

## International Conference

### THE EXPRESSION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

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### **Breaking into the Epistemological Problems of Research**

#### **Abstract**

We claim that researchers in different disciplines operate in different research paradigms owing to different worldviews. A worldview is determined by a set of foundational beliefs that are taken on faith, and a research paradigm is defined by axioms and assumptions that are a consequence of that worldview. For example, the scientific view of the world is that it exists independently from the individual and the individual's thoughts about it; and it is possible to find out objective facts about the world by following certain procedures. This worldview conditions a research paradigm with an ontology of a real external world; that methodologically the data that is collected in procedurally appropriate ways will yield objective facts about that world; and that epistemologically the researcher stands in a disengaged relation to the world she is investigating. The procedures that are regarded as appropriate within a particular research paradigm form the research models that are acceptable in that paradigm, and these research models determine what one should do in order to extend knowledge in a particular subject. Of course, the scientific worldview is not the only one, and this paper will contrast it to the arts worldview as indicating the emergence of a unique research paradigm.

The relationship between a community's worldview and the academic models that it adopts may be functional or dysfunctional. We claim that the relationship in the areas of creative and performing arts is dysfunctional. This is because the academic model has not developed naturally, but has done so in response to external forces for academicization. When pushed into the academy, the creative and performing arts did not possess its own academic models that were effectively linked to its worldview. We claim that, as result, these areas simply co-opted research models from other disciplines and areas. There is therefore incongruence between its worldview and the academic models it uses. Although academic research in areas of creative and performing arts uses a variety of academic models, these models were not developed in line with the worldview of that community. As a consequence, the use of these co-opted academic research models has lead to flaws in argumentation, three of which the present paper identifies.

The paper proposes a criterion-based approach for investigating the relationship between worldview and research model. This approach enables the development of a more functional relationship between foundational beliefs and theoretical concepts and methodology in research models. We explore the relationship between the concept of philosophical subjectivity as it is understood in the world of creative and performance arts, and how this concept is dealt with by the current models of research. The criterion-based approach enables a critique, which reveals that there are indeed problematic issues with adopting academic models from other research paradigms in an uncritical way, and concludes that the arts should be investigated as an example of a distinct worldview.

**Keywords:** paradigm, worldview, research, academic, criteria

## **Introduction**

At the University of Hertfordshire in the UK, we have a cluster of projects called "research into practice". The researchers on those projects have been working for quite a long time on a number of problems related to the same topic, and the topic is the emergence in the UK, but also now in other places as well, of something called "practice-based research" (PbR). There are different names for it, and some people are very sensitive about the different nuances that these names connote. Broadly speaking they all refer to the same kind of activity and that is: what it is to undertake research in an area like painting or musical composition, architecture or dance and performance; namely the creative and performing arts. In particular, there is an interest in research that is not historically led or to do with technology, but to do with the actual production of the stuff itself. We think that the interest lies in what happens to these professional activities when they are pushed or pulled into the academic context.

The master-apprentice model has been a persistent teaching model in the creative and performing arts. It is common to find it in almost any country around the world in which the teachers of advanced studies in the institutions are also active professional practitioners (Biggs & Büchler 2008a: 85). Until recent times it has proven to be a very

successful educational model. However, the contemporary environment is changing substantially in response to the academicization of formerly so-called vocational subjects. This academicization can be seen as a natural consequence of creating a market for knowledge. In a market, the generation of knowledge and the control of knowledge becomes something of value: not just of cultural value but of commercial value too. Both kinds of valorisation create an environment in which competition and exchange thrive, but the commercial value of research as a generator of income for Universities and individuals is now a strong force. For example, the UK AHRC awarded nearly £60 million for arts and humanities research in 2007/8 (AHRC 2008a: 48). It is therefore understandable that Universities and individuals should be motivated towards research.

