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ARE THE TYPES OF EPISTEMIC COERCION AND THE MEANS OF ITS RESISTANCE OF THE SAME NATURE?

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One of the most challenging issues, essential for the actual state of science, is the search for a fragile balance between scientific normativity, openness, methodological proliferation and other key concepts, associated with the modern world of research. Paul Feyerabend understood science not as a detached and hermetic self-sufficient reality, but as a structural part of the social world, liable to politicization, discrepancies and inconsistency. His analysis of science, its strategies and institutions involved and, in a way, undermined a long living concept of science as an objective, rational and neutral domain. Following his discoveries, today researchers in general, philosophers of science and social epistemologists in particular, face the problem of corrupted practices, which jeopardize the acquisition of true knowledge. According to the ideas of professor S. Turner, there are two strategies of approaching epistemic coercion: conformity or resistance. Aimed at scientific progress and sustainable development the scientists strive to overcome obstacles of technological, organizational and administrative nature. It presents the case of epistemic resistance. In other circumstances, when the mechanisms of epistemic coercion function without recognition and impediment, the epistemic environment conforms. Professor S. Turner's article gives an in-depth analysis of epistemic coercion as a ubiquitous phenomenon, pervading intellectual and institutional practices of science and public life. Having stated the existence of the new instruments of epistemic control, he also sheds light on the requirement of the new forms of resistance. In the following article the author consequently scrutinizes the types of epistemic coercion offered by S. Turner. In order to highlight a technological perspective on all three types of epistemic coercion (information deprivation, normalizing/stigmatizing, legitimating/delegitimizing), the author places the emphasis on algorithm – based practices as a distinctive type of information deprivation. Presented from the standpoint of technological design, an algorithm could be seen as a technologically embodied form of epistemic coercion. Further on, the author argues that some of the means of resistance, given by prof. S. Turner, are more suitable to perform epistemic coercion, rather than resisting it. For instance, transparency has compromised itself as an untrustworthy concept put in use to conceal more information than to reveal. Tribalism is proven to be another arguable means of resistance because of its limiting effect on practices of open internal and external scientific communication. Finally, the author augments the list of means of epistemic coercion with construction of ignorance and coercive effect of expertise.

Keywords: epistemic coercion, transparency, tribalism, technocracy, expertise

Средства эпистемического принуждения и методы сопротивления им – одно и то же?

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Одной из самых острых проблем, ключевой для современного состояния науки, является поиск хрупкого баланса между научной нормативностью, открытостью, методологическим богатством и ключевыми концептами, связанными с современным миром исследований. Пол Фейерабенд понимал науку не как отдельную, герметичную и самодостаточную реальность, но как структурную часть социального мира, подверженного политизации, противоречиям и изменчивости. Его анализ науки, ее стратегий и задействованных институтов в некоторой степени «подорвал» концепцию науки как объективной, рациональной и нейтральной области. Сегодня исследователи в целом, философы науки и социальные эпистемологи в частности также сталкиваются с проблемой искаженных практик, препятствующих получению истинного знания. Согласно идеям профессора С. Тернера, существуют две стратегии в отношении эпистемического принуждения: подчинение и сопротивление. Нацеленные на научный прогресс и устойчивое развитие, ученые стремятся преодолеть обстоятельства технологической, организационной и административной природы. В этом состоит эпистемическое сопротивление. В иных обстоятельствах, когда механизмы эпистемического принуждения функционируют скрыто и беспрепятственно, эпистемическая среда им подчинена. Статья профессора С. Тернера предлагает глубокий анализ эпистемического принуждения как повсеместно распространенного явления, пронизывающего интеллектуальные и институциональные практики науки и общественной жизни. Обозначив новые инструменты эпистемического контроля, он также проливает свет на необходимость поиска новых способов сопротивления. В своей реплике я критически анализирую типы эпистемического принуждения, предложенные профессором С. Тернером. Для того чтобы обозначить технологическую перспективу трех видов сопротивления (информационная депривация, нормализация/стигматизация, легитимация/делегитимация), я особо выделяю практики, основанные на алгоритмах в качестве отдельного вида информационной депривации. С точки зрения технологического дизайна он может быть представлен как еще одна форма, воплощающая эпистемическое принуждение. Далее, предлагается тезис о том, что некоторые из средств эпистемического сопротивления являются средствами принуждения. Например, прозрачность, эпистемически не благонадежный концепт, используемый чаще для сокрытия, нежели раскрытия информации. Трайбализм обладает тем же свойством, становясь препятствием открытой научной коммуникации. Наконец, я расширяю список средств эпистемического принуждения, дополняя его конструированием незнания и принуждающего действия экспертизы.

