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Epistemic Cultural Constraints on the Uses of Psychology

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Abstract

This paper describes some epistemic cultural considerations which shape the uses of psychology. I argue the study of mind is bound by the metaphysical background of the given locale and era in which it is practiced. The epistemic setting in which psychology takes place will shape what is worth observing, how it is to be studied, how the data is to be interpreted, and the nature of the ultimate explanatory units. I argue epistemic constraints shape the praxes that arise from structural study of the mind. In order to illustrate this notion of epistemic cultural constraint, I discuss Soviet Psychology and provide a contrast between practical uses of psychoanalysis in India, Egypt, and rural Ghana. In response to these conceptual and practical epistemic limitations, psychology could adapt methods drawn from history and anthropology towards an interdisciplinary psychology.