DOI: 10.31430

On the Precedence of Understanding Over Method[1]

Azmi Bishara[2]

Self-Inquiry

Allow me to preface my remarks here with some Cartesian self-inquiry, although I have the impression from reading the papers presented to this conference that the man does not enjoy great popularity in the house!

First,

It is a privilege for a scholar to be able to shun publishing for the sake of publishing or for formal academic obligation like promotion, and to liberate self and work from such drives, so that the impetus for research, discovery, and understanding in the social sciences becomes meaningful in the lives of others as well as in the scholar's life, whether his inquiry is driven by curiosity or an intellectual sense of a prevailing erroneous explanation for a particular phenomenon; or a belief that a certain concept is misused; or a desire to enlighten public opinion on a topic the researcher considers of importance. What compels a researcher may be goals established purely by values, and judgments stemming from them. Methods have no role to play in choosing a subject.

As soon as I start work on a subject, I encounter different possibilities for departures: engaging with one or more concepts used in philosophy or the social sciences and humanities, or engaging with the social or human matter at hand, *itself*, the topic for which these concepts figure as clues that help me understand and explain. My predilection for starting with social sciences terms and concepts before proceeding to the actual phenomena might be traceable to my having come to the social sciences and humanities from philosophy.

I draw this distinction, although I know these two tracks intertwine through the course of research, and studies in the social sciences and humanities are not theoretical studies in which one definition or determination logically follows from another. If I wish to study concepts such as state, secularism, civil society, class, community, city, tribe, sect, market, demographic group, political culture, and so forth – or if I wish to develop new concepts possibly more suitable in explaining phenomena – I find myself face to face with a social reality and a historical context.

Starting research with critical analysis of concepts and terminology already at hand has the virtue of providing the scholar with an easy entry point, a ready opportunity to step in the subject and test terms and concepts relating to a social phenomenon as part of a dual process analyzing terms and concepts, and simultaneously, approaching social phenomena from a certain perspective.

It also occurs to me that I am part of the social reality that I am studying, or at least that I have a position concerning it, whether negative or positive. The fact of my presence in the context might benefit the research, through an ability to understand nuances, meaning and significance otherwise inaccessible, say to someone who is external to the cultural context in question. Alternatively, it might negatively influence the research if it prejudices me not only in my choice of research questions but also in the selection of data and indicators. Everything depends on how one engages with one's presence in the context of the social reality. The awareness of my position and the effort expended in resisting any possible inclination

1 Complete text of an address delivered in an abbreviated form as the keynote opening the Social Sciences and Humanities Conference on Research Methodologies, held at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, Qatar, 22 - 24 March

2 General Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. Bishara has published numerous books and academic papers in political thought, social theory, and philosophy, in addition to several literary works. He was Professor of Philosophy and History of Political Thought at Birzeit University, from 1986 to 1996. He also co-founded Muwatin, the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, and Mada al Carmel, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research. He can be reached at: azmi.beshara@dohainstitute.org.

or deflection that might cause damage to the validity of the research outcomes is fundamental to what we term "the pursuit of scientific objectivity".

It is not necessarily the case that many of the social sciences studies that are widespread today fall under this broad heading of analysis of concepts or phenomena – for sometimes these latter are literature reviews, quantitative summaries of public opinion, structured narratives of social events based on newly-surfaced historical documents, or case studies. When I speak of "scholarly research" in this paper, I mean research into *concepts and social phenomena*, and not simply any of the many varied and useful research activities pursued by scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

When the topic is a theoretical, philosophical or social science concept, the starting point is a literature review of the topic at hand, in an attempt to define the concept's history, how it arose, and whether or not it is still a valid tool for explaining the phenomenon it is intended to help understand. Various types of philological and linguistic analysis may be helpful, and also review of the sequence of stages of a concept's evolution in explaining a social phenomenon and its historical context. This entails delineation of the interplay between the history of an idea itself and the historical context incubating it.

What method shall I use to analyze the social reality, or the phenomenon under study? To be honest, I don't know. I have no answer before plunging into the experience. Karl Popper's statement that there is no method by which things may be discovered, but only those by which they may be validated or falsified, comes to mind here. This would seem to apply as well to the discovery of method: there is no method to discover a research method beyond having a sound reasoning mind and some idea of existing theories.

It seems tempting to direct one's research to demonstrate the effectiveness of some method that one has read about or studied. It would be fine, of course, to work on validating a particular method as an intellectual exercise, or in the framework of a debate on methodologies or curricula, or within publications intended as credit for the promotion of university faculties, or in training a student in these sciences. The validation itself proves retroactively to be worth undertaking because it means that the concept was a useful tool in explaining a social phenomenon. The research that concerns us here is of the kind that transcends discussions that are not pursued in order to understand the subject (using "understand" here in the broadest sense, notwithstanding considerations today of the difference between understanding and explaining that some schools emphasize), but rather to demonstrate the validity of a particular methodology. This latter approach can be a starting point in the search for new methodologies or new perspectives, especially when validation fails.

The truth is that there is no correct or incorrect method, beyond getting on with research work on a particular, defined topic. For this reason, I believe that theoretical discussion of methods removed from efforts made to understand a subject using various theories in defined contexts can only be of limited benefit – mainly for pedagogical, scholastic purposes, or in philosophical discussions of questionable relevance to the methods under study. An example of this might be the discussion that has preoccupied some philosophers over the epistemological precedence of either structural or process analysis – as if there are processes amenable to analysis that do not have a specific structure, or as if analysis of structures can be of any use if it does not reveal the processes flowing into and from them, and their internal dynamics. This kind of debate is only possible philosophically, in my view. Anyone undertaking research in a defined topic area in a methodical way, assisted with theories – that is, anyone making use of methods and not simply theorizing about them – understands that it is impossible to research structure without touching upon process, or to research a particular process without examining its structure.

If my purpose is to understand a social phenomenon, or to examine a specific social science concept, I must begin by sifting through classifications and categories of phenomena, using the same concept that I am studying – even before discovering its effectiveness or limitations. However, method/methodology is not something I can decide upon before having actually started the research itself. I mean to say that research methodology does not come ready-made, waiting for us to adapt and vary for scholastic purposes. What is important is what we ourselves devise and come to discover from the process of the research itself. This may necessitate choosing an available methodology, combining a number of methodologies, and perhaps leads to a new theory, in such a way as to help us

move beyond the prevailing "methodology-worship," – as I see it. This appears practically enshrined as a matter of custom some studies, with methodology explicated and meticulously defined at the outset, as if having been decided before the work had actually started.

To be candid, what universities call research methods – and what they teach under this heading – is nothing more than techniques and instruments that are indispensable in some social sciences. We may call them "methods," if that reflects common usage and if we understand that what we mean by methods in this case is techniques and instruments. However, "methods" in this paper refers (more precisely) to various analytical approaches and interpretations of social phenomena, as advanced through, or by theories.