Ключевые слова: эпистемическое принуждение, прозрачность, трайбализм, технократия, экспертиза

Today many theorists and philosophers of science find themselves in quite an extraordinary state of matters in the conceptual environment. On the one hand, a great number of researches demonstrate that scientific institutions could be perceived as organizations of a rare kind: the last resort of objectivity, where the principles of neutrality, rigorous methods and strict approaches serve the one and only ideal of true science. On the other hand, there are a great number of researches, which show that science is yet another part of social reality, deeply politicized, epistemically coerced, structurally and methodologically corrupted. The question is: how can one navigate in the reality where the lack of scientific normativity leads to total social determinism (constructivism)? Even B. Latour, who contributed profoundly into the research of the social matters of science, criticized those tendencies and considered them as unproductive. Before we continue with particular issues, I would like to outline a more general picture of science, which due to its structural specificity provoked the thriving of epistemic coercion.

There are different images of science which serve different purposes, all true and none complete. The first one is exported for the public to see: the most exciting, full of amazing truths revealing themselves through the remarkable discoveries in physics (string theory, back holes, quarks, etc.); genetics (newly discovered genomes), medicine (bacteriology and virology, in particular) and other fields of research. The achievements of natural sciences provoke interest and resonate greatly with the public. The reason for such interest is a unique combination of macro and micro scales of the researched matters that challenge human ability to perceive, understand and conceptualize the world.

A different image of science could only be seen from the downside of it. It is filled with routines, at times daunting, long-term study, search for solutions to the issues and puzzles that are not easily resolved. Therefore, it cannot be used to promote the image of science or even explained properly in the public eye as all its seams are potentially not appealing to a lay man, a citizen and a taxpayer. The most attractive image the public demands is associated with accuracy, certainty, accountability. It should respond to the public request accordingly. One drastic issue here is that the public itself does not know whether it needs a plethora of expert opinions or just the one, which waives all the responsibility from ordinary people and makes science itself accountable for the potential consequences. More often than not, the public image of science is the result of its inner workings, although presented as an ideal image from the first description. This issue comes from the fact that many concepts of science are related to the pursuit of excellence.

The issue of "ideal theory" professor S. Turner stated is extremely important and indeed problematic. One can have difficulty defining its place in real scientific practice. It is not clear whether "ideal theory" is an artifact of the history of science or an actual system of explanations

with subordinate methodology we should not give up. The inability to give a definite answer instigates further confusion, which could be simultaneously seen as a crisis of scientific normativity and/or deliberative hypocrisy. In the former case, the scientific community simply cannot find a viable alternative to this ideal, while in the latter one, uses purposely (which might also mean "politically") the drawbacks of the concept of the "ideal theory".

The universal rational method, the basis for the "ideal theory", is widely criticized today by the supporters of feminist and postcolonial epistemologists. It is considered as a tool used to force homogenization of research practices. The parallel between geographical/political colonization and rigorous scientific methodology is quite common as modern science has been associated with the western science for a long time. Although this conceptual platform is valuable in its own right, here we can make an analogy with the created appearance of consensus. As professor S. Turner points out, the consensus is what we can see on the surface. But it is underlined by the forceful processes of normalization and stigmatization. The latter ones define the ways scientific institutional practices are performed, determine the mainstream research issues and the "proper" ways to approach them. Algorithms are the direct successor of the universal rational method. And although the development of AI has achieved some extraordinary results, we still cannot waive responsibility when we deal with different forms of discrimination and injustice.

