Subjectivity

Subjectivity is a central philosophical concept, related to consciousness, agency, personhood, reality, and truth, which has been variously defined by sources. Three common definitions include that subjectivity is the quality or condition of:

- Something being a *subject*, narrowly meaning an individual who possesses conscious experiences, such as perspectives, feelings, beliefs, and desires.[1]
- Something being a *subject*, broadly meaning an entity that has agency, meaning that it acts upon or wields power over some other entity (an *object*).[2]
- Some information, idea, situation, or physical thing considered true only from the perspective of a subject or subjects.

These various definitions of subjectivity are sometimes joined together in philosophy. The term is most commonly used as an explanation for that which influences, informs, and biases people's judgments about truth or reality; it is the collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, and personal or cultural understanding of, and beliefs about, an external phenomenon, that are specific to a subject.

Subjectivity is contrasted to the philosophy of objectivity, which is described as a view of truth or reality that is free of any individual's biases, interpretations, feelings, and imaginings.[1]

Contents

Philosophy

The rise of the notion of subjectivity has its philosophical roots in the thinking of Descartes and Kant, and its articulation throughout the modern era has depended on the understanding of what constitutes an individual. There have been various interpretations of such concepts as the self and the soul, and the identity or self-consciousness which lies at the root of the notion of subjectivity.[3]

Subjectivity is, for instance, frequently the implicit topic of existentialism, Sartre as one of its main proponents emphasizing subjectivity in his phenomenology.[4] Unlike his colleague Merleau-Ponty, Sartre believed that, even within the material force of human society, the ego was an essentially transcendent being- posited, for instance, in his opus *Being and Nothingness* through his arguments about the 'being-for-others' and the 'for-itself' (i.e., an objective and subjective human being).

The innermost core of *subjectivity* resides in a unique act of what Fichte called "self-positing", where each subject is a point of absolute autonomy, which means that it cannot be reduced to a moment in the network of causes and effects.[5]

Sociology

Subjectivity is an inherently social mode that comes about through innumerable interactions within society. As much as subjectivity is a process of individuation, it is equally a process of socialization, the individual never being isolated in a self-contained environment, but endlessly engaging in interaction with the surrounding world. Culture is a living totality of the subjectivity of any given society constantly undergoing transformation.[6] Subjectivity is both shaped by it and shapes it in turn, but also by other things like the economy, political institutions, communities, as well as the natural world.

Though the boundaries of societies and their cultures are indefinable and arbitrary, the subjectivity inherent in each one is palatable and can be recognized as distinct from others. Subjectivity is in part a particular experience or organization of reality, which includes how one views and interacts with humanity, objects, consciousness, and nature, so the difference between different cultures brings about an alternate experience of existence that forms life in a different manner. A common effect on an individual of this disjunction between subjectivities is culture shock, where the subjectivity of the other culture is considered alien and possibly incomprehensible or even hostile.

Political subjectivity is an emerging concept in social sciences and humanities.[2] Political subjectivity is a reference to the deep embeddedness of subjectivity in the socially intertwined systems of power and meaning. "Politicality," writes Sadeq Rahimi (http://artsandscience.usask.ca/profile/SRahimi) in *Meaning, Madness and Political Subjectivity (http://www.routledgementalhealth.com/books/details/9781138840829/)*, "is not an added aspect of the subject, but indeed the mode of being of the subject, that is, precisely what the subject *is*."[7]

See also

- Dogma
- Intersubjectivity
- Phenomenology (philosophy)
- Phenomenology (psychology)
- Political subjectivity
- Q methodology
- Subject (philosophy)
- *Truth is Subjectivity*, an existential interpretation of subjectivity by Søren Kierkegaard

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baptized "self-positing." Here, each subject is a point of absolute autonomy, which means that it cannot be reduce to a moment in the network of causes and effects."

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