Methods in the social sciences are actually approaches to explaining social phenomena that arise from theory and theorizing. As a result, in the natural sciences we don't find similar disputes on the subject of method such as seen in the social sciences, which in reality revolves around different approaches to explaining phenomena under study, to understanding them, to formulating what *demarcates or differentiates* them, and what is *structured* and regular within them. In my view, a theory that does not yield an approach to understanding a phenomenon or class of phenomena – an approach yielding or producing a method – cannot really be a scientific theory. It might be an idea or a philosophical opinion, but it does not merit the designation of scientific theory. (I would not include here the usage of the term "theory" related to certain ideologies and the approaches associated with them, but I cannot discuss this in the present paper.) *Scientific theory is a patterned array of logically coherent statements or propositions about social phenomena revealing a recurring structure, showing a continuous relationship among variables, and thereby demonstrating a certain regularity and stable order amid turbulence. A method or an approach to explaining the distinctive features of a phenomenon can be discerned arising or following from this structure, and from it a path of evolution can be predicted.*

Theories I know of may be helpful to me, and I may need to look into other theories to make use of useful approaches to understanding social structures and historical developments, in other words, the methods or methodologies associated with these theories. Once I have begun to use them, I will discover whether they have really assisted me in comprehending the phenomenon. I will then realize that I need some tools, in addition to methods, since the application of method requires tools – just as I needed – without giving it prior thought – the tools of critical reading in order to prepare for the research, and just as I undertook the literature review, sorting and comparing sources before starting the research. I may require other work instruments as well, such as induction and statistical quantitative analysis, and I might find quantitative data in the published literature. I might be obliged to undertake quantitative research to fill in any gaps or for the purposes of comparison. I might not need quantitative techniques or instruments at all, but rather in-depth interviews with active individuals, participants, witnesses, and observers, or for other reasons, with people besides those participating in the phenomenon under study. Research topics may include attitudes, emotions, ideas, and psychological approaches. The interview then takes on another role and uses more sophisticated techniques and tools that serve in curricula and methodologies of psychology, neuroscience and human brain sciences in general.

Thus, clearly, and first and foremost, in the conduct of my research, the subject (or topic) at hand – knowledge and understanding of it – has pride of place. This determines the method or methods that should be used. I hope to be able to obtain clarity regarding method/s through the interaction of the mental tools and intellectual faculties available to me with the object and purpose of the study, its topic in mind. The selection of method is not a matter of a prior decision or preference in favor of this or that method. Moreover, I differentiate between method on the one hand and techniques and instruments on the other.

Second,

The exposition above applies to the hypothesis, as well; I do not begin research by constructing a hypothesis. The hypothesis is really an advanced (late stage) outcome of the research itself, which may well substantiate that a possible hypothesis under consideration leads me to view the phenomenon under study from an inappropriate angle, or that this hypothesis is neither falsifiable nor susceptible

to validation, so that I am forced to amend it or completely replace it. The purpose of the research could then become to demonstrate the falsity of a given hypothesis in a simple and straightforward research project.

When the findings of research are presented in a book or article, many put exposition of the hypothesis at the beginning, although in fact it emerges in the research process, and in some cases is the *end result*, the outcome to which they arrived at the end of the research. This outcome is then wrapped up as a hypothesis, and given pride of place at the presentation's beginning. This is a customary practice to which I am not opposed, on the condition that we fully understand that this is *the beginning of the presentation of the completed research*, and not the beginning of the research itself. Confusion between *presentation style* and research methodology can be misleading.

Therefore, before starting on my research, an idea takes shape in my mind about the subject, and a certain amount of information comes to my attention. I may have some positive or negative attitudes, or feelings of comfort or discomfort with regard to the status of the topic and prevailing views on it. I will have some intuition about causation underlying the phenomenon that will equip me for analysis before selecting any research method. Intellectual prowess and intuition, description and analysis do not constitute research methods, notwithstanding researchers who write that they have espoused "descriptive-analytical methodology," since description and analysis are rational faculties and skills, not defined research methods. One finds this very often in papers written by students of the social sciences.

When I set forth a hypothesis at the outset of a book or study, I will have already completed and validated the research undertaken. That is, I now place the hypothesis at the beginning of the published study *not* for validation, since it has *already been validated*, but to present the study in a renewed effort to convince myself, by convincing other readers, that what I have achieved is sound. In reality, a formulated hypothesis is an advanced phase of the research. Prior to this formulation, it could have been a matter of guesswork, premonition, intuition, or even presumption.

Suppose that I have some sort of idea, or maybe a predisposition towards the validity or falsity of certain propositions, some premonitions and conjectures that do not reach the level of a hypothesis. I then must look into the subject to determine what I can verify about it. I can only attempt to approach the subject by thinking about it using the tools I have stowed in my mind; these are intellectual, rational-inductive, rational-derivative/rational-deductive tools. Along with these I have accumulated some knowledge and information about the subject, from literature and background surveys. Nobody starts from zero, unless they wish to re-invent the wheel – not minding the risk of inventing one in the shape of a square, since in the humanities it cannot be test-driven…

The only reasonable conclusion that rationalism might draw from confronting the waves of criticism directed at it is that it ought to be modest and know its limitations; it can hardly abolish itself, and no critique has proposed an alternative. In the absence of an alternative to rational thought as practiced in the coherent derivation of sound and valid propositions from other sound and valid propositions, with continuing re-examination of their validity, or through analysis and deduction seeking to understand phenomena from the inside, arriving in a controlled manner at generalizations from the analysis of particulars and specificities, all the while avoiding the entire spectrum of possible fallacies – one can only declare that the only alternative to rationalism is simply its negation, in an abstraction that is devoid of content, that can only be defined by descriptors such as "other than rational," relating to conclusions reached through moving from one proposition to another in a disconnected and incoherent fashion, without concern to examine the validity of these propositions, or from particulars to generalizations without the benefit of a proper inductive procedure, or simply "*Irrationalism*," which occupies a large domain extending from diagnosing mysterious powers in phenomena that are beyond explanation and narrating stories of these powers, to the point of pure delirium.

I have then to commit to what I consider to be rational thinking processes that can penetrate the domain of study. If I make any decisions regarding hypothesis or method prior to the research, then it is incumbent on me to be open to changing them during the course of it.

I may have a hunch about the spuriousness of other propositions and the accuracy of a group of views

constructed from observation and reading. I may have some perceptions of the value of the research, stemming from the benefit that a certain society may accrue from it, or in support of a cause that I believe in. However, I cannot construct a coherent hypothesis as basis for research before the work starts.

Third,

Every theory worth of the name gives rise to some kind of methodology, or approach, to understanding a phenomenon of one kind or another. I repeat this because, as I have mentioned previously here, I have noticed that people freely apply the designation "Methods" or "Methodologies" to "the quantitative" and "the qualitative" tools that are used in various specializations.

What are often considered to be quantitative methods are in fact tools or instruments derived from mathematical induction, probability theory, statistics, or other disciplines – and used by methods or methodologies. The test of these tools is the extent to which they are in themselves neutral and multi-disciplinary, or trans-disciplinary and to which they are continually revised and adjusted. These last are distinct from the *inter-disciplinary,* or the interlinking or overlapping of methodologies derived from theories associated with these disciplines. This is the difference between "*trans-disciplinary*" and "*interdisciplinary*," or, more accurately, "*integration of methodologies*" for there are techniques that are trans-disciplinary for some disciplines, such as quantitative techniques, because a variety of disciplines employ them *as they are*. This does not dispense with the need for *interdisciplinarity*, meaning the integration of methods or approaches derived from different theories for the purpose of interpreting and understanding a phenomenon. Techniques may be used to serve this or that methodology, or to demonstrate this or that theory. Integration of disciplines is not in fact an integration of the disciplines themselves in academic curricula, but the integration of different theories (which may belong to different disciplines), due to the need for diverse approaches or methodologies stemming from several theories, upon undertaking research of a particular social phenomenon – depending on the complexity and multiplicity of its different aspects and their simultaneous interplay, or overlap. The point is that the "interdisciplinary" integration of these theoretical approaches/methods, is not predetermined or prearranged; rather, the need for it arises only from the research itself, as it is underway.

