Reply to Rom Harré
Ilya Kasavin, Russian Academy of Sciences

I am happy to reply to Rom Harré (2015) who is widely known for his fruitful revision of scientific realism. He equips the latter with the whole set of concepts, which are rooted in a wider philosophical and scientific tradition—from Hume and Kant, to Cassirer and Ryle, and to Durkheim, Vygotsky, and Bruner. He develops an original version of social epistemology and was among the first scholars who integrated the results and methods of social and human sciences into it. All this makes him the best possible discussant on the topic of my article.

I agree with the objection that I limit the variety of realism to the relatively narrow school of American philosophers. This is an "intentional stance" since my paper in *Social Epistemology* is a critical reply to a particular ideological pamphlet against social analysis of knowledge. The pamphlet's author is Paul Boghossian (NYU), who pretends to represent the school of analytical scientific realism performing this in a plain, and even rude, form.

But my general attitude towards philosophical realism is pretty different. I regard "refined realism" an inspiring source for discussing epistemological as well as ontological issues. Moreover, my goal is to justify the possibility of "social realism".

What is Social Realism?

"The social" is designed for understanding the entire domain of processes, events, objects and agents, which are normally excluded from consideration by the widely spread versions of scientific realism (materialism) either in epistemology, philosophy of science or philosophy of mind and language. These are the elements of human world characterized by a "centaurical existence": they essentially combine physical, social, cultural and psychological dimensions. Strictly speaking, one can hardly analyze such phenomena without taking for granted their inseparability; otherwise, they lose their peculiar meaning and function.

Relativism

Here, I would like to turn to Harré's concept of relativism, which is one of the main points of attack by Boghossian and like. According to Harré (2015), "if, by relativism, we simply mean that many workable views of parts of the world, and of human society, exist each of which reflects a facet of a complex reality revealed by different methods of enquiry, then this fact is no threat to a carefully delineated realism" (19). So, this understanding of relativism presupposes multi-theoretical and multi-empirical description of the world complexity, which is taken though as one and the same. It is much more a position of moderate pluralism: there is one world, which is conceived in a complementary manner by different sciences and other types of cognition. But Harré is known as a proponent of a "discursive turn" in the social sciences and humanities: reality is constructed by the speech acts as well as by material practices.

Constructivism

I would underscore the constructive role of human activity in the emergent and dynamical understanding of reality. Even those objects like heavenly bodies or mountains start, or cease to exist and change their reality, in the human world due to human activity and communication. And relativism means here that physical, social, cultural and psychological aspects of the human world's phenomena are considered cross-referentially. The understanding of the physical needs, essentially, the cultural, the social and the psychological. The understanding of the social requires the psychological, the cultural, and the physical. Each of these aspects is *relative* to the others, and this is ontological as well as epistemological relativity. It means in no way an arbitrary consideration: in contrast to this, relativity is an essential regularity, the entire and complex connection of things, which objectively (human- and mind- independently!) includes an observer, an actor as a part of the whole interaction.

Practice

Harré points out that my focusing on "Harvard realism" leads to reducing the whole discussion to the realism of propositions and disregarding the human practice. Well, this is fairly true for the object of my criticism, but does not exhaust the arguments of my own. Since Saussure and Wittgenstein the difference between language as a system of rules (theoretical construction) and speech as linguistic elementary practice only partly governed by rules (empirical reality) is widely accepted. But even here the border between theory and practice is not as solid as it seems. The system of language reflects the current linguistic practice and even pretends to describe its dynamics. And the latter is intentionally constructed in the educational process according to a certain requirements of sex, race, nation, religion, social status, cognitive purpose, and cultural surrounding. And still the introduction of the concept of practice into epistemological consideration marks the later developments and reveals the reminiscences of the post-classical German philosophy (Marx, Weber) as well as of sociolinguistics and linguistic pragmatics.

A young representative example of this trend is Jason Stanley who, proceeding from the philosophy of language, endorses contextualism about knowledge and relativism about truth appealing to the concepts of practical interests and knowing how.[1] This pragmatic turn, wherever it leads, clarifies and elaborates the concept of practice by eliminating an unbridgeable gap between knowledge and practice and showing how an appeal to practice can legitimate knowledge claims. But there is hardly any general solution to the problem of knowledge-practice interrelation.

