

**PROBLEMS OF KNOWLEDGE BY COMMUNICATION**A.R. Karimov<sup>1</sup>M.N. Solodukho<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This article deals with the problems associated with communicative knowledge. It gives narrow and broad definitions of communicative knowledge. The concept of “evidence” is analyzed. The problem of the status of communicative knowledge is analyzed. It is substantiated that the transfer of communicative cognition is possible. The essential and sufficient conditions for the transfer of communicative knowledge are determined. As a sufficient condition for the transfer of knowledge, it is proposed the following: for any witness A and recipient B, if 1) A knows that p, and 2) B is convinced that p on the basis of the testimony of A, and 3) that B has no reason to prejudice the testimony of A, that p, then B knows that p. 4) The witness and the recipient have the maximum possible positive intellectual perfection. The article criticizes the reductive approach, which

consists in the fact that any knowledge obtained by communication from another is secondary, because in the end it can be reduced to individual experience. The article defends non-reductionism, since it takes into account the collective nature of cognition. Others will also learn, and I can learn something from them.

**Keywords:** knowledge, communication, testimony.

**Introduction**

There are two senses in which one can talk about the social nature of knowledge. In the first sense, social knowledge is the knowledge, which is not obtained through individual experience or reflection, but through communication with others. In the second sense, the social nature of knowledge is understood as the determinism of cognition by social

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practitioners, primarily the powerful ones. This article concerns the problems related to communicative knowledge.

So, in the first sense, epistemology studies:

1) The problem of status of knowledge, obtained during communication.

2) The problem of group knowledge, when the subject is not an individual but a collective subject. For example, in such expressions “We, the people of the United States ...”, “the commission believes that”, “the government decreed that”, etc., the subject of knowledge is a certain social group. Here one can note the tendency to increase the number of authors of scientific articles, connected both with the distributed nature of modern science and with the growth of interdisciplinary research.

3) The influence of certain institutional features on the quality of communicative knowledge. For example, the influence of the system of reviewed journals in science on the quality of publications.

In this article, we will consider the first problem - the status of knowledge obtained in the course of communication.

Today, it is increasingly realized that the production of knowledge does not occur in the minds of individual scientists, but in the process of communication between different social subjects. As an example from the history of science, one can cite the building site as a communicative space (the pyramid of Cheops, Taj-Mahal). At the building site, there was a combination of knowledge, technology, professions, social roles: the work of engineers, mechanics, mathematicians, stone dressers, loggers and carpenters, blacksmiths (as well as priests, slavers, guards, etc.). The advent of printing as a factor of the rapid dissemination of scientific knowledge also influenced the development of communication. Modern knowledge is not achieved in salons, where the guests of high standing together with the ladies discussed, among other things, some scientific questions (“invisible college”), and not even at the Academy of Sciences, but on the Internet site. The problem of the status of communicative knowledge is already outlined in Plato in the dialogue “Menon” mentioned above. Socrates gives an example of the routine case, when we get knowledge from another. Such a routine case is to ask the first who

comes along which way to go. Suppose a traveler needs to get to a certain inhabited locality. He asks the way from the first person who comes along. Suppose that he has absolutely exact information about the whereabouts of the city, because he lives there. He tells the traveler how to get into the city. Now the traveler also knows how to get into the city.

But it is also obvious that the epistemic status of the traveler and the first comer is different. After all, one knows by name, and the other knows by hearsay. In what sense does the traveler know how to get to the village?

Consider the following judgments:

“The Nile is the largest river in Africa”.

- The star TRAPPIST-1 has three planets that are suitable for life.

- Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C.

Most of us have not been to Africa, looked through the telescope and studied the historical archives. We have learned all this not through independent research, but from the message of the other - the teacher, the media, etc. Major portion of the knowledge is obtained through communication, and not through personal experience or reflection. We

depend on communicative knowledge to such an extent that we cannot even imagine it otherwise. Cognitive Robinson is only possible if he has a history of communication with other people.

### **The Problems of Communicative Knowledge**

So, we formulate *the thesis of the totality of communicative knowledge* - a significant part of our knowledge is obtained from others, and not by independent cognitive effort. Certainly, the cognitive effort of the subject is also essential in order to obtain knowledge during communication. For example, reading a textbook on math analysis takes a lot of effort of mental abilities. But the primary source of knowledge is, in this case, the author of the textbook on math analysis

The main meaning of English *testimony* is evidence, witness, argument, proof, statement. It is not a question of a formal witness (under judicial oath), but of what is found in everyday social interactions. We are interested in testimony as an additional source of knowledge along with perception, reflection, etc.