I think that there is no point in taking positions on tools and techniques. In-depth interviews, ethnographies, and statistical approaches are all tools that continually evolve: evaluated and developed in practice. At certain points, people may generate supplementary tools and alternatives. In any case, it is a trifle absurd to take to an ideological stand, or even a theoretical one, with regard to them.

Based on continual experience, then, tools and instruments are subject to alteration and adjustment; thus, the worthwhile discussion is one about the social theories from which spring methodologies that we can study. From this standpoint we can think about whether quantitative or qualitative tools would be most suited for application under this or that theory.

As an extreme example, we cite the science-specific tendency that swept over humanist and social sciences – and even literary studies, with the practice of literary criticism transforming the living body of a text into a corpse for dissection and through-and-through quantification. This trend has since departed the fields of cultural and literary studies, now replaced by methods of boundless interpretation. A kind of symbolic, ideal-based hermeneutical tendency swept into the language of some social science studies, becoming something of a distinguishing feature of interpretive sociology.

Discussion of these instruments takes on meaning only from the perspective of a social sciences or humanities theory from which a particular methodology takes shape. What do I mean by this?

If, for example, we take in hand modernization theory in social history, a theory that intersects and interacts with other theories such as functionalism, structuralism or even historical materialism, together they will generate approaches/methods to understand the structure and evolution of society, to define or formulate the concept of modernity and meaning of modernization, as well as underscoring the importance of the concept in differentiating one phase in the development of a society from another others, and the impact this has on our understanding of this society, its intellectual life, prevailing customs, and political systems. Questions then arise such as these: How do I go about determining whether a

particular society has undergone a modernization process? Do we collect statistics on the number of radios and televisions used in households, per capita income, the spread of education, the average age and lifespan – or do we rather identify the prevailing values and mentalities by surveying opinions? Are opinion polls adequate to this task? Alternatively, is the important thing the size of the middle class, and if so how do we measure its size? And how do we know that? (Here we will need theoretical methods and approaches to understanding and measuring the middle class, as well as understanding its role). The modernization approach to understanding the evolution of societies entails a need to use quantitative tools and to critique these tools. Are they sufficient to describe the modernization process and its effects in a given country? The assessment and comparison of modernization processes in different societies often uncovers quite different "modernizations," and defies an essentialist concept of, or approach to, modernization...

Naturally, a quantitative bent comes to the fore in the sphere of economics, with its rivalry with political economy to diagnose every phenomenon. Consequently, we find studies advancing various quantitative indicators to show a domestic economy is balanced and "sound," by conventionally recognized standards, while at the same time in the country under consideration protest movements and uprisings of unemployed people, marginalized by development, are raging.

The surprise some economists then express can be attributed to their reliance on figures and statistical tables to the exclusion of other factors, such as the populace's heightened expectations in view of quantitative improvements in economic conditions, or confusion between *quantitative growth* which can be measured by quantitative tools and *qualitative development* requiring measurement by other means. Unfortunately, the statistics in many Arab countries are matters of opinion, produced by experts according to each regime's requirements, albeit always in keeping with a "rigorous scientific approach" based upon the use of quantitative tools. Every theory – whether in domains of psychoanalysis, behavior, linguistics, or the economics of growth, inflation, and financial crises – is associated with systematic approaches or methods. Historical Materialism, for example, tells me that the way to analyze the structure of societies begins with the study and diagnosis of prevailing relations of production, to determine whether they impede the development of the forces of production (the definition of which we may suppose differs in our time from Marx's), and for example to monitor the class struggle and the nature of the forces owning the means of production, associated juristic and political structures and ideas. Analysis may demonstrate the interpretative inadequacy of this theory. However, a theory – if we are to call it a theory – must bring about or give rise to a method of approaching social phenomenon that can be examined through its usefulness in the analysis. This applies to social sciences in general. Fear of an extreme oppositional "push-back" often leads to preset or programmed bias in favor of certain methods, so that the research effort is limited to a repetitive application of theory, with the researcher transforming method into ideology. Tell me, for example, what a research method's user's position is on feminist theory, and I will tell you what this user will say about this or that society! This also applies to theories of modernization, historical materialism, psychoanalysis, and so on. These may all play an important role in highlighting aspects of the phenomenon in question, as needed by the researcher, but partisan loyalty to a given method at a study's outset turns research into display, concocted to demonstrate methodological validity.

In natural sciences, discovery is guided by intuition, experimentation, observation, experimental laboratory with controlled procedures governed by a protocol, and also non experimental research. Following formulation in laws and mathematical equations, theory is tested in its application. The failures and success of theory in the natural sciences are much clearer than in social sciences. In the social sciences there is nothing approaching the technology, medicine and other practical applications that are available to the natural sciences.

The function of theory and methodology in the social sciences is quite different, however, and for this reason, theories and methodologies are numerous, and give rise to much discussion. Theories in social sciences are approaches to understanding and interpretation, but theories are also general formulations of regularities in the relation among variables, and that is why they are expected to give at least a basis for probable scientific prediction.

Meditations on the Question of Method

First,

When I investigate a specific subject I don't give much thought to myself *as a self*, as *subject*, or to the topic, as the *object* of my investigation. I might take this all for granted. The self and the object at the instant of undertaking research are two sides of an epistemological equation; they are not two opposing poles of preset theorizing. Distinguishing subject from object is an epistemological given, and it is not based on a conscious assumption of a sociological separation of social phenomena according to subjects and objects, or an ontology of existence in general between subject and object as in the philosophical deliberations of Heidegger and his students. I can think, philosophically, that *subject* (self) and object are ontologically *inseparable*, and that the *object* is the form of the existence of the subject in the world around us. However, we cannot even *think* of this matter itself without the epistemological assumption that it is *the subject* that studies the object and that it can make *itself* and other *selves (or subjects)* into *objects* of study, notwithstanding how successful or otherwise this might be, or the ontological and epistemological obstacles involved. The object is not an object *as such* but only an object *of study*. Each object in a research process is an object for study by a subject. Without this caveat, not even Heidegger can take pleasure in bewildering his readers after the time and effort they have spent seeking to establish any benefit they might derive, as subjects, from the study of the objects known as Heidegger's philosophy — aside from the sheer pleasure of discussing and debating an idea that evades everybody else's understanding, particularly when we translate his terms into Arabic.