As for me, I propose a typological definition of knowledge based upon its relation to practice. This typology comprises three abstract knowledge patterns, which are explicated at the same time as empirically observed historical types of cognitive activity.[2] I single out "theoretical knowledge" (philosophy, theology, science, ideology), "mind-practical

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[1] Jason Stanley *Knowledge and Practical Interests,* 2005, and *Know How,* 2011.
[2] See Ilya Kassavine, *Soziale Erkenntnistheorie. Migrationsmetaphern, Wissenstypen, Textepochen. Nichtklassische Ansätze.* Hildesheim, G. Olms Verlag. (2003): S. 32-39.

knowledge"—or in Karl Marx's words, *praktisch-geistige* appropriation of the world (religious cult, moral norms, artistic images) [3]—and "practical knowledge" (practical policy and material production). The criteria of their differentiation are the level of linguistic articulation and reflexive supervenience; the degree of separation from or inclusion into practical activity and communication (critical, projective, normative, regulative, or descriptive relation); the character of knowledge production and dissemination (institutional or elementary, public or private, impersonal or personal, regular or occasional, algorithmic or contingent); and the grade of historical universality (locality). So, knowledge and practice appear not as different human abilities and products, but as a continuum of knowledge types that are connected in a peculiar historical manner to the correspondent types of practical activity and communication. One may trace how my approach works in the analysis of interdisciplinary research types in historical contexts of social communication. [4]

Knowledge and Power

Speaking about realism cannot be exhausted with the questions if knowledge claims have a human- and mind-independent referent, or if propositions objectively describe anything outside our language games. The reality of knowledge is demonstrated in its practical ability to change the world. This is a reason why Harré mentions Ian Hacking's "*Representing and Intervening*" (1983). Since the discipline of "History and Philosophy of Science" has been transforming into "Science, Technology and Society", one is more and more aware of the role technology, including social technologies and engineering sciences, play in contemporary changing world. Referring to Max Weber' works on modern bureaucracy and John Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936) Adolf and Stehr assert that practical success and influence of those theories had nothing in common with their scientific justifiability and truth. Rather, those theories became powerful as a result of their ability to successfully couple "theoretical notions to conditions of action that could be influenced and changed in directions designed by the actors of the day" in case of Keynes, or due to that bureaucracy constitutes a form of "domination based on knowledge" (Weber).[5]

Foucault generalizes the practical roots of cognitive power depicting knowledge as anonymous discourse that exercise control over a powerless individual. But, here, a clash between knowledge as property and as public good appears. Since power circles provide an institutional framework for knowledge production, the dissemination of knowledge is hard to limit. As a consequence, non-governmental groups and individual actors begin using knowledge as means to fight for their independence. So "knowledge acquires both 'constructive' and controversial functions".[6] The use of algorithms, patterns and artificial intellect machinery are accompanied by the irreducibility of "personal knowledge" and

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[3] For the problems with the proper translation of the term see: Fred Moseley and Tony Smith. *Marx's* Capital *and Hegel's* Logic*: A Reexamination.* Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014.
[4] See Ilya Kasavin. "Cases of Interdisciplinarity: Between Habitus and Reflexion." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 4, no. 3 (2015): 15-30.
[5] Adolf and Stehr, *Knowledge* (2014), 124.
[6] Adolf and Stehr, 128.

"intellectual capital". Knowledge becomes the source of both social reproduction and social change.

Edmund Husserl's *Lebenswelt,* or human *Umwelten* as Jakob von Uexküll put it, are dominated increasingly by the immediate productive force of current science and technology. They, in fact, determine what is real. The extent to which the external world and the humans themselves can be potentially appropriated by cognitive-practical means is often regarded as a border of reality. Either the privacy of the mind obtains, or loses, its reality within this technocratic development. Such questions remain topical for philosophy.

Contact Details: itkasavin@gmail.com

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