

Essay on Sociology of Knowledge

by [Pranav Dua](#) on MAY 31, 2012 in [ESSAYS](#)

‘Sociology of knowledge’ is one of the recently emerged branches of sociology.

This branch pre-supposes the idea “that our knowledge is in some measure a social product.” Thinkers had recognised long back the importance of economic, religious, political and other interests in shaping human beliefs and ideas. Of late, the view that even human society and its very structure can influence knowledge, gained sufficient recognition.

The history of Greece and Rome in particular has strongly supported this view. In his book “New Science” (1725) Vico tried to show how heroic literature constituted the thought mode of a specific kind of society.

The problem of the relationship between society and knowledge has been raised by Marxism, and it has offered a solution to it also. “According to Marx and Engels, all knowledge has been distorted, directed and conditioned by the interests conscious and unconscious, of conflicting exploited and exploiting classes”. In the light of contemporary sociological information, this view is found to be untenable as a total sociology of knowledge.

Durkheim tried to approach this problem in his own way. In “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life” 1912 and “Sociology and Philosophy” 1952 (essays translated) he argued that our perception and experience are derived from and constitute a part of social structure.

This view may be alright for simpler societies and not for complex societies. Even Comte’s three stages of social evolution had been regarded as stages of forms of thought of which the last stage, that is, the positivist stage is alone objective.

The foundations of the sociology of knowledge will have to be found in Karl Mannheim’s “Ideology and Utopia” 1936 and “Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge”, 1952.

Manheim tried to face “The problem of sociology of knowledge with great philosophical learning and methodological ingenuity”. A number of sociologists are attracted by the subject of sociology of knowledge but the problems it raises are unsolved.

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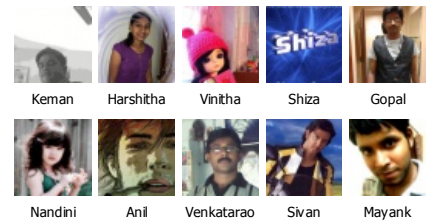
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