How to determine what is a testimony in the philosophical sense? Australian philosopher S. Coady gives the following definition<sup>1</sup>.

Statement S that p is a testimony if:

1) Statement S that p, is a proof that p.

2) S is competent to state that p, or S has appropriate powers or regalia to state truly that p.

3) Statement S. that p, belongs to some controversial or unresolved question.

The first condition determines that it is the testimony, not the personal experience, that acts for the subject as the source of justification. In addition, it establishes a causal link between the statement and its testimony. The second condition concerns the competence of the speaker. The speaker must have certain authority in order to communicate any knowledge. For example, there are certain qualification requirements for university teachers. Those who do not meet them, cannot teach the students from the chair. The doctor giving a diagnose to the patient must have a doctor's diploma, etc. The third condition determines concerning what the testimony may be. Something

can be a testimony to me if I do not have knowledge on this matter. If I do not need knowledge about something, then I will not accept this testimony. That is, the third condition takes into consideration not only who is the author of the testimony, but also the recipient, his epistemic status, his interests and wishes.

According to this model, by definition, in principle, we can not have an unreliable witness. If there is no objective connection between what is asserted and the actual state of affairs, then there is no testimony. Thus, the question "is testimony a source of sound knowledge?" turns into the question: "Is there any such testimony?"

Jennifer Lackey believes that these three conditions are too strong<sup>1</sup>. It seems intuitively, that we cannot trust a testimony, but it still remains a testimony (for example, the testimony of UFOs). It is not necessarily the case for the witness to be reliable and competent, or we cannot verify it. Finally, the testimony is not necessarily directed to a real request. Suppose someone accidentally overheard someone's conversation, a posthumous publication of diaries, etc. Modern scholars offer a broader definition of testimony. Testimony -

when “people tell us things” (R. Audi) “In a broad sense, testimony is the affirmation of someone’s thoughts” (E. Sosa)<sup>1</sup>. Testimony can be not only a statement. Evidence can be an od, a wink, gestures, etc. Sometimes the absence of testimony can be a testimony itself. For example, I know that last week there was no devastating 9-magnitude earthquake in the world, otherwise there would be various independent confirmation of this report.

This definition also suggests that in most cases the testimony of other people is true. Truthfulness is one of the conditions of linguistic communication. The dissemination of incorrect information is fraught with loss of reputation and sanctions. If the information does not affect his personal interests, the subject does not need to lie or hide information. The dissemination of true knowledge in general brings greater benefits to the subject and is rewarded by society. Besides, against the background of existing knowledge, we can assess the plausibility of a new testimony.

So, as the starting position, we accept the following:

(Default rule) *If the subject A reports that p to the recipient B, then*

*under normal conditions, it will be correct for B to accept the testimony of A as true if B has no special reasons not to trust the testimony of A.*

Therefore, if A knows that p and A reports that p to the recipient B, and B takes p based on the testimony of A, then B knows that p.

Suppose that Bill believes that the president is in Washington. But Bill has read in “New York Times” that the president is in China. It would be irrational for him to continue to hold the opinion that the president is in Washington. In the absence of reason to doubt the truth of the reportage, he comes to the conclusion that the president is in China.

In the chapter “About the Miracles” of his famous “Study of Human Understanding”, D. Hume singled out the factors that can be taken into account when doubting the truth of the testimony:

- the presence of the opposite testimony;
- the identity of the witness;
- the number of witnesses;
- the way in which the testimony is reported
- possible interest of the witness in the affirmation of the information;

- the extraordinary nature of the testimony, its contradiction with past experience<sup>1</sup>.

The principle of J. Hardwig's testimony<sup>1</sup>:

If A has good reasons to believe that B has good reasons to believe that *p*, then A has good reasons to believe that *p*.

Now, after having clarified the meaning of the term "testimony", it is necessary to discuss the main issues. Two problems are discussed within the framework of modern epistemology:

- 1) The problem of knowledge transfer. How is knowledge transferred from the witness to the recipient?
- 2) The problem of reducibility of testimony. Is communicative knowledge an independent source of knowledge or is it reduced to other sources?

As regards the first problem, firstly, it is necessary to find out whether the transfer of knowledge is possible from the speaker to the listener at all. There can be two points of view:

1. The transfer is not possible. Only the one knows who cognizes by oneself. In Plato's dialogue "Menon", Socrates says that only one knows who has learned something from personal experience. The one who has received

this knowledge from the other has only the right opinion.

2. The transfer is possible.

Knows not only the one who cognizes by oneself, but also the one who gets to know from the other. Knowledge can be shared with another.