The existence of other *selves* (other *subject*s), in other words, selves that are not *me*, although despite the fact that they are not me or "I", each of them has its own particular "I" and my capacity to get to know and understand them (to varying degrees) consists of a set of "axiomatic assumptions" that I conduct my life in accordance with (this may seem a strange way of putting it, but I haven't found an alternative). When I undertake to get to know another subjects, I do so *because* they are subjects, and because they are *others*. I do this by means of 1. analogy with reference to some measure of functional symmetry, linked to the subjective "I" (myself) and how *I myself* feel and think; or 2. directly through this subject's actions and gestures, through her speech, external to me, on the basis of a societal accord on meanings and significance and any other meanings I comprehend through rational exertion and my accumulated experience; or 3. through both of these together, i.e., via an immediate and simultaneous binding overlap of perception of the actions, language, and subjective analogy without consciously thinking of analogy as syllogism, such that each one immediately corrects the other, thereby giving shape in my mind to an understanding of the other. In this way, the subject becomes an object to be comprehended.

The confusion between epistemological and ontological specification is an inexhaustible source of fallacy in the humanities and social sciences, and of ideological rationalization and justification in the twin domains of rights and thinking on ethics. A conviction of the existence of ontological causal inevitability is not necessary for causal thinking. I think in terms of causality irrespective of this conviction, and there are those who are convinced that ontological causal determinism exists in the world, which justifies a preternatural metaphysical conception of hidden forces in the universe pursuing their own, or history's ends, and these hidden forces manifest themselves though causal determinism. Moreover, convictions on this matter do not necessarily affect the existence of such structures in my moral thinking. I can for example believe in causality in the real world around me, and in freedom when it comes to ethics or morality.

I engage as a knowing subject with the object of research, whether or not there is no ontological distinction between subject and object. There is in my view no necessary, logically derived relationship, scientifically subject to validation or refutation, between ontological thinking, epistemological thinking, and ethical thinking. My assumption is that such a relationship (or to be more accurate, belief in its existence) belongs to the realm of dogmas, creeds, and ideologies rather than in the sciences, and it plays a role in varying degrees in philosophy. The impact of intellectually linking these areas may be of great significance, perhaps more important than science, but I do not seek to evaluate the importance of this

linkage nor assess its pros or cons. I would simply say that I can't elicit a scientific benefit for the method of research from it. A long history of thought on the impossibility of differentiating subject from object and ontologically "sound" argumentation offers no benefit for research methods.

Theories in the social sciences that formulate a constant relationship among variables should give a rational basis for prediction. But they are not predictive in the way natural sciences are, due to the many factors and elements that must be taken into consideration, the difficulty of offsetting the large number of variables, and the human factor, which brings into play human wills, goals, and aims. It is one thing to endorse the different responses made by positivist, experimental, and behaviorist theories to skepticism and doubt – that *knowledge of the other is possible*, that *we can indeed know the goals and purpose of the other*, that *perhaps we can even make inferences regarding the inner world of the other's self* through experience, analogy with oneself and common sense, and *that there is no unbridgeable gulf between the soul and the body.* It is quite another to claim that all conceivable human purposes, goals, and wills can be coded, typed, or classed so as to enable us to develop predictive theories in the social sciences.

A large portion of factors and elements are *unanticipated*, so we try to isolate those as variables in order to arrive at laws, or to predict scenarios. This isolation is *theoretical*; in reality, as we live and study them in order to foresee the future, the variables are not isolated but rather remain active, with the picture subject to change or continually changing. Therefore, in the social sciences there is a problem associated with *necessary but insufficient conditions*, conditions that render the situation more complex than is often the case with the simple and clear distinctions made in the natural sciences. Necessary conditions are ineffective if other conditions are absent, other conditions that we can't define and will differ from one society to another or from one context to another. I am currently testing this in studying transitions to democracy, where shortcomings are apparent in the notion of their being "necessary conditions for democratic transition," as per any theories we might consider – new theories of transformation and transition, modernization, or others. Whether the condition is the elites' acceptance of democratic principles, and their accommodation to them, or the presence of a comparatively steady modernization process seen in terms of growth rates, education levels, expansion of the size of middle class, the availability and accessibility of institutions and so forth, it is extremely difficult to determine the difference between "necessary" and other, "unnecessary" conditions (as defined by according to the various different theories), with the undefined "unnecessary conditions" nevertheless *having to exist* so that the necessary conditions might become in their turn sufficient. Different theories have different approaches to this topic, yet the degree of actual *effectiveness* and/or *necessity* of many conditions remains unanticipated, and only after the fact researchers discover that they were deciding factors.

The limited scope for prediction does not stem from the invalidity of causal analysis, analysis that is justified by our incapacity to anticipate human purposes or intentions. We are dealing with the purposes and intentions of human beings (in the domain between philosophy and psychology that we often regard as the domain, par excellence, of the humanities and social sciences*) as causes* that lead to *results*, with *outcomes*. It is true that social structures are the products of social actors possessing certain definite goals, but social structures, power relations, norms, prevailing culture, etc. rebound to shape the way many people think, including how they master their purposes and goals, and even inform the conceptual tools through which they perceive themselves and the world. The matter is not resolved, therefore, by taking purposes and goals into consideration when analyzing social structures; social structures must be taken into account when thinking about purposes and goals, and what Bourdieu termed "*Habitus*."* There is a need for both intuitive and non-intuitive understanding of the ends and meanings that lie behind the semantics, but this is not enough: this must combine with an understanding of the social environment.

An understanding of the relationships between and mind and body will also be of benefit when it comes to understanding human behavior, language, and the development of knowledge in the child. It may also contribute to computer science and the development of artificial intelligence, and help us to understand the social conduct of individuals; neuroscience has recently begun to combine psychology, neurology, computer science and philosophy.

Durkheim and other sociologists, seeking to understand the causes and effects of the modern transformation of European societies and the social phenomena that accompanied it, assumed that sociology looks at societies just as science studies things and subjects to arrive at laws governing their evolution. They did so by comparing phenomena in different societies, examining the effect of the absence or presence of other variables that might link, in terms of their type, to the phenomenon in question. Durkheim did this, for example, in the case of the phenomenon of suicide. This assumption forms the basis of sociology. Clearly, an understanding of a phenomenon such as suicide requires other methods as well, methods relating to an understanding of the inner world and human drives. On the whole, it appears likely that the social sciences will need to compensate for a deficit in study of the human mind and soul with methodologies that differ from those of sociology, economics and other social sciences.

I had an occasion to test this out when studying the violent extremism of the Islamic State Organization (ISIL). I rejected any contention that the origin of this movement can be found in Islamic texts that millions believe in, arriving as others did at other socio-political factors underlying the phenomenon. These factors could be seen in the biographies of the leadership and membership of the movement, which could be classified with several variations, all leading to the commission of acts of spectacular violence. On the other hand, it was clear that other individuals with the same or similar social background, growing up in the same environment as the one I described, and living through similar experiences including exposure to torture in prison, did *not* go on to commit the same violent practices. Thus, it seemed clear that psychological factors that marked the formation of the personalities of individuals as they lived through comparable circumstances and similar experiences, in the self-same cultural and social environment, must be considered when attempting to explain their behavior, while at the same time avoiding offering a psychological explanation of the social-political phenomenon itself, and marginalizing the importance of political and economic factors by assuming a general or typical psychological make-up not only of the individuals but also of concerned societies or communities, for example by diagnosing entire societies and cultures with narcissistic injury as some have done, converting psychotherapy into a facile rubric pathologizing Muslim societies.

