable cultural and historical guides of the scientist gain their epistemological sense.

Cognitive meaning of these attitudes can be demonstratively observed in the studies of cultural-historical psychology [see: 4], the history of Russian philosophy [see: 7; 3], political science [see: 5], and criticism of pseudoscience [see: 6]. During the methodological analysis of these studies based on cultural and historical epistemology, contours of the new methodological tools, in particular, the concept of «methodological strategy» appear. The need for its development is connected with the fact that, as we have noted, interdisciplinary researches focus today primarily with the applied objectives. Modern science – both humanitarian and natural – is not just a cognitive search. It is always an internal appeal of studies to the practical result. Therefore, the traditional economic term «methodological approach» needs to be added. The concept of «methodological strategy» expresses in the conceptual apparatus of the methodology the need to preserve the scientific standard in the results-oriented study. With regard to humanitarian researches, now there are three important methodological strategies:

1) «translation», which provides the interaction of different disciplines using very different languages (including technical and humanitarian), solves urgent practical problems and involves the expansion of research in the context of peer review of its results;

2) «interpretation», which provides communication between these disciplines in terms of main area of the studied problems;

3) «convention», which is achieved by different scientific disciplines in addressing these specific problems.

These strategies, which ensure the specific methodological support for researches in the framework of the cultural-historical epistemology, allow us to consider knowledge as a semantic-symbolic language phenomenon (cognition as the system of linguistic practices) and, consequently, the semantic and value aspects of cognitive activity come to the forefront. Thus, the field of scientific researches includes the semantic and value, existential aspects of the relevant discourse accompanying the socio-cultural determinism of the scientist in its historical and cultural perspective. The cultural-historical approach does not offer an abstract declaration of the cultural value of scientific knowledge, but focuses on the distinction between the respective measurements of scientific and educational practices, on the assessment of the consequences of either confirmation or deformation (disregard) of their cultural values.

What cognitive perspective does this kind of appeal to the methodology of the cultural value of knowledge open? We will try to briefly answer this question. These appeals orient scientific research on the identification of risks (social, political and technological) in any scientific result that can put into question the prospects for the development of modern society. These risks are associated with uncontrolled technological development of society based on the growth of the array of applied researches. Cultural-historical methodology focuses the research activity on the analysis of these risks, while examination becomes the institutional form of its implementation.

The increase in the proportion applied researches in science is due to the commercialization of science. The consequences of this process can be easily observed in the reports and publications of the results. These results are usually published without a description of methods used to obtain them, since the *means of achievement* are the most expensive part of the study. As a result, internal scientific communication is virtually torn, and the integrity of science as a cultural phenomenon is destroyed. At the same time, this minimizes the possibility of applying the acquired knowledge to search for a new one. Meanwhile, the epistemological meaning of such possibility is, in fact, a science-constituting «scientific criticism». As it is known, achieved knowledge in science is constantly checked in new research contexts in order to detect its limits. But the matter does not come down to a simple check. This is the way the new research horizons and the prospect of finding a new knowledge open. But in order to go back to dynamics of this search, a value reorientation of science is required: we need to return from

practical usefulness of scientific achievements to the idea of universal significance, the idea of inherent worth. And public awareness of the fact that the consequences of an uncontrolled application of science can be very sad contributes thereto. The current situation, in fact, leads to the examination, namely, scientific investigation. In other words, the society needs not only pragmatically useful applied research to stimulate the transformation of knowledge into a commodity, but also in the expert review of the results of applied research, which requires open intrascientific communications. Satisfaction of this requirement turns the fundamental scientific community into the expert community.

When appropriate, the expert community bases its judgment on the body of currently existing rational and reasonable knowledge. At the same time, it draws, by necessity though less evident for non-experts, upon living knowledge aimed at the search for new one. The thing is that the body of scientific knowledge accumulated at any given time does not constitute a logically coherent system. It is rather an open system of internally correlated, more stringent subsystems of different levels, in particular, scientific disciplines. It is not always possible to discern distinct consistent relations in this correlation. But the integrity of this system can be described as a stylistic unity of knowledge included in the search for conditions of reproducing new results obtained in the applied research. It requires to cross the boundaries of disciplines. This should be done by both an applied artist, and society, and, of course, the science as an integrated system of knowledge about the world.

That is why the expert, who corresponds to the present socio-cultural demand, is neither a multiskilled journalistic critic nor a modern manager of science, having not written any article, not conducted any single experiment, not deciphered any single line of archive «non-text», etc. Socially popular expert today is a professional scientist, actively engaged in one of the special subjects and therefore able to critically evaluate the potential of the knowledge gained in his research activity. Working scientists constitute a body of experts, which is now actually plays the role of fundamental science and thus is really guided by the broadest understanding of the value of knowledge. Applied knowledge is approbated, projected in some new contexts, in which it is presented very differently. And no indices and formal evaluation of scientific activity, adapted to the narrowed application tasks, cannot replace this living expert work.

A comprehensive examination reveals in the applied knowledge an extremely wide range of humanitarian and social meanings, from humanitarian and social to the personal-existential, bearing the

environmental, economic, biological, and other opportunities and risks. This expansion, in turn, motivates the inclusion of the local applied results into a coherent system of successively developing knowledge of the world, returning to it the status of historical cultural values, and dignity to the knowledge. Axiological-epistemological and social significance interlaces here in the channels of intrascientific communication, but does not lose its specificity. Moreover, a synergetic effect of mutual reinforcement arises, and opens cognitive prospects for science.

The scientific community that carries a knowledge as such and develops it as a universal basis for risk assessment and prospects for applied innovations is the current fundamental science. In fact, this is a new semantic layer of the concept of fundamental science (along with the search for bases of all the existent, along with the idea of pure science, and along with the treatment of science as a foundation for development of applications – the basic science). The fundamental science is presented here as a basis for the work of the expert and philosophical community. And this science requires philosophical and methodological idea directing the scientists to mutual growth in the research experience gained in different disciplines.

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