Cognition Sociology in Germany with Self-Interest Viewpoint

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**A B S T R A C T**

Cognition is understanding and perception. Social cognitions understand this point that epistemologies study is not an individual issue, but it reflects social affairs in its individual cognitions. Cognition sociology relates history of thoughts and the way of historical evolution of thoughts in epistemology aspect at societies. Cognition sociology had growth and progress in different countries. Cognition sociology in Germany includes structuralism and self-interest viewpoints. In this paper, second viewpoint is investigated. This paper examines the relationship between social cognitions and political ideas. The question here is that how social cognitions form the political ideas? The hypothesis is including the social cognitions cause formation of political ideas via social interests. The information required is gathered by library method and they were analyzed by help of constructivism method.

**INTRODUCTION**

The questions propounded here are including: what is the main political idea? What is cognition and how it is created? What is social cognition? What does the cognition sociology mean? In respond, it can be said that idea is a social issue which is formed in public relations and thought embraces personal viewpoints. The idea is historical product of thoughts. The idea is applied for explaining events and behaviors of individuals [11]. Idea is objectively and it is normally internal. The political idea is not seeking agent, while political thought separates the political philosophy and seeks agent. Cognition means understanding and perception of something. Social condition determines the thought. Social cognitions play role in social facts. Social cognitions are constructed of the way of speaking and thinking of individuals about reality. The way of speaking from one side forms cognition of individuals from reality and on the other hand, they make a special discourse about that. Therefore, the facts are not dependent issues, but they appear in the framework of our cognitions. The knowledge which refers to study of relations between thinking and society, in other words, they relate the studied ideas to social-historical contexts in a way that these ideas are the product and extracted from that is called cognition sociology.

2. **Constructivism school:**

The “Constructivism” viewpoint is in the framework of methodological approaches in sociology, psychology and international relations. In constructivism theory framework, two elements are majorly emphasized: believes which cause creation of meaning; knowledge which causes creation of norm. Meanwhile, it should be considered that believes can also produce some norms during the process of meaning creation.

In constructivism, the knowledge is intensively normative and is formed based on a series of values and the belief connects to meaning. In experimental thinking, first the knowledge and then the human mind are created proportioned to the world. However, in constructivism, first the human’s mind toward the world is created and then the knowledge is formed. Thus, cognition of knowledge means sole representation of reality. According to this, the knowledge is not definite and critically there is no pure issue [4]. In constructivism, believes form the meaning, because the belief to this formation is for that constructivism separates itself from positivism. Moreover, positivism doesn’t deal to accept belief and value in the issue of cognition. In other words, in positivism, the belief and value are looked like a problem, while constructivism looks at belief and value as a reality. The value has an objective concept proportioned to the past and is related to our method of viewing the world. As we enter a value, we make reality based on the same value.
According to the constructivism approach, human activities do not solely evolve the physical environment, but they also form the social relations of social structures and institutes and more important than that they are constructor of social reality. This reality is composed based on way of speaking and thinking of individuals about reality. Construction of reality means its significance. Constructivism investigates the methods of having the meaning and producing the reality and reproduction of that. However, in constructivism just construction of reality is not considered, but the way of understanding the social reality and its reproduction is also considered. Besides, it should be considered that reality is being constructed continuously.

3. Cognition sociology:

The cognition sociology is a theory about knowledge that here refers to two issues: the mind that understands the world; the objects which are cause to cognition out of mind. Cognition sociology is originated from two critical flows of European thinking in 19th century: the Marxist tradition in Germany and Durkheim tradition in France. Most theoreticians start their work from the two mentioned schools. The pragmatism and social behaviorism tradition in US shall be assumed as the third axis affecting the growth and development of cognition sociology [1]. Cognition sociology had growth and progress in different countries including Germany, France, UK, Italy and US. The thinkers of this school in Germany were including: Marx [10], Scheler, Weber [13] and Mannheim [9]. This paper refers to investigate the viewpoints of Weber and Mannheim in creation of political ideas from social cognitions.


Weber [13] was from the German Protestants’ generation which before entering the university had great information on Marx, Goethe, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Humer, Cicero and Niche. He believed that there is a sphere in society and history belonging to ideas which has existential reality which we, the humans can share, but no matter how strong the ideas are in their sphere; they are weak in their life of social reality. For this, when they are willing to show off in the world of social realities, they are required to unite with vital interests and to get along with elite groups and enter the history coupled with them to be generalized and legitimated. Weber believes that the content of awareness is different from a historical period to another and from a society to another and these differences cause the form of issues creating discipline in the content of awareness to evolve. He believes that human is always acting in the society with thinking and his actions are targeted [13].

