

# Philosophy of science assignment

[Philosophy](#)



October/November 2010 Words (without quotes): Essay Philosophy of Science INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT For the course: Philosophy of Science (30J205) In the logical positivistic sense it is often mentioned that the field of economics is not scientific . Whenever one would try to refute this bold statement they often invoke the mentality of Thomas Kuhn. Although Kuhn passed away in 1996, his mentality is as contemporary as it was when it was first launched back in the nineties.

Surely, his mentality had to withstand points of critique in the times to come, but as it turned out, his mentality proved to withstand this critique and be highly influential in the following decades. In this essay I will assess Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science and I will try to find an answer to the question: " To what extent does Kuhn's view fit International Business Administration (IBA) as a systematic study of the economic world? " 1. I will discuss Kuhn's view in detail and illustrate the results with a clear economic case.

We will discuss the ' paradigm shift' view and consequently apply it on the mentioned question above. Thomas Samuel Kuhn made several important contributions to the understanding of the progress of knowledge. The most important and revolutionary at the time was his concept of the so called paradigm shifts. This view implied that there is no improvement in the gaining of knowledge, merely a shift in the perspective on reality (i. e. paradigm shift). It says that one always operates in a framework (paradigm) to approach any form of science.

The paradigm shifts enable scientists to approach a given concept from an entire new perspective of which they could have never considered the

validity before the paradigm shift. This view of Kuhn is so revolutionary because it does not deal with the demarcation criterion that proved to be an obstacle for philosophers prior to Kuhn. The demarcation problem in the philosophy of science is a problem in which it is unclear where to draw the proverbial lines between science and non-science.

This was an important problem in the philosophy of science because after the scientific revolution people claimed that science was the only truth. But as it turned out it was unclear what ‘science’ exactly encompassed. Kuhn’s view did not create a different criterion of demarcation but came with a different strategy. Immanuel Kant played a very important role for Kuhn, to such an extent that Kuhn’s theories were influenced by Kant’s concepts. The main difference that Kuhn opposed was the fact that paradigms in fact can change, whereas Kant claimed that his so called ‘categories’ cannot.

Whenever the paradigm shifts are being analyzed, it will become clear that these occur in stages (according to Kuhn). There is a clear distinction between the so called ‘pre-scientific period’ followed by the ‘normal science’ which subsequently is being followed by a ‘crisis’ which can lead to a ‘scientific revolution’ and a paradigm shift in which one would return to the ‘normal science’ stage. After they returned to the normal science stage the cycle repeats itself.

In the pre-scientific period there is the stage in which ‘there are as many opinions as there are people, there is no consensus about the way one ought to proceed to gather information about a specific domain of phenomena, and here is no generally accepted background of assumptions’. Whenever this

stage is being followed by a period of normal science (for that discipline), there will be some consensus that is generally accepted about that specific discipline. People strive to extend the paradigm, get rid of mistakes and minor problems (so called anomalies).

It is important to note that scientists take an uncritical stance in times of normal science. When the accumulated amount of anomalies have reached a certain point at which the trustworthiness of the paradigm is eroded, it will usually mean the start of a new period called abnormal science. Abnormal science can end in either two ways, the first way would be solving all the accumulated problems (anomalies) so the current paradigm still holds. The second and more interesting alternative is the paradigm shift in which a total new paradigm presents itself.

At some point in time a paradigm shift has to occur, whenever this happens it has to occur abruptly and not gradually. It is also important to note that the out-of-date paradigm cannot be called un-scientific, they are just superseded. Whenever a shift occurs it can only occur when there is an alternative paradigm that gives an explanation to the anomalies. Both the solving of the anomalies and the paradigm shift are preceded by a scientific revolution. The scientific revolution will end the period of abnormal science and will give a new insights and information to the current way of thinking.

However these insights cannot be called an improvement, there was only a shift in perspective on reality. Some anomalies might be solved (i. e. growth of knowledge) but that does not lead the scientist any closer to ‘ the truth’. Because when we accept the view of Kuhn, we also have to accept that a

truth is only true within a paradigm, and therefore there is no such thing as ‘ a truth’ (which was a common belief prior to Kuhn, in particular logical positivism). When we compare the new paradigm with the old one, there will occur a phenomenon called incommensurability.

Basically this means that: ‘ even though the terminology that is used is the same, the old concepts have an entire new relation to each other and hence to the world that is under investigation’ . This also means that the communication between scientists that are located within different paradigms is highly problematic, one can compare this as if they would speak different languages, and hence have difficulties with communicating. As was mentioned in the introduction, there has been some critique on Kuhn’s paradigm view.

Some of this criticism was withdrawn when Kuhn’s work became better understood. However, some critique proved to be well-founded, most of the criticism was concentrated on two areas. First, ‘ it has been argued that Kuhn’s account of the development of science is not entirely accurate’ . Secondly, ‘critics have attacked Kuhn’s notion of incommensurability, arguing that either it does not exist or, if it does exist, it is not a significant problem’<sup>6</sup>. It is not within the scope of this essay to go into details of these points of criticism but it is important to note that there is criticism.

However as was mentioned before, Kuhn’s scientific studies proved to be very valuable in spite of this criticism, and a huge stimulus for the scientific knowledge. In my opinion the paradigm shift theory is the best theory that has been discussed up to now. It applies a good solid theory that makes

sense (see above) and avoids most point of critique that were addressed with previous theories. The idea of shifting paradigms in which we think we are right are logical, and whenever we look at the past we can see that the reason of other scientists in their paradigm matched with what we would expect with the current theory.

So with that being said, we can take a look to the question that was mentioned in the introduction. In my opinion Kuhn's paradigm view fits International Business Administration (IBA) as a systematic study of the economic world to a great extent. When we look at the past studies of economics we can clearly see that researchers tried to find constants and certainties in economics in order to forecast future events and get a higher efficiency in what they are doing.

It is hard to tell what exactly IBA is because it encompasses many different subjects that all deal with different aspects that are in some way related to economics. However when we look at the main Paradigm shift, IBA, as part of economic world. Systematic. Fit?. To what extent does Kuhn's view fit International Business Administration (IBA) as a systematic (geordend in een system gebracht). study of the economic world? "

Conclusion:

End your essay with a brief conclusion in which you summarize what you have discussed, the conclusions that followed, and possibly arguments for your own view of the matter, if you haven't already done this in the main body. ? REFERENCE LIST Barnes, B. , 1982 , T. S. Kuhn and Social Science, London: Macmillan. Dooremalen, H. , Regt de H. , Schouten, H. , 2007 ,

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