Social sciences ought not to cast aside the human psyche, while all the while affirming the specificity of the social, with its own particular logic distinct from the psychological or the neurological. One must be wary of superficial reductionist analysis.

Sociology, economics and other disciplines cannot dispense with psychology, although they are disciplines in their own right, with their own communities, institutions and relationships that cannot be reduced to psychological variables just as mental and psychological variables cannot be reduced to neurology. Discoveries in neuroscience will have an impact upon neurological operations and the formation of ideas in psychology and linguistics. I doubt, however, that they will influence in a decisive way our understanding of social relations and structures, which have their own logic that we try to discover and elucidate in our theories. Over-exuberant haste, impelled by new scientific discovery, should not lead a scholar with a particular specialization to immediately attempt to apply laws or ways of thinking learned in one particular discipline to another. Scholarly, scientific humility, and readiness to be open to exchange and cooperation with other disciplines are required in order to round out investigation of the phenomenon.

I do not know if the attempt to arrive at a precise description of the relationship between biological and physical functions taking place in the brain on the one hand and functions that may be underway in human awareness, through the gamut of its emotional and mental states, that may result in the formulation of laws and formulas. The challenge here is a real test of the issue of the duality of consciousness and matter. Even after establishing thousands of connections by affiliation, interaction or other mental or neurological means, questions will remain open. When it comes to self-awareness or freedom of will, and even if after resolution of issues such as the mechanisms and operations of thought and memory or the center of emotion in the brain, questions arise: freedom of will, self-awareness, and moral values cannot be derived from the movement of cells and molecules. Nor do I think that chance genetic mutations or random motion of sub-atomic particles are a physical background for freedom of will or to propose that we can establish a

conception of freedom upon these things. These are two entirely different matters. There is a vast amount of naïve philosophizing along these lines. Freedom of the will springs from consciousness.

Undoubtedly, it can be useful to examine the relationship between brain processes and sensory, mental, and emotional processes in epistemic terms, whether in medicine or artificial intelligence technology. However, the danger lies in the reduction of the human being to biological and neurological processes, and even more perilous is accordingly entertaining a control of human will, ethical predilections, and freedom. This involves an element of coercion because there are no direct consequences of discoveries in physics and biology on determinism and free will, in my opinion.

However, the absence of quantum determinism in physics makes it easier for us to reject the illusion of determinism in other phenomena, with the explanation that the other phenomena are based on laws and processes at the quantum level. Physical objects are ultimately atoms, molecules, and sub-atomic particles. For example, the vision or lack of vision of a healthy eye depends on the amount of light entering the eye. Light is a quantum issue, whereas vision is a biological-neurological issue. However, denial of determinism here does not affect our expectation that the healthy-sighted people see the same things, or any design of steps we might take on this basis, notwithstanding the impossibility of predicting the movement of particles. Determinism can be denied in one context, while determinist presuppositions are made in another context, and believing in the irrelevance of both in issues of human aesthetic or artistic sensibility, and such matters as human free will.

On the other hand there is no relation between denial of determinism in nature and asserting human freedom. A scholar may comprehend that the ontological structure of the world in which we live consists of fields of energy or the random movement of particles, devoid of lawful regulation, and believe that in the biosphere genetic leaps and mutations occur, similarly unregulated by laws – and at the same time not believe in free human will or in freedom in politics and society. The absence of a negative or positive relationship between the two demonstrates also the gap between the scientific perception of the physical structure of reality and the scholar or scientist's moral judgments. This does not eliminate the possibility that scientists may propose to demonstrate the existence of such a link between their perceptions of the structure of reality and their moral positions. However, such an effort is not a scientific endeavor, even if set forth in a book by a scientist, and notwithstanding the philosophies and ideologies that might be established on such a basis.

There is a difference between using probability theory in quantum mechanics, and using it to predict the actions of individuals. Probability in the first is the only way to conceptualize a certain degree of irregularity, and perhaps insufficient knowledge of all the relevant causes and factors. In the second case, of human beings, possibility derives from many things of this same kind *along with* the element of human rationality and free will that cannot be overlooked, which is the subject of research in the social sciences.

In studying social structures, it is important to pay attention to intentionality entering into the interpretation of social acts, although social structures take up existence in and of themselves, or so we think. In order to be able to do their job effectively, social sciences and economics must take into account the purposes and will of human beings. The analysis cannot be completed without addressing social structures as products of social actors who have intentions (whether or not we consider these intentions to be the causes or reasons behind the structures). We cannot always derive purpose from behavior, perhaps not even through an elaborate and specific taxonomy of social behavior. Moreover, even with the creation of models of statistical theory to predict possible decisions on a particular course of human action under specific circumstances, and taking into account the positions of others – on the assumption that humans are rational beings who make rational choices – the prospects of success are not always bright. Nonetheless, theories have developed under this rubric.

Finally, understanding a subject doesn't "solve the problem" in reality. Deconstructing a myth by revealing its social or historical source does not deconstruct it in reality. Social scientists pride themselves on the fact that unlike the "laity" they have discovered that identities are not natural givens but constructed social imaginaries. Astonished by the

role identities still play in the life of individuals and societies, they may be swept by their discovery to the point of asserting in public discussions that identities are either a fraud or should be negligible.

Second,

Indeed, I am somewhat perplexed by what Georg Gadamer means by asking scientific research to "participate," and not control. When one speaks of science being a process of control, one is using a literary metaphor. It is true that science serves the purpose of exerting control over nature and society and that "knowledge is power" has been an emblem of the Enlightenment since Bacon. It may be possible to link the evolution of this human endeavor called science, which distinguishes the modern age, with the development of instruments of control in the modern state and its presence right up until totalitarianism. However, does this mean that scientific research itself is a process of control over the object of investigation on the part of the investigating self, such that a process of participation might come to replace it? Is this not a fallacy stemming from a misguided use, or at least different meanings of the word "control"? Is command of the laws of nature analogous to control in the sense of the use of force to restrict freedom of a person or a people? Is it possible to deduce relations of political control from the "command" of data from which generalizations have been derived, or via a firmly "controlled" process for deriving one idea from another? This is simply a metaphor, such as people saying that someone "commands" his subject or is "mastering" it. The same applies to such conceptions such as "epistemological violence".

It has become possible to engage in post-colonial criticism of the underlying hypotheses of Orientalist discourse *and* Western social sciences with our increasingly developed understanding of social sciences, which enables us to demonstrate which of their hypotheses and conclusions were ideological or unscientific. In other words, underlying the critique itself was the idea of what scientific research should be, or at least what it should *not* be. If criticism claimed that the hypotheses of hegemony in social and human sciences are at the heart of the definition of science and are in no way a distortion of it, what then is the nature of the criticism? Could it be a non-scientific critique of science? The proponents of this kind of critique generally insist on affiliating themselves with university centers and struggle to be accepted as researchers working under clear Western academic standards, forming a subculture within Western academia. They do not apply for jobs in "formerly colonized" countries, nor do they help produce alternative social sciences within them.