The ability to understand and perceive before action rises from Weber’s ontology. In other words, verstehen perception most important source of cognition is Weber’s thesis. The opinion of Weber [13], awareness in the process of verstehen is extracted from the organizational form of authority that the people live in and also it raises from the perception that people confront in different situations. Weber with a criticism view on Marx’s tradition in which Marx emphasized on materialistic perception of the history, emphasized on dialectical method between objective and subjective parts and he finds a relation between economic system, ethics and cognition at each society [14]. Weber [13] with his interpretive sociology stands against one way causal determination in human studies next to Dilthey [2]. According to this, he evaluates the Marxist determination of objective productions and human act by “economic basis” and in return he believes in mutual influence of two independent material and objective spaces. With taking influence from Marx and Niche, he believes that not the ideas, but material and ideal interests manage the human behavior directly. However, mostly some imaginations of the world that are created by ideas determine to which practical path the human interests shall lead dynamically.

Weber [13] who distinguishes four types of value, traditional, charismatic and rational actions and authorities, believes that no social reality would rise from value action, but two origins of social awareness exist in formations of traditional and rational authorities. He also believes that the issue of human understands is dependent to the form of economic structure of the society they live in. From Weber’s point of view, human’s production and awareness are coupled and in all mutual actions of humans, the inter-subjective deductions are formed based on relationship between senses and Ratio [13].

Weber [13], who has taken his epistemology basis in its sociological investigation from Kantianism, has helped development of cognition sociology in several ways. First, he introduces the principle of favorable conditions and facilities for description of cognitive-social relations. Second, he emphasizes on hermeneutics and inferential state of cognitive-social flows. Third, it emphasizes on permanent secularity and rationality of emotional, social and cognitive relations inside the human life in determination of cognitive-social flows and emotional deposit phenomenon coupled with them. Fourth, it propounds special economic mood or type of inter-world austerity based on analysis of causes and analysis of public relations in economic and religious sociology fields.

Some believe that whether in the meaning of empathy or by the meaning of revitalizing real experiences the sociology or other adjacent sciences can be founded based on intuition. It means; unmediated cognition of other via a kind of inter-projection in their real experiences. The objection of Weber on this method is that intuition is
from emotion and for this it is not a scientific cognition, because such cognition not only requires preparation and construction of a conceptual base, but also it requires these notions to be precise too. Intuition never conforms to the endless evolution of reality, because in its place, it appoints. Whatever the role of intuition will be, the real experience as personal experience is never accepted as a scientific cognition. It can become a scientific cognition providing that it provides ordinary requirements for conceptual transformation, proceeding and other test methods [3]. Regarding the relation of intuition with theories, it can be said that intuition is via self. The rational, imagination and sensation powers are under control of self. We have sense and wisdom but without sensation, they are all nothing.

In Weber’s opinion, diverse steps of conscious and social existence select each other and they combine in this selection. In other words, what is propounded in the society as our cognitions are parts of instants, reflections and emergence for domination of idea. From his point of view, whenever in the society and human history, there are power and interest, the ideas become important. Weber [13] talks about different ways in which social action happens regularly, in this way, what Weber calls application is the same ideal type of regular action which is considered a natural state for actual existence and continuous action of a social group; while the custom is applied when the respective action has the customary relatively stable foundation. Against these two, Weber propounds a third type, which means action determined via personal interest which is guaranteeing action of group repeated tool rationality in which the behavior of actors has been oriented toward homogeneous expectations as a tool [13].


Mannheim [8] by general adherence to the European way of thinking, from Kant [7] to Hegel [5] and Marx [10], accepts existence of realities of society and history and their cognitive state and refers to determining the determination of cognitions. Before him, Aristotelian formal logic or Bacon’s new scientific organ by reliance on analogy and modern logic by emphasis on inductions for inefficiency of thinking which was known the result of uneducated state of wisdom in proper thinking and for this like Descartes they had proposed the proper method of applying wisdom. The west epistemology from Democritus to Plato and Aristotle to Hume and Kant also had introduced the uncertainty of human thought resulting from lack of sufficient experience of thinking in cognition of realities. However, Mannheim following Marx focused his attention to society and history. The main policy of is realizing cognition dependent to society, in a way that it approaches our cognition to participation in theoretical and social practical living. The critical leader for the path of studies of Mannheim is the point that any cognition borne and evolve in certain social space and for this, it is continuously it is dependent to certain interest and this interest is also bound to concrete certain social and historical state which is originated from primordial connection of subjects in the society and this origin itself at last indicate the existential dependence of thinking to social existence.