The Algorithm/Transparency Issue

It leads to the question, concerned with mediation/transmission of information (and knowledge as its conceptualized form). As professor S. Turner explained, transmission is one of those weak spots, where the biases could be incorporated the easiest. On the surface, it seems to be a matter of the technical capability modern systems provide. But what is hidden there is the issue of responsibility for epistemic coercion, not taken on either side of the transmitted message. Therefore, every time the researchers in the humanities bring up the question of technological influence over any kind of social processes, especially the scientific and institutionalized ones, it turns out into the question of distributed responsibility. In this particular discussion on epistemic coercion, it concerns the matter of responsibility for the trustworthiness of the transmitted message/knowledge.

The mere notion of transparency is problematic. Even more problematic is the actual content of this concept. It can be seen at least from two standpoints appropriate for the current discussion. The first one is related to the field of ethics, justice and moral stands of the public agents, performing professional duties (in science, politics or business). Virtue

epistemology could help here, as a virtuous agent is honest, just and transparent in his conscious intentions to find the truth and express solely true justified beliefs. From another point of view, transparency relates to a number of technical settings that make up the system, for instance, the algorithm. Algorithms are in the technical core of a digital platform. The issue of transparency arose when the platforms turned into the ubiquitous tool of data and metadata preservation. The phenomenon of transparency itself is the result of the public request, which demanded the businesses to avoid discrimination. The use of algorithms itself has nothing discriminative in it. Yet, the following decisions companies make, which are based on the data algorithms provide, could potentially harm people, social groups and the environment [Safransky, 2019 – a great example of the Detroit's "red zoning" algorithm in action, which proved to be the example of the "algorithmic violence"].

The greatest pragmatic controversy is that algorithms are the objects of intellectual property protected by the law. It means they are "black boxes" not only from the epistemic point of view, but from the judicial one as well. The only available public outcome of their work (and the demonstration of transparency) is the body of data they have earlier produced. It has no practical sense without the means of interpretation, hence could be manipulated. As a result, data becomes the real ground of epistemic coercion. One of the biggest issues of transparency is the idea that anyone, without special preparation or professional skill (or special knowledge in a field different from his/her own if we consider scientific communities) can draw adequate conclusions about the systems, as if they are "equally visible and understandable" [Annany, Crawford, 2016, p. 979]. As a rule, this is not the case and there is always a threat to make any kind of desired conclusions out of that data.

The whole idea of transparency appeared about the same time the notion of the "audit society" did. The latter is based on the observation of the "audit boom" in the late 1980s [Power, 1999]. It reflected an outrageous increase in the number and scale of public surveillance practices "driven by closely related political demands on behalf of citizens, taxpayers, patients, pupils and others for greater accountability and transparency of service providing organizations" [Power, 2000, p. 113]. Together with the methods of disclosing information, appeared many ways to hide it, i.e. to create the image of transparency without being transparent.

It seems to be quite similar to the means of epistemic coercion – inclusion and exclusion, legitimizing/delegitimizing professor S. Turner analyzed this in his paper. The key issue with the means of coercion and the means of resistance to it is that all of them are procedural and in this respect, algorithmic. Unfortunately, it comes to a point, where one cannot tell the difference between the algorithmic and the bureaucratic acts. As M. Power pointed out, there's a threat of turning actual revision into the process of getting "a badge of legitimacy" [Ibid., p. 117].

Construction of Ignorance

Construction of ignorance is another means of epistemic coercion. It could be added to the list of epistemic threats that ought to be taken into account while performing epistemic practices.

There are different forms of epistemic ignorance that should be discussed here. The first one is related to algorithms. It could hardly be avoided due to the lack of proper tools of interpretations and massive bodies of the produced data. In the case of "algorithmic ignorance" it will be fair to notice that when something does not serve the purpose of transparency, it fosters ignorance. Whether or not this form of ignorance is produced deliberatively, it has all the potential to cause real harm to the epistemic environment. First of all, it could be consciously used as an instrument of discrimination. Secondly, if algorithmic ignorance technically multiplies itself making the body of data inapprehensive, the true epistemic authority behind it becomes unidentifiable.