At a theoretical level, academicization involves the adoption of the dominant hegemony and the worldview that supports it. The largely capitalistic description of how the academy adopts new concepts of knowledge has been theorised by Bourdieu (1990), identifying the interest that the academic has in the artificial division, sub-division and apparent creation of knowledge as an industry. If knowledge can be a business then the academicization of knowledge changes the nature of that business from something broadly philanthropic and with ideals of a shared objectivity into something more overtly commercial, like any other marketable product. This is not the only way of theorizing the exploitation of knowledge. If one sees this more as the exercise of control than of exploitation, then one might prefer the explanatory structures offered by Foucault (1974), which show the arbitrariness of inclusion and exclusion in the academic canon. What these alternative explanatory frameworks show us is that there is more than one point-of-view from which to attempt a theoretical explanation of phenomena such as the academicization of knowledge. Indeed, the visibility or invisibility of phenomena, and the need for explaining them, arises within a meta-level concept called a worldview (cf. Goodman 1978; Aerts & Apostel 1994).

Academicization is not just a theoretical concept: there is tangible evidence of this process. At a practical level we can find indicators of these changes such as the move of arts schools into universities, the funding made available through research councils who also broaden their remit into practice, availability of doctorates, etc. For example, in the UK the majority of art schools were located in polytechnics as part of the vocational education sector, but in 1992 the polytechnics were incorporated into universities, which had the immediate effect of increasing both the opportunity and the competitive necessity to compare the creative and performing arts with all other university based subjects. The so-called 'creatives' had to compete for resources, and were also now in an academic environment in which new levels of study were available. Since the highest level of qualification in universities is the PhD, this, rather than the MA, became the target terminal award. But the PhD is a research degree and therefore somewhat different in its aims and objectives from the BA or MA.

There are disciplines that have conducted academic research for longer than others, and have therefore helped to shape the notion of what constitutes academic research. Thus

when we look back at their period of academicization it seems that there was always a harmonious relationship between their worldview and their research models. The natural evolutionary situation is therefore that the worldview of an academic community determines the research model that the community adopts and that, therefore, they develop coherently.

This is not, however, the case of disciplines such as the creative and performing arts, that have only recently joined the academy owing to forces for academicization. In response to the immediate needs for mature knowledge production infrastructure we claim that these disciplines have built a collage from the resources in other areas, only modifying them superficially to force them to fit together. To some extent this is understandable because they did not have models that were exclusive and specific to their own needs. In the creative and performing arts we claim that there is a dysfunctional relationship between the worldview and the research model that has been adopted. In terms of the forces at work in the process of academicization in the creative and performing arts, these push towards the academy and at the same time towards the extant and dominant models of research that belong to other academic areas.

At a practical level, creatives now find themselves having been trained for one type of activity but asked to perform another. The type of training that creatives have hitherto received regarding research has been pragmatically driven, and has consisted in their ability to find out what they need to know about a subject sufficiently effectively to enable them to operate within that subject as "guest workers". However this type of research is not academic research. This type of research is "finding out something that one doesn't know" whereas academic research is "finding out what nobody knows" (Biggs & Büchler 2007: 66). The former type of research has an important place in the worldview in which creative practitioners produce "works of art" (etc.) as part of a cultural network of the production and consumption of artefacts. The latter worldview is quite different, and consists of the production of journal articles, books, theories, etc. as part of an academic network of the production and consumption of ideas.

Under pressure for productivity in the new regime of post-1992 academia, Universities, funding councils and others have hastily adopted apparently productive models from traditional subjects and crudely mapped onto them concepts from the creative and performing arts. For example, what was hitherto known as "experimental method" in the sciences became labelled as "studio activity" in the arts (Gray & Malins 2004: 30). But this crude mapping failed to take account of the difference in worldview between these traditional subjects and creative and performing arts. The worldview of creative and performing arts includes many meaningful activities for creatives, but amongst these is not prediction and control. This is perhaps more clearly exposed if one looks at the scientific model from which many concepts were adopted by creative and performing arts.

## **NtKC**

The particular project on which our research group is now working is called “non-traditional knowledge and communication”<sup>1</sup>, and we have decided to address this topic by approaching it from a number of different points of view in order to see if we can identify any common characteristics of research in the arts. This is reminiscent of Wittgenstein, whose method consisted of travelling over a wide field of thought criss-crossing in every direction (1953: v). One of the directions we are taking is to make comparisons between arts research and other forms of research in order to find parallels. By doing this we are perhaps slightly different from other researcher groups in the field, who tend to claim that arts-based research is very different and so therefore largely incomparable to models in other areas. We come at it from the other side, adopting the Principle of Parsimony, and prefer to find similarities first and only claim dissimilarities later.