First, Mannheim takes efforts to refer the imaginations and awareness available in the society to layers and groups which are in fact creator of these rational creations. From his view, the layer or social group who are the agent and result of stream of consciousness are the wise men or intellectuals. In the second step, he focuses consciousness to social existence. Mannheim has stepped on Marx’s shoes in a way that the existence in the mind of Mannheim is the nature of experience lived and reasoned in human life instead of the material and economic existence of Marx. Marx [10] believes that the same humans building their material production relations in their special social state, they will also create principle of believes, ideas and special categories of these social relations.

From the epistemology corner of view, when the subject tries to know the object, inevitably it does this cognition action by the ability of legal nature of human wisdom [7]. Studies from Marx to Mannheim indicate that during the process of objectification of subjectivity and subjectification of objectivity [5] not only the state of informative data interfere in the system of our mind, but also it also influences the rate of interest of our existential system in the framework of certain historical and social relations. With creation of capitalism and emergence of criticism philosophy of Kant and Hegel, cognition is implied the product of interaction between subject and object or thinking and material.

Regarding the Ontology, Mannheim believes that existential state would also indicate the way of creation of the history of thoughts and it is also constructor of thinking results. He believes that the certain group or social class which practically fulfills the existential connection in different societies is intellectuals. From the view of Mannheim, the intellectual classes can establish a general view of the total social process and create the political co-institutionalization based on their social awareness.

Mannheim in the book “Idea and Utopia”, describes the main issue of cognition sociology as: there are some thinking methods and only the human being is capable of thinking. The ideas and emotions can only be explained appropriately just based on the life experience of that person. Cognition sociology realizes the thinking and thought based on its historical concrete situation. Thus, this is neither the humans who generally think and nor the separate individuals who prepare the thought, but this is humans in certain groups who develop a special thinking style in an endless series of reactions against special situations. From Mannheim’s point of
view, cognition sociology refers to the role of intellectuals in social evolution. The opinion of Mannheim, the elites control everything: they are the ones taking decisions on the content of cognition, way of production and methods of investigating that. Also, they determine and specify the general framework for all ideological and Utopia discussions in the territory of policy by connecting members of thinking elites to other social layers as the representatives of their interests in the world of thoughts [9].

The investigation center for Mannheim is ideology and cognition sociology is the tool via which the ideologies are investigated. Definition of Mannheim from ideology is a realization of cognition as distorted cognition and it tries to cover the new realities. From the Mannheim’s view, the values place in social groups. Ideologies are the belief having positive valuation toward the existing social system and the interests of groups within that. Ideology is description of the thought of social specific groups; various political valuations are based on foundation of interests and values of special social groups.

Mannheim [8] believes that social system causes creation of ideas. From his point of view, ideology is the thought determined socially. The truth is ideas proportioned to special step of historical evolution. Mannheim believes that we consider the idea from inside as the idea looks like; the idea phenomenon in Husserl’s opinion [6]. Whenever the same idea is observed from outside and from its social existence reference, it is revealed for us as an ideology. As far as Mannheim can see, principally cognition is a collective cognition and individual cognition is solely special form of its further evolution. He propounds the concept of action in some cognitive fields. From the very beginning, cognition is one of the cooperative processes of group life in which each person reveals its cognition in the framework of a common destiny, common activity and along domination on common difficulties [8].

Mannheim was seeing the place of interests in a kind of social gathering which means in the economic class; finding the mutual relations between the existing thinking styles in the infrastructure of a viewpoint and thinking motivation of a certain social group. With relief from the concept of class, it connects the thinking style to social layers. The mean by thinking layer is a group of people belonging to a certain social unit.

In comparing the view of Kant and Mannheim, it can be said that the traditional issue that Kant established in questioning the possibility of scientific cognition of this thought was the point that such cognition is not only dependent to the existential situation of thinking, but to the way and method of presenting that which means its logic structure and provability. However, in Mannheim’s opinion, the concepts of cognition and truth are related to the situate they exist in.

