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KNOWLEDGE AS MATCHING
OF POTENTIALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Abstract

Discriminating symbolic from actual making up of knowledge poses severe difficulties. In fact, the term “observable” is usually understood as the very same thing as “material”, or “real”, in such a way that all the three are mutual.

In this paper it is maintained that the opposition of hypothetical knowledge versus observable data is misleading. More suitable is distinguishing general from particular making up of knowledge, since general knowledge always is only hypothetical, while particular knowledge can also be actual, and always must be thought as actual in order to give it an actual meaning.

In fact, not a single empirical knowledge ever is thoroughly actual, that is fully determined by only physical data. Knowing something always implies referring it to an abstract class and to a theoretical frame of possibilities, both which are of course purely hypothetical, and call for each other. Every knowledge is actual, as soon as it is defined in a precise way, which gives it a specific identity, and, as soon as it is supposed, by this, to correspond to an actual reference in an univocal and inescapable way. In order to assess that its reference is also material, it is not necessary that the whole knowledge in question coincides with physical stimuli. The last is never possible. It suffices for such a knowledge being in conformity, in an univocal and inescapable way within the accepted knowledge, with a set of physical stimuli which is specific in regard to a specified sphere of discourse, and to be constant through all relevant possible experiences.

The concept of “reality” can’t signify anything knowledge-independent. Only clusters of physical stimuli deprived of the defined identity typical of the objects of knowledge are knowledge-independent. Specific constant clusters of physical stimuli are converted into known objects when they are incorporated, integrated and interpreted by means of such well-structured systems of accepted knowledge as conventional categories and conventional frames of possibilities.