

Sacred Journey: The Humanities and Social Sciences Paradigms - An Integrated Methodology

A summary, while referring to *Carry Forth the Story* (2017) for greater depth of discussion.

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Using the Tools of the Disciplines: While the disciplines and approaches of the humanities and the social sciences each seek to understand and appreciate the human condition, they rely on contrasting ways of knowing and methodologies to do so. What distinguishes the humanities from the social sciences, for example, is not so much a subject matter, but rather the mode of approach to any given question. Both, for example, could study and explore the meaning of a “rite of passage,” but do so using different research tools, seeking answers to different sorts of questions, and presenting their findings using differing styles.

The **social sciences paradigm** (2017:125-26, 159-70) is embedded within the scientific paradigm, ontologically premised on critical principles tracing back to Aristotelian Materialism (to Aristotle of the 4th Century BC), and to the Cartesian Dualism (René Descartes of the 17th Century). Science uses the tools of empirical induction and rational deduction, based upon objectivity, with formally accepted standardized styles of texts and categories, applying such legitimizing tests as reliability and external/internal validity, with the goal of replicating phenomena and generating new knowledge, for pure and applied scientific purposes. The world studied is a world as if behind a “glass pane,” with an independent observer on one side and the empirical, observable reality on the other. Often asks questions relating to the role and function of something, what that something does socially, economically and/or psychologically.

As a branch of science, social sciences research emphasizes empirical methods that seek to explain causality of events. This method can be expressed in either a quantitative design, which approaches social phenomena through quantifiable evidence, often relying on statistical analysis to create valid and reliable claims, or in a qualitative design, which emphasizes understanding of social phenomena through direct observation, communication with participants, or analysis of texts, and may stress contextual and subjective accuracy over generality. May seek relationships between dependent and independent variables, and the frequency with which the variables occur in a social setting. The disciplines of social sciences often include archaeology and physical anthropology, economics, education, geography, history, Law, linguistics, political science, public administration, psychology and sociology.

The **humanities paradigm** (2017:125-30) applies an interpretative method to understand meaning and purpose. The humanities can be traced back to the playwrighting and poetry of Shakespeare and personal essay and memoir writing of Montaigne, both of the 16th Century. The humanities embrace a modified ontological Cartesian Dualism premise and substitutes the role of material reductionism and objectivity with an emphasis on the role of human imagination and reflexivity, resulting in the subject and object tending to become interwoven and indistinguishable. There are cracks in the “glass pane.” While not a black and white distinction, the interpretative methodologies of the humanities disciplines are thus typically distinguished from the positivist and empirical methodologies of the natural and social science disciplines, and the creative and imaginative endeavors of the arts. Such interpretative methodologies, for example, include hermeneutics, literary criticism, phenomenology, and in the discipline of ethnography, “thick description.” The legitimizing tests in the humanities include such

criteria as authenticity and trustworthiness. The humanities disciplines often include cultural anthropology/ethnography, communications studies, cultural studies (such as American Studies, International Studies, American Indian Studies, Religious Studies, Women's Studies); they include the languages, law, literature, history, philosophy; and they include the reflection and theory in creative writing, in the performing arts of music, dance and theatre, and the reflection and theory in the visual arts of painting, sculpting and architecture.

To “interpret” certainly seeks to render something meaningful and understandable, serving to inform, enlighten, instruct. Likely first expressed in the 14th century Middle English, “interpret” is derived from the Latin, *interpretārī* – “someone who serves as an agent, a negotiator.” Hence, to interpret certainly seeks to (1) generate new knowledge, rendering something meaningful, be it culturally or historically distant, be it something more immediate but veiled in some fashion. But to interpret also seeks to (2) render that knowledge accessible, applicable, relevant, that is, linking and integrating. Indeed, “negotiating” known and knower. Indeed, an element of rendering knowledge empathic, of projecting the knower into the known! To successfully interpret is to successfully be self reflexive.

The Idaho Humanities Council states that “through [the] study [of the humanities it seeks to] yield wisdom.” Wisdom is that deep understanding that goes beyond knowing; to thicken and extend our understandings; to apply; to engage that knowledge in civic life, both locally and globally; to address the challenges faced by humanity; to take up the “big questions.” The humanities enable us to reflect upon our personal lives and ask fundamental questions of value, purpose, and meaning in a rigorous and systematic way.

<p>Social Sciences:</p> <p>compartmentalized segments of discrete material objects, made up of independent and dependent variables</p> <p><u>the glass pane of objectivity</u></p> <p>logical reasoning (deductive methods)</p> <p>standardized empiricism (inductive method)</p> <p>tests of validity and reliability, with skepticism</p> <p>formal, objective style of presentation</p> <p>seeks new knowledge that can be generalized</p> <p>asks questions of what something “does,” e.g., its social, economic and/or psychological role and function</p>	<p>Humanities:</p> <p>holistic and “big picture” (not compartmentalized and reductionist)</p> <p><u>cracks and holes in the glass pane</u></p> <p>interpretive (not analytical)</p> <p>tests of authenticity and trustworthiness</p> <p>narrative style of presentation (not formal, objective)</p> <p>seeks wisdom (not knowledge per se), e.g., “thick description”</p> <p>asks questions about larger, “big picture” meanings of something, e.g., with focus on philosophical, moral and ethical meaning, and personal responsibility</p>
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Sciences: seeks to formulate precise descriptions of the physical reality to generate new knowledge. Questions of role and function. $A^2=B^2=C^2$

Humanities: seeks to “suspend disbelief,” and through the “experiential imagination,” identify and describe “wisdom truths.” Questions of moral and philosophical meaning, and personal responsibility.

Importance and Role of Integration: In this seminar and in fact throughout your educational pursuits, you will be presented with an array of multiple and diverse perspectives and worldviews, along with distinct and differing methodological and epistemological specializations, such as those brought to bear through the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. And in addition, as in any academic endeavor there can also develop a disconnection and schism between your academic pursuits and your social and personal life as engaged outside the classroom. It is thus especially important that in a seminar such as the Sacred Journey you also acquire skills in *integration* and *interdisciplinary cohesion*. Out of the potential chaos and contradictions of diversity can arise a larger inclusive unity, as well as ability to better think and act critically and creatively, and, in turn, problem solve.

In this seminar we are using an integration model entitled, “*Sailing the Four C’s*.” It entails *Compartmentalization* (acknowledging and distinguishing the epistemological and methodological differentiation of the humanities and social science tools), *Context* (distinguishing the diverse and differential cultural, historical, intellectual and social environments, as well as the differential levels within an given environment; in other words appreciating and distinguishing the rich diversity in the human condition), *Competency* (in knowing the distinct epistemological and methodological tools, and when and in what specific contexts to apply those tools), and *Connection* (applying the multiple tools to differentiated contexts to make connections, see the “bigger picture,” address issues, and problem solve).

We seek to develop and utilize a most adaptive approach to integrating multiple disciplines and diverse perspectives, and in so doing, attempt to address life’s challenges. Critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving all depend on your ability to both think divergently – compartmentalizing and seeing the rich diversity and multiplicity in the human experience – as well as to think convergently – integrating and connecting that rich diversity in new and novel ways. And we just might consider Tom Yellowtail’s Rock Medicine Wheel (Wagon Wheel with its hub and spokes) to help us along the road of integration.