What are the essential and sufficient conditions for the transfer of knowledge? As the initial conditions we take the following conditions:

Essential condition:

For any witness A and recipient B, B knows *p* on the basis of the testimony of A only if A knows that *p* (i.e., has a true well-founded belief that *p*).

Sufficient condition:

For any witness A and recipient B, if 1) A knows that *p*, and 2) B is convinced that *p* on the basis of the testimony of A, and 3) that B has no reasons to have some doubt in the testimony of A that *p*, then B knows, that *p*.

An analogy with memory is often used to explain the transfer of knowledge. Memory preserves and transmits epistemic features of perception in a little while but does not create new epistemic

features. That is, I cannot know something based on memory, if earlier I did not used directly to have the experience or feeling of this something. But if I had experience, it's enough that I have a memory of this experience. Similarly, with the transfer of knowledge. It is enough for him who conveys knowledge to have direct experience.

So, we have looked into the problem of knowledge transfer, but a more serious problem remains - the problem of confidence in the testimony.

It seems that we have no way to independently verify all the knowledge that we have received from other people. At the same time, most of our knowledge is the knowledge received from other people (the thesis of the global nature of communicative knowledge). How to evaluate the testimony of another person?

The variants of attitude to the testimony received during communication:

1. Non-reductive approach.
2. Reductive approach.

The reductive approach to the communicative knowledge is traditionally more common in philosophy. Initially, its formulation can be found in D. Hume's "On Miracles"

(1778) and I. Kant's "What is the Enlightenment?"(1784).

The reductive approach consists in that any knowledge obtained through communication with another person is secondary, because in the end, it can be reduced to individual experimental knowledge. The experience of the individual subject, which is based on the sensory perception of reality, is the source of all knowledge. That is, there must be some additional reasons for giving credence to the testimony, apart from the testimony itself. The argument in favor of this approach is usually the inability to verify the testimony or identity.

Nevertheless, the drawbacks of the reductive approach to the testimony are also evident.

1. We have too little information, so that with a sufficient ground it would be possible to study and to call in question every testimony. Often we get information from witnesses about whom we do not know anything, for example, the first comer.

2. Reductionism leads to skepticism for the same reason that it is impossible to independently re-verify all the information reported.

3. Moreover, how to assess the knowledge of children that they receive from adults? After all, children get most of the knowledge from adults without being able to personally verify it. The opposite approach is non-reductive (credulism). Thomas Reid<sup>1</sup> is usually considered to be the founder of a non-reductive approach to communicative knowledge.

According to the non-reductive approach, testimony is the same basic source of knowledge as perception, memory, reflection. In the absence of positive grounds for doubt (defeaters), the testimony of the speaker should be taken as truth. The listener is a priori entitled to convictions received from others. This does not mean to accept everything that you are told at face value. For example, if it contradicts personal experience, or there are reasons to believe that the witness is lying, then the evidence cannot be accepted.

## Results

The definitions of communicative knowledge that exist in modern literature have been analyzed. The main approaches to the problem of knowledge transfer have been considered. The reductive and non-

reductive approaches on the value of communicative knowledge have been defined.

## Summary

Which position is more preferable: reductionism or non-reductionism?

The position of the reductionist: “I do not accept until the opposite has been proven”. In fact, this is a return to the idea of an individual subject in gnoseology, for which the classical epistemology has always been criticized, to Kant’s ideas about the autonomy of reason, the idea of individualistic and subjectivist theory of knowledge. The reductionist believes that knowledge is only what is generated by him. A priori, any witness is disqualified as unreliable. Perhaps, this is accompanied by such a positive attitude as critical perception. But most likely, behind reductive position there is an intellectual arrogance, dogmatism –unacceptance of value of another’s knowledge.

In addition, as it has been already noted, in modern science, purely individual cognition is practically impossible, especially in empirical sciences. The solution of a scientific



problem involves the teams of dozens of authors, each of them carries out his part of the research. Therefore, an integral part of such studies is the trust of authors in the results obtained by each other.

The position of the non-reductionist: “I accept until the opposite has been proven”.

Non-reductionism takes into account the collective nature of cognition. Others also learn, and I may learn something from them. Non-reductionism is characterized by intellectual modesty - the recognition of lack of knowledge. Also non-reductionism shows intellectual generosity - we must a priori recognize that other people are also rational beings. The principle of intellectual generosity (charity), or otherwise, the principle of rational accommodation, was formulated by W. V. Quine and D. Davidson. It requires the interpreter to maximize the truth and rationality in the utterances of the interpreted text.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the article substantiates that communicative knowledge is an independent source along with

individual knowledge, and cannot be reduced to individual knowledge.

### **Acknowledgement**

This article was prepared with the financial support of the Kazan Federal University.

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