In investigating the thoughts of Mannheim, it can be said that: the existential connection of thinking is principally from Marxists and it was first propounded by Feuerbach, Marx and Engels [10]. The Marxist principal of the existential connection of thinking and cognition for Mannheim are transformed to the primordial connection of thinking; in Mannheim’s epistemology sociology, cognition is always conducted selectively and this selection is determined by special historical and social state of each certain group or layer and or class in a special society; by imitating Marx, Mannheim puts the social station of his thought on the same class station. Although he mentioned dignity of certain groups, he overshadows the role of social class; in the opinions of Mannheim, the concepts of situation and interests which he has taken from Weber are replaced for the class interest issue. The social class considered by Marx steps back for the concept of origin; in the opinion of Marx, capitalism and type of its productive relations, class state of society, inappropriate division of social work and emergence of alienation have caused inversion of thinking and creation of wrong awareness and ideology, that is why by the opinion of Mannheim [9] the type of structures and functions of societies and specific cultural state of people are considered as the major element for creation of wrong awareness, ideology and Utopia. In other words, Marx emphasizes on the infrastructure, but Mannheim on the Superstructure; in expressing the constructive role, Mannheim valorizes the intellectual layer and he has followed the unity theory of Proletarian and the intellectuals.

In criticizing the opinions of Mannheim it can be said that the concept of clairvoyance is perception and cognition of realities without reliance on prefabricated principles and traditions which has lost their reality indicating value. The mean by intellectualism is perception and cognition of now and future realities and seeking along fulfillment of real ideals of the society. The real intellectual is the one who has rationally regulated its relation to the time realities, by proper perception of causes, effects, constants and variables. In order to fulfill rational life, the society feels a mission. The intellectual subjectivity is including the cognition and perception of realities in the ring of past, present and future events along reaching to rational life which is necessity for the individual and society.

5. Conclusion:

Understanding and verstehen perception are the most important origin of cognition by Weber; Weber emphasizes on opportunities, verstehen and rationalization of value relations in explanation of relations and social-cognitive flows. He believes on existence of relation between economic system and cognition in the society. The opinion of Weber, when there are power and interest in the society and human history, the ideas become important. He finds the human cognition in interaction and inter-subjective state in closeness of sense
and wisdom. From his view, the ideas are thinking requirements which have fulfilled and became effective experimentally in humans during history. In the discussion of interests and the relation of political ideas with social cognitions it can be said that Weber finds the importance of ideas beside the power and interest. From his view, cognition is dependent to dominant values. In cognition sociology we are led toward relations between action, cognition and domination.

From Mannheim’s view, any cognition in born and evolves in certain social space. For this, cognition is dependent to interests, social condition of primordial connection and social existence. The cognitions are always conducted selectively and this selection is determined by special historical and social state of each certain group or layer and class in society. The intentions, motivations, prejudices, imaginations, seeking advantages and seeking points are involved in connection seeking. In his opinion, the social layers and groups (intellectuals) are the agent and carrier of cognition flow. Mannheim realizes the dynamicity required in confronting social issues the motivation for thinking. Creation of human thoughts depends on governmental and productive relations. In the back of theoretical changes always the worldview and social evolutions related to them are moving. The opinion of Mannheim, the social system causes creation of ideas. He realizes connection between thought from one side and economic interests and the insight of social groups and classes on the other side. He refers to the role of competition and generation in forming the subjective structures. Mannheim also believes that various thinking styles are combined and carried by the intellectuals free of classes as a process. He confines his cognition to historical, political and cultural issues. In From the view of Mannheim, existential correlation exists between object and subject. Social cognition is the effect of special social situation. Social relations affect the thinking.

Mannheim realizes the set of living factors involved in thinking. In his opinion, the ideas are resulting from historical situation and dependent to the place and situation in the social structure and historical process. From his point of view, social cognition is made of social structure. For this, social situation affects the awareness of parties and groups during the history. A theory or thinking movement refers the interests, wishes and specifications of social groups, classes and forces from one side and the process of historical evolution of structural situation from the other side. Mannheim related the ideas to their social fabrics. The Mannheim’s approach can be realized like Weber’s. He found the position of interests in the economic class; the thinking style has mutual relation to the infrastructure and thinking motivation of the social group and layer. The systems of values are conceptualized based on their functions in the social group.

REFERENCES