

On Knowledge as Subjectivized Information

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Abstract – Investigating the phenomena of knowledge and examining its relationship with information, the author reaches conclusion that knowledge as the maintenance of intelligence is subjectivized information that is the content of objective reality.

Key words – knowledge, information, subjectivizing, objectivizing.

I. Introduction

Knowledge is one of the most difficult and discussed notions of modern epistemology. This situation can be considered as natural, because there is no single opinion for understanding the process of cognition. Agnosticism, gnoseological optimism and gnoseological skepticism exist presented in modern forms. The difficulty of revealing of univocal definition of knowledge is that using the notion, one can mix some as minimum three different fields of human being: the word “knowledge” can denote not only 1) some complex of information, but also can be understood as 2) subjective or 3) objective result of cognition.

And to this day last two forms just entail the hottest discussions. In modern Russian philosophy, there are various points of view on this problem. So, Filatov considers, that the knowledge is the subject’s belief corresponded to the real state of affairs and justified by the facts and rational arguments [1]. We are not satisfied with the definition, because it generates a set of questions connected with: 1) the correlation of the knowledge with believes that is not corresponded to the reality; 2) the coordination of the knowledge with relativism and fallibilism, etc.

Nikiforov stands another position. He defines the knowledge as the result of cognition, usually expressed in language or in any sign form and supposing true estimation [1]. Such formulation is not all-purpose, because it prescind the subject from the knowledge as the result of the process of cognition, and it connects the knowledge only with verbal structures, though there are many reasons to think that besides verbal knowledge there is non-verbal form of it, expressed with the help of images, gestures, rules, etc.

Kasavin trying to overcome the limits of previous definitions posits that the knowledge is a form of social and individual memory, collapsed scheme of human activity and communication, the result of designating, structuring and conceptualizing of object in the process of cognition [1]. We consider that such definition of knowledge is irrationally wide, because there is a tangling of the cognitive content of society and the cognitive content of intelligence of subject. According to our reckoning, it is wise to demarcate these two spheres using suitable notions. Two forms of knowledge, tacit and explicit, help us to do it.

II. Knowledge and Information

Knowledge division to tacit and explicit based on the accepting of thought, that there is a difficult to articulate some knowledge, because it exists in the form of subjective experience. For the first time these forms of knowledge were marked by Polanyi in his monograph “Personal Knowledge”. Tacit knowledge is united with the subject and its empirical activity, and cannot be objectivized (verbalized, formalized) without the partial or complete losing of content. To this knowledge, we can refer the individual skills, experience, recollections and so on, which though are always socially mediated, inseparable from the person and its features [2].

Explicit knowledge alternatively can be expressed verbally, stores in books and other carriers of information, and can be transmitted electronically. According to Polanyi, explicit knowledge is knowledge, which can be or has been already transformed (objectivized) to information, and can be saved on some exosomatic (out of body) carrier (papery, electronic or another), where it will exist not depending on human perception.

There are oppositional opinions about the nature and the relations of tacit and explicit knowledge. Cook and Brown argue, in what they claim is in agreement with Polanyi, that “explicit and tacit are two distinct forms of knowledge (i.e., neither is a variant of the other)” [3]. In contrast, Tsoukas claims that tacit and explicit knowledge are mutually constituted and should not be viewed at two separate types of knowledge, because “tacit knowledge is the necessary component of all knowledge” [4]. Stenmark said that all knowledge is tacit and explicit knowledge is in fact information [5].

We agree with Stenmark, but offer to concern knowledge only to the sphere of intelligence. In this plan Yulov’s position is rather perspective. He considers that though cognition is realized by activity of three components of human consciousness: intelligence, affective and mental psychics, the result of cognition, knowledge is content of intelligence and is a set of rational significations. They are present as empirical images (tacit knowledge): sensations, perceptions, representations, and variety of theoretical formations (explicit knowledge): ideas, principles, theories, concepts, etc. [6]

Since intelligence process sensory information received from reality, subjectivizing of this information takes place. Therefore, in the process of knowledge constructing, we can definitely point out a set of stages: 1) extracting of information and 2) its subjectivizing. Informational life of any subject supposes the transition of stimulus irritation from external and internal environs to sensory impressions, which then transformed to sensuous signs carried meanings. It is the dynamics of transformation of information to knowledge.

Verbs “to know” and “to inform” hint on differences between knowledge and information. It is easy to see, that the first means internal having or getting (“I know something”), while the second is understood as external activity, outwardly manifestation (“I inform someone”) – something, which is different from the subject, who knows.

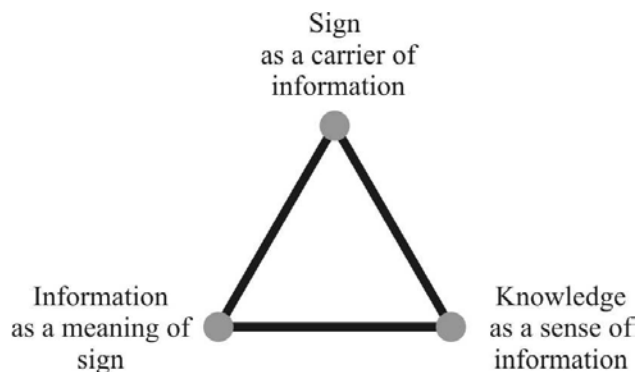


Fig.1 Triangle of sign, information and knowledge.

If to correlate these phenomena with the notion “sign”, it is possible to draw an analogy with Frege’s semiotic triangle. In our case the vertex of the triangle are notions: sign, information and knowledge (Fig. 1) Every sign is carrier of some information and is correlated with not only with its denotation – information or meaning of sign, but also with what this information expresses, its sense or knowledge. The sign made for designating of an object or event, is able to carry some meaning, which is information. Information as a content of sign-form is comprehended by the subject. The result of this comprehending is knowledge that is a sense of the information and a meaning of the sign. It is interesting to see at the link of the noun “information” with the verb “inform”. The verb “inform” can be divided on two: the preposition “in” and the noun “form”. These two words “in form” mean that something is in a form, something that is an internal content of form, sign.

Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that knowledge as intelligence content is subjectivized information. It is possible to set between them a cycle interconnection with two transitions: information to knowledge (the process of subjectivizing) and knowledge to information (the process of objectivizing). Thereby waste tangles of the senses of knowledge and information in cognition are prevented. The picture is clear – subjects cognize the reality (the source of information) and construct the knowledge (the content of intelligence).

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