Another form of ignorance is related not to the technical, but the "human" or social aspect of it and concerned with agency. The idea of transmission as the most vulnerable and potentially compromised element of the system prone to epistemic coercion could be supplemented by the issue of the potentially coerced agents who carry it out, i.e. the experts. The institute of expertise is an extremely broad and problematic topic that should inevitably be narrowed down to a limited number of questions here. The most important one is: what role does the expert play in the process of epistemic coercion?

Experts do not transmit, but communicate the message, connecting the inner world of professional domains and the outer world of the continuous demand for the expertise. Although the institute of expertise has been proving its value and discrediting itself with variable success during the whole time of its existence, it has never ceased to be a part of the scientific, social and political environment. What makes it dangerous from the epistemic point of view, is the mix of the political and the scientific aspects of it.

The institute of expertise and its influence on political and social decision making is so drastic it could be seen as another means of epistemic influence, including epistemic coercion. The underlying processes of presentation and legitimization of public expertise is depolitization of the public realm. The experts are skillful and technocratic. The whole idea of technocracy is based on the domination of the expert community. Here we can draw a parallel between the argument of professor S. Turner, who claimed transmission to be the weakest spot of epistemic security. Indeed, experts are notorious for performing the same task, but as human agents. They hold specific professional knowledge and execute the duties in the key political and economic institutes. Depoliticized public realm is

not only free from the "conventional" politics, but from the civil public debate. The expert community defines the deliberative framework for the public debate or, probably, epistemically coerces it. The context of discussions that suits the technocratic model is limited to some kind of solutionism, where civil citizens are made to choose from a restricted number of options, which are supposed to fix the issues technically. It reminds of how the universal rational method in science is made to unify (or reduce diversity of?) the results and create the image of the universal scientific model.

Moreover, as some researchers see it [Stone, 2012], technocratic approach is just an instrument of conventional politics, which is used to stabilize the system and "blow off steam" in times of political instability. Here we can agree on the necessity of a tribal approach professor S. Turner mentioned. Civil society should not be deprived of deliberative practices and should stand against technocratic methods as a "civil tribe". Yet, there are some dangers of tribalism that need to be addressed below.

The Issue of Tribalism

Information tribalism described by professor S. Turner as a means of resistance to epistemic coercion is, to some degree, a different name for collective epistemology. Some of the advantages of this phenomenon are obvious: there would have been no scientific schools without it, as well as no research tradition. Tribalism could be seen as a condition for deliberative practices in the search of a consensus. Although, we do not always find a compromise or a convention to be a productive thing for scientific progress, we cannot easily undermine its importance for epistemology.

Still, some thoughts on the issue of excessive tribalism should be considered. Tribalism is deeply rooted in the practices of scientific institutions and is highly doubtful to cease existence only because of the criticism directed its way. Academic communities constantly fluctuate between the ideals of universalism with homogenous outlook and tribalism as the essential principle used to create and develop the schools of different intellectual traditions.

The problem is that there is a definite similarity between favouritism as a means of epistemic coercion and tribalism as a means of resistance to it. We can also add epistemic paternalism to the list of the "-isms" that fall into both categories, as it is quite common for the tribalistic practices. The focus here is on the world of academia to become vulnerable, as the "results in strong tribalism, where the universalistic tendencies of science and the academy in general are dampened in favor of a kind of conceptual nepotism" [Wilkins, Ebach, 2014, p. 61].

In conclusion, I would like to point out once again that the nature of the means of epistemic coercion and the means of resisting it are of quite ambiguous nature. When we try to comprehend all the relations between different notions, such as algorithm, transparency, tribalism, means of stigmatisation/legitimisation we should take into account how vulnerable they are. While using them, it is important to critically analyze the epistemic context and every particular case where they are applied.

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