We should not throw the baby out with the bathwater, however. Criticism of social sciences is should be rigorous and scientific, and not sacrifice science itself; in order to move from the abstract negative to the specific and concrete, any criticism must master the subject criticized, derive benefit from it, and having benefited from it, add something to it, all the while demonstrating its shortcomings. That is why I have never accepted pure and simple negation of Orientalism. What is needed, then, is the development of social science theories in the Arab world, theories that we can formulate in methodologies: methodologies that may in their turn take on universal relevance and be subjected to criticism from others who having benefitted from them can also demonstrate their shortcomings to us. Ideological criticism of Orientalism is legitimate, but we should not succumb to the hegemonic diktat that the subjugated can only critique science on ideological – rather than scientific – grounds.

I agree with the criticisms of the Enlightenment made by Adorno and Horkheimer, ranging in their focus from the drive to control nature to totalitarian control in the modern state. Their criticisms are unrelated to any conceptual derivation of one thing from another, but rather revolve around two axis: *first*, the degradation of the mind by science to the status of tool in the culture of modernity, a culture that aspires to command over nature and society and limiting rationalism to thought about *means* at the expense of thinking about *ends,* through the exclusion of aims from the reign of science; and, *second*, that scientific discoveries and techniques in management have enabled the establishment of administrative institutions of command, control, surveillance, and violence within societies. These two pivotal points do not pertain to the process of inquiry itself, or the nature of the relationship between the researching and knowing subject, and her object (or research topic).

Whether we use the word "participation" to describe the activity of the scholar pursuing inquiry and research, or the word "control" with reference to the

subject of her inquiry, the result is one and the same: the goal of both "the scholar involved in the subject of his inquiry" and the scholar "commanding his subject" is to reach an understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon. Positions either for or against state policy in the application of force are a matter of moral judgments, that a science does not free scientists from making.

Heidegger's association of self with existence did not render him morally immune to supporting an extreme system of total control over human beings, their bodies and minds, to the extent that his philosophical system itself has been subjected to criticism holding it responsible for the positions of its creator. I do not agree with this view either, but there are many scholars who busy themselves with ontological issues and issues of self and existence without paying much attention to the crushing of selves by tyrannical states, where people are oppressed, imprisoned, and tortured.

Philosophy can no longer be allowed to ignore ethics and real issues of human existence, and human aims and to flee to pure ontological issues. However, with scientific theories one cannot force moral values into methodologies, as critics of scientific method might wish to do; selection of methodology and critique of existing methodologies does not exempt one from taking moral stands in our social and political life, and no critical approaches in scientific research can substitute for that.

Scientists are a group of people who believe that understanding the world is possible through science, and they may seek such understanding from a moral standpoint and for ethical purposes, or from standpoints or for purposes we might consider to be immoral, whether to consolidate control over society or to liberate society from control. The results of their research may be exploited for either moral or immoral purposes, which they may be aware of prior to starting their inquiry, such that they then bear a moral responsibility for what they are doing. I do not think that this differentiation of purposes and points of departure has any relationship with differences in scientific methodologies in terms of their interpretive power. In both cases, the scholar seeks "command" over her subject. (I assume here prior agreement with respect to the need to rid scientific methods and techniques from ethical abuses during their use, especially in the field of "human experimentation"; the ethics of scientific research are themselves undergoing constant evolution).

In general, we must distinguish between scientific truths, bearing in mind their relativity, and the need to formulate truths in such a way as to permit them to be examined and refuted, on the one hand, and the philosophical conclusions drawn from science on the other. Another distinction is required between refuting laws and theoretical scientific models and the expiration of the effectiveness of paradigms on which they have been constructed.

Much has been said on the limitations in the science of mechanics that have been discovered in the wake of theories in quantum physics, relativity, and so forth. Does this mean that mechanics has been refuted and that the truth has been rediscovered, to an extent sufficient to build an entirely new perspective on the world in its entirety? What is the meaning of the "relativity" of mechanical truth here? It signifies these truths' relative applicability. This means that the laws of mechanics hold true only in a particular area or areas, and not that they are wrong, for they remain able to scientifically predict the path of movement of objects, given the neutralization of various other different variables. It would be erroneous, however, to draw philosophical conclusions from these relative truths, thereby transforming them into a vision of the world that might seek to explain the entire world, and even the movement of ideas, as simply movements of repulsion and attraction – something that actually occurred in eighteenth century philosophy.

The discovery that mechanical laws do not apply to objects that travel at the speed of light, or to sub-atomic particles does not mean that they are wrong, but that scientific laws hold true in a particular domain. What is broken, however, is the *paradigm*, which had become a comprehensive approach protected and preserved by scientific institutions and custodians who expel from the realm those who transgress the accepted norms. The laws of movement, gravity, gas pressure and so forth all remain valid in their fields and form the basis for scientific prediction. The resulting paradigm, having come to uphold a general approach to science and shape certain institutional traditions for designating correctness and error, is liable to be broken with the discovery of new scientific laws that govern new areas and establish new theoretical foundations for understanding the old laws.

Scientific criticism of the scientific method itself is what is required to clarify its inadequacies and limitations whether the approach arises from theories in the mechanics of the natural sciences, in psychoanalysis or behaviorism, in modernization, or from other theories. How did scholars arrive at the limitations of behaviorism? This was not accomplished by moving from "control" to "participation," but rather because behaviorism proved of limited value for understanding the interaction between the self and its surroundings, treating the human psyche as a closed box to be understood simply from its external expression, insisting on considering only stimuli and reactions, while other theories in psychology and linguistics gave us new tools to explain aspects of the mind structure.

Heidegger's student Gadamer's view is that the social sciences require dialogue and participation (of and/or between) the self and the underlying meanings of social phenomena – and that for this reason human phenomena cannot be bound by a set of laws that enable prediction. This is theorizing that is analogous to the distinction between treating a living human being and dissecting a corpse. Note, however, that the same analogy that that I used here also demonstrates that both have their value and place, at certain stages. The problem lies in converting an autopsy into a paradigm – a protocol – for the treatment of the person who is ill. The same problem arises from the turning behaviorist theory into a paradigm governing psychology and social sciences in general, or the expansion of the approach of Historical Materialism into the analysis of thought and culture. *This* is the problem. These types of issues are not resolved by general pronouncements about engaging in the research with the subject of inquiry, instead of explaining and interpreting it. The political and social activism of scholars lies in their positions on moral, political, and public issues and their pursuing dialogue with human beings and understanding the other – rather than shoehorning these matters into a methodology to "enrich the dialogue" with the subject of research "as a self", thereby relieving them of the effort required to be scientifically objective and to simultaneously take principled moral stands on the problems people face and seek dialogue with the selves of human beings in the real world.

I can only deal metaphorically or figuratively with the object of research as a "self", even when analyzing a text. Unless I am writing literature, a text is not a self that can enter into a dialogue with me. It is important that I realize that a "self" wrote the text and that I work to understand the departure points and maybe the motives of this writing, as well as the culture and historical context of this self, their interests, and so on. It is important to know that I too am a self, and the person who wrote the text is a self. However, the text itself is not a self. It is a subject of inquiry and interpretation.

Third,

Interpretative (hermeneutical) methodology proposes a plurality of possibilities for interpreting written texts authored by a rational being, whether that being is supposed to be a god or human. Interpretation is thus an inquiry into the different possible purposes intended by the author of a text and the different meanings that may emerge from connotations and meanings of words – or that may be hidden by them. However, philosophical interpretation is not a method for understanding the world and the reality that surrounds us. This recalls Jacques Derrida's refusal to consider deconstruction a research methodology. I think that by "research methodology" he intended an approach to research involving trans-disciplinary techniques, insisting it is a way of thinking about "literary products"; that it applies to thinking undertaken about, or within, a specific domain.

