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Public Knowledge as a Mosaic of Competing and Cooperation Systems



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Public knowledge in each historical period represents an inimitable, contradictory and stochastic mosaic of competing and mutually complementary (epistemological) systems. The ordering of the global and universal base of human knowledge should be founded not on the classification of sciences, but on the classification of public mentalities, which give rise to a historically stipulated semantic mosaic. (Author)

It has been generally recognized that library classification should be coordinated with the philosophical classification of the sciences. E. Richardson expressed this condition in the following terms: "In a general case, the nearer the classification comes to the true order of sciences, and the more precisely it follows it, the better will the scheme be and the longer it will remain valid". However, philosophers and scientists have up till now failed to develop a true and stable classification of human knowledge and the sciences on which librarians could lean when systematizing books. The concept of cumulative growth of science proved to be untenable. An ordered, stable and global system of human knowledge is a fantasy of utopian epistemologists. Realistically gained human knowledge represents not a hierarchical structure, but a multi-colored mosaic of competing and cooperating epistemological structures.

There exist the following types of competition in the mosaic of public knowledge: competition of old and new ideas, theories, convictions, ideals, etc.; competition of styles of thinking, for example, of deterministic and probabilistic, imaginal-artistic and abstract-rational styles; the conflict between class-ideologies, religion and atheism, orthodoxy and heresy, competition of national mosaics of public knowledge, competition of solutions, which duplicate one another, of cognitive problems ("reinvention of the wheel"). The tendencies for competition, which at times take on a destructive and nihilistic character, are at variance with the cooperative processes. Competition and cooperation turn out to be interconnected and mutually balanced, and this supports the vital capacity and enrichment of the mosaic of public knowledge.

There exists the following types of cooperation of the epistemological systems: the succession of new and old knowledge; the diversity of styles of thinking and of

methodological approaches broaden the selection of methods of self-realization of man; differentiation of scientific disciplines is balanced by their integration; national isolation is opposed by the tendency for the formation of a single universal culture; the duplication of information in communication channels raises the reliability of communication of information to the appropriate destinations. Can this contradictory, dynamic and yet irremovable mosaicity of public knowledge be squeezed into the rigid framework of a hierarchical library classification? Yes, it can be done, but within certain limits. These limits are set by the mentality of the society that gave rise to the given knowledge. In contemporary historical science "mentality" is interpreted as an integral characteristic of the spiritual life of this or that period. We speak of the mentality of the Middle Ages, of the mentality of Antiquity, so we may well speak of the mentality of Soviet totalitarianism, of Tsarist Russia, of Western Liberalism, etc.

When organizing public knowledge we should, first of all, divide social mentalities, for otherwise we will get not order, but a chaotic mixture. It is necessary to include the theory of library classification into the concept of mentality as it brings with it the coordinate of time and the principle of historical method. The comparison of realistic classification schemes, beginning with Callimah's tables and ending with the Soviet Library-Bibliographical Classification, shows their substantial and formal difference, and this is not a casual, but a law-governed phenomenon. It is quite evident, that the schemes of organization of documented public knowledge of different historical periods are not compatible and cannot be combined without the forced deformation of their content. Hence it follows, that the uniform system of universal knowledge should be built on the first level not on the basis of classification of knowledge, but on the basis of classification of mentalities.

For the classification of social mentalities it is expedient to use the typifications of cultures (civilizations), which were developed by N.Y. Danilevsky, O. Spengler, A. Toynbee, A. Kroeber, P.A. Sorokin, A. Toffler, and other philosophers of history. Further, within the given mentality, as within the first class division, a hierarchical or a facet structure of competing and cooperating meanings, adherent to the given period, can be built.

The system of mentalities is none other than a system of mosaics of public knowledge, and the "intra-mentality classification" is a method of presentation of the inimitable color of each mosaic.