Notwithstanding the importance of interpretation (i.e. of hermeneutics) in its domain, the domain is specific, just as it is for all other methods; turning it into a sub-cultural paradigm, as is the case with other paradigms achieving prominence in some universities, threatens its credibility. I believe there is an expansionist tendency among the proponents of this approach, manifested in the attempt to impose interpretation as if it were a complete philosophy, and to cast doubt on all other approaches that do not incorporate it, such that any scholar advocating a scientific truth or claiming a valid scientific discovery is considered an exclusivist, or someone likely to reject pluralism in society. But if we were to say that all claims to knowledge were exclusionary, then that very claim would be exclusionary. For how can those who reject definition state in a definite way that they reject definition?

With the spread of the hermeneutic approach to understanding texts and even social phenomena

it becomes necessary to underline the need to differentiate scientific from religious approaches to understanding texts, for example when justifying the multiplicity of creeds that believe in the same Creator God. I have come across attempts to anchor religious pluralism based on the variety of possible interpretations of texts. This has a basis in history for there is a relationship between the multiplicity of religious doctrines and the multiplicity of scriptural interpretations. Are the differing interpretations due to the existence of different religious doctrines, which themselves emerge for whatever political, tribal, or social reason, or did differing interpretations produce different doctrines? This is not the place to answer the question, important as it is.

As for religious tolerance of difference (something that many interpretive efforts aim at promoting), there are religious tendencies (mystical and non-mystical) and schools that accepted religious and confessional pluralism before they adopted philosophical interpretation in scholastic theology, for they considered that different paths can lead to the same divine truth, through differing ways of worship in differing confessions.

Religious truths can be relative, to hermeneutic interpretation, but religious faith itself can only be absolute. The truth of religious faith is absolute. That said, its adherents, the faithful, may well be tolerant, and accept the idea of others having faith in other absolute truths.

It is true that the method of interpretation (hermeneutics) in the reading of texts can reveal various contradictions and differing possibilities. However, the relative truths that it reveals are not *truths of faith*. In my opinion, to establish a basis for tolerance one does not need to upend truths of absolute faith or replace them with relative truths highlighting different interpretations. Tolerance is a moral position that one does not bring oneself to through the scientific method. The opposite may hold true, however: a tolerant attitude may prompt scholars to adopt hermeneutics/an interpretive approach to reading texts.

There is a difference between religious and ideological exclusionism and tolerance, on the one hand, and scientific certainty and the relativity of scientific facts on the other. In the past, the Deists were proponents of religious pluralism, finding justification in the belief that faith in religious truth is possible, but that its *imposition* is impossible, and they did not establish this position on a pluralism of method. I have shown above the importance of pluralistic approaches to understanding phenomena, but I do not think that tolerance and religious pluralism are based upon the multiplicity of interpretations, because the believer unlike the philosopher believes in one interpretation. I also believe that a person can believe that his or her religious truth is the only truth, and be nonetheless tolerant of other truths. He is not tolerant of them because they are in his view religiously correct, but because they are wrong from the perspective of his own faith. There are also people who blend these two and tolerate other faiths based on the belief that there may be innumerable paths to the same divine religious truth, or because they believe their own religious truth is relative; however, this represents an uncommon type of philosophical religiosity, one that subordinates faith to reason.

Interpretation is an attempt to understand by going beyond external indications given to us by other selves, to the inner depths of the human soul and the meaning behind the surface, through differentiating meaning and significance. My problem here is that there is not enough distinction between interpretation of religious scripture and interpretation as a method of understanding social phenomena, texts, and other related objects/matters.

The issue of method is not an ontological issue associated with a supposed link between subject and object, and it certainly is not an issue that is resolved by an epistemological assumption of unity between the two. Even when Quantum Physics established a correlation between measurement, instruments of measurement, and the subject measured, at the end of the day it dealt with these matters as a knowing self that is consciously aware of the limitations of theoretical models in reflecting reality, or in describing reality as it exists outside of our perception of it, but simply interpreting it. That said, scientific interpretations are not merely meditations, since they are established the basis of theoretical models. Some of these theoretical models are simply explanatory, whereas some are tantamount to laws that enable people to produce techniques and deal with reality based on tools that generate predictable (or highly probable) outcomes to realize a benefit or induce harm – and in many instances inducing harm is actually the "benefit" that is sought.

Fourth,

In my research I have found it useful to distinguish epistemologically between theoretical analysis and construction on the one hand, and historical analysis and construction, on the other – in spite of their dialectical relationship and overlap. That is to say, departing from a recognition of this relationship as a given, during the research it turns out that differentiating them is useful, because each one follows different rules for induction and derivation. What do I mean? When we approach a social phenomenon (and every social phenomenon is a historical phenomenon, in the sense that it is historically emergent and historically transformed) we often try to arrive through the analysis at the simplest constituent component of the phenomenon that distinguishes it from other phenomena. I consider this simple element to be the phenomenon's differentiating formative component. Some may consider it its "essence." This debate on essence or substance may be useful in discussing philosophical, literary, and artistic creativity. However, I don't see that it can be useful in understanding social phenomena, nor really even in the analysis of literature, art, and philosophy when these are dealt with as social phenomena.

We can see the simplest illustration of this distinction in the clear divergence between the analysis and synthesis we find in logic, mathematics, statistics, etc. involving simple or complex abstractions (and they are all abstract generalizations) on the one hand, and the analysis of a *specific* social phenomenon – in which observation and data collection are incorporated to more clearly delineate the precise phenomenon in question – on the other. In dealing with collected data, the inference does not derive generalizations from other generalizations, but in drawing generalizations from the particular and specific to the general and more abstract, so that I can return later to theoretically reconstruct the phenomenon by means of generalizations previously abstracted from the particulars. The movement of analysis in research is from the concrete given phenomenon to the general abstract and then, back to reconstruct the complex, and concrete, revealing the recurrent structure of the phenomenon in the more specific iterations of it. This is the conceptual model represented in *the concept*. The logical transition from the general to particular and from simple to complex is movement in the realm of generalizations, because it moves from one term to another and from one concept to another.

The conceptual challenge, however, lies in differentiating particular phenomena and rooting them in conceptual categories such that they become abstract ideas, and recognizing the need to distinguish these categories *created in my mind* from the relationship between *phenomena at large* on the one hand and *components of the single phenomenon under study*, on the other. Thus, the *theoretical concept of the phenomenon*, *theoretically storing* or embodying the phenomenon's structure, arises in the very process of its theoretical formation. I must be wary of understanding the phenomenon as merely a derivative of abstract terms, phrases, and categories. However, it will be incumbent upon me to go back every time to examine and re-examine this derivation: holding it against historical-social facts and processes in reality, neither pre-selecting certain facts to prove the validity of the derivation, nor ignoring others that do not accord with what has become something of a theoretical model.

This simple initial distinction is very important methodologically. Based on my limited experience it is applicable, in every theory I have come to deal with through my research, to the relationship of the theory with the reality it interprets. Having virtually reached the point of forming a theoretical model, a risk arises of slipping into considering the process of deriving generalizations from previous generalizations and one abstract idea from another to be a process of narration *of the story and/or of the process of reality itself*.

I have benefited from reading Hegel's *Science of Logic*, a book in which he did not attempt to formulate an alternative to formal logic, contrary to the belief of some of those who found fault with it on the basis that is was a kind of transcendentalist, "head in the clouds" metaphysics. Rather, Hegel devised a method of understanding evolution based on the assumption of a "logical" structure for the world – that is, rational and open to being understood through reason (an assumption that Spinoza and Leibniz held in common, each in their own way, before his time). Accordingly, Hegel explains evolution by the movement from one unit to another, more elevated, or from the general to the specific and from the abstract to the concrete. This is not through exclusion of contradiction, as in formal logic, but rather through recognition of unity and contradiction, amid identity and difference, as an explanation describing development through

dissolving an existing unity and re-enveloping its elements on a higher, more complex unit – and from that point analyzing existing contradictions in nature and society, and in the fundamental evolution of reason in history.

In his other works on the history of philosophy, on the philosophy of religion, and on the philosophy of history, this theoretical model (whose dialectical method I still consider useful in sharpening thought) was transformed into the story of world history and the history of ideas; understanding this history, from this perspective, has become possible through considering its stages as embodiments of the terminology of the science of logic itself; through the transition from the general to the specific, from the essence to the form, from the subjective to the objective to the absolute and in the unity of the subject and object turn transformed into a purpose of history, history pulled by its own internal logic to arrive at an absolute, rational end.

Karl Marx's *Capital* made an attempt to apply Hegel's logic to the understanding of social development, but the presentation served to mislead an ideologist and political leader like Lenin into thinking it was simply a matter of inverting Hegel's logic, in such a way as to maintain the unity of the logical (meaning here *Hegel*'s logic, that is the logic of the *rational mind*, in other words *theoretical thought*) and the historical. Lenin's assertion of this unity was in the service of another ideology that seeks another end to the world and history; that is, it seeks a teleological metaphysical end that is inherent and pre-existing within the core of the laws of the historical-social dialectic.

In his research on the emergence of the capitalist system and its internal dynamics that drive its development and Marx's attempt to formulate what he considered to be its "laws", such as those of value, division of labor and surplus value, Marx concluded that the main component, or the core constituent cell of the capitalist system, the cornerstone of its structure, is *the commodity*. It is the general idea from which one can derive the concept of capital in a theoretical model. Analyzing commodity as the embodiment of social exchange in the market, Marx then tried to theoretically derive from it the concept of capital, following in the footsteps of Hegel's *Science of Logic* – a book in which Hegel established a complete logical structure of existence including creation, process, substance, identity, difference, and contradiction – just as an entire structure of mathematics may be derived from three or four axiomatic principles that form the basis of the whole.

This, then, is the logic of presentation of Karl Marx's theoretical model: production of the concept of capital as derived from the concept of commodity. However, the historical pre-condition of the capitalist system that Marx identified is the emergence of *wage labor*, which together with capital historically distinguishes the capitalist system from other economic systems. Commodities existed before the capitalist system and before they became disseminated by it, but the capitalist system transformed the commodification of everything into its internal logic. Over the course of his exposition in a number of chapters of *Capital* Marx returns to examine topics such as the emergence of wage labor in the historical separation between labor and property, rise of the bourgeoisie, migration from countryside to city and the collapse of agricultural relations and European feudalism.

What then is the problem here? A misconception has arisen that Marx's theory is purely a derivation of the concept of capital from the concept of commodity, with the latter conceived of as the embodiment of a relationship of economic exchange. However, this derivation is not logically possible by means of theory alone, since the theory's author resorted to historical analysis and had to rely on an exposition of the historical conditions of the phenomenon, conditions impossible to arrive at by means of derivation. Although in Marx's presentation of the theoretical model the derivation of capital from commodity appears to be itself a reflection of a historical process, it is actually a *theoretica*l process, not one that is temporal or time-based, and it is founded on *prior* historical analysis.

There is a role for the theoretical model in differentiating our understanding of capital and deriving the "law" of surplus value from the value "law" that defines the exchange value of commodities by labor time invested in them, distinguishing their use value from their exchange value. However, what is *theoretically* sequential or consecutive should not be understood as a *historical* process or as if it parallels a sequence of historical phases. There are some elements of myth in such a correspondence between historical sequence and theoretical sequence, because

myth also explains phenomena through narrative. The narration reveals the "meaning" by a sequence of events. All popular cultures enjoy "explanations" of this type, and they have been incorporated into almost all religions.

Theorists of the social contract also relied on theoretical models to derive the notion of the state from the idea of the contract. This is a derivation of an idea from an idea, rather than a generalization from historical facts. Through a rational analysis of the actual situation and the prevailing ideas they encountered in seventeenth century societies and their own ideological assumptions, they arrived at twin notions of the social contract and the human individual. They then derived the concept of the state, theoretically, from the concept of the contract between individuals, to accomplish an envisaged transformation from a "state of nature" to the civil state – both theoretical, mental notions. This was accomplished through a theoretical synthesis that could not have been done without recourse to forced generalizations drawn from human motivations such as pleasure, fear of death, love, desire for recognition, free will, and so forth.

The theoretical model and its consequences would have been completely different, however, if the first constituent component had been groups or communities, rather than individuals, and if the state had been theoretically derived from a dynamic observed within an existing community, or from a contract between solidarity groups. Such a theoretical assumption would have been closer to historical reality than starting with independent individuals. However, starting with the individual as an analytical unit, or from individuals in a state of nature, is the outcome of an ideological perspective *in the mind of the researcher*. This theoretical model, when presented in books, seems then to be a historical sequence, a story.

This is also reminiscent of what took place in psychoanalysis with the derivation of religion from murder of the father. The derivation of this theoretical model seemed as if it were a historical narrative, because the structure of its presentation bore resemblance to the structure of myth and actually-used myths. Almost every myth is a tale that narrates the story of a phenomenon.

When we analyze a phenomenon and arrive at a generalization regarding a fundamental relationship between variables differentiating it from others, the return to the construction of the phenomenon is in this sense a *theoretical* return, but it is *not possible,* in purely theoretical terms. It is impossible to construct it through deduction, as it will be necessary to return constantly to the historical context and historical facts. Going back to those requires methodologies. Methods.

Final Remarks

In sum, what we would call "a method" in the humanities and social sciences is an analytical approach associated with theories. The topic worthy of our attention in our cultural context is not a discussion of techniques, which like technology, statistics, mathematics, and so forth are instruments that can be used and developed in the context of any civilization. What is required in terms of development of method, or methodology, is a concern with theory in the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the societies we study. Most of the theories (read "methods") in the humanities and social sciences have developed at different stages of time, and in places, cultural contexts, or through studies of other societies than those that we aspire to study and address. No doubt it can be useful to employ them in research if they are subjected to objective and pointed criticism during this process. But the challenge is producing methods of research, i.e. theories, that are more capable of explaining social phenomena than ready-made "imported" theories and methodological approaches. The challenge is not only criticizing, but also creating science.