## **Worldviews and Paradigms**

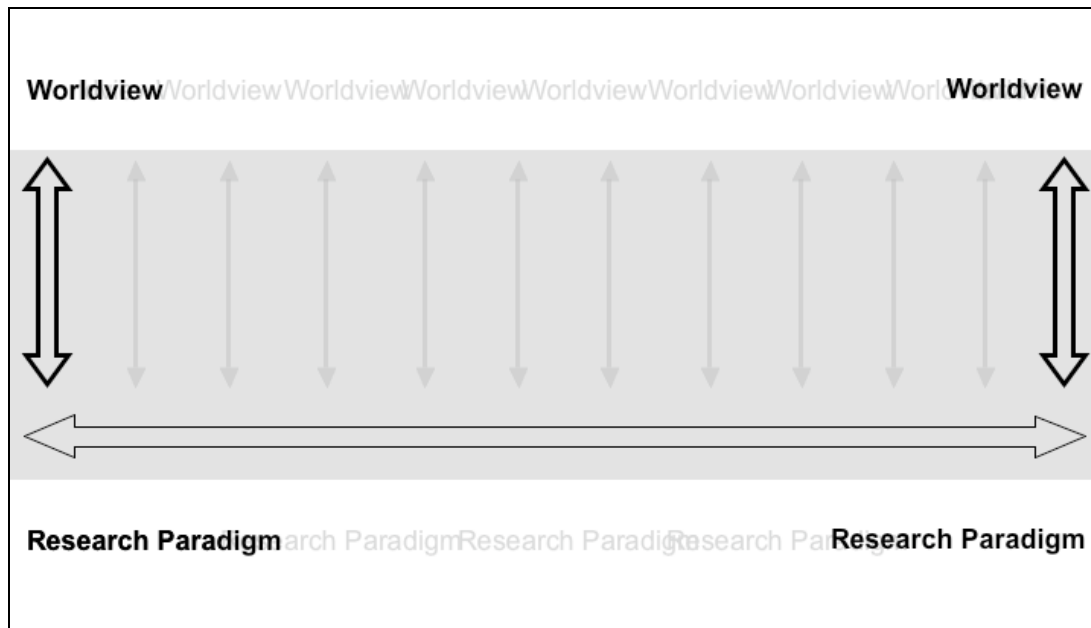
Our current work package looks particularly at theories of worldview and research paradigms. In doing so we make reference to the work of Guba (1990), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Heron & Reason (1997); and earlier work by Goodman (1978) and Kuhn (1996). The reason we focus on these theories is because we feel that the arts, as newcomers to this academic context, are entering a context in which there are already some established worldviews and research paradigms derived from other more traditional academic subjects. It would be an interesting development if we could show that the arts bring with them a new worldview and research paradigm. Conversely, it would be nearly as interesting to see whether they could be happily fitted into existing worldviews and research paradigms.

The terms “worldview” and “research paradigm” need some explanation. A worldview is basically a set of beliefs that one holds about the nature of the world and one’s place in it, that determines the activities one would undertake as a researcher. So if we think of the model from classical physics: the classical physicist believes in an external world, and facts can be found out about that external world. Because it is external, it is independent of the emotional responses and interests of the researcher. It is an objective world and one can say objective things about it. One can find evidence for it, and anyone else can find this combination of evidence and objective statements. As a result, they will conclude broadly the same things about the nature of the world. The more repeatable the outcomes, the more the statements and claims are held to correspond to what is actually out there. Such a worldview creates a research paradigm in which certain activities are relevant: reaching for evidence and setting up repeatable experiments becomes meaningful. But of course this is not the only worldview. If we compare this to the world of literary theory: the literary theorist doesn’t approach the world in this way. They do not believe there is something objective out there: for example, the fundamental interpretation of a text. Their worldview is much more engaged with the reading of the individual person: with the

subjective experience of the reader in constructing the text. The individual's interpretation is at least as meaningful as anything that one might claim the author put into the text.

The fact that the world may be regarded as a construction of the individual, contributes to Goodman's (1978) concept of "world-making". Goodman regards worldviews as a representational problem whereas Guba and Lincoln refer to the relationship of the researcher to the world. Guba and Lincoln (1994) originally identified four main worldviews, but responded to the criticisms of Heron and Reason (1997) and later described five (Guba & Lincoln 2005). This amendment suggests that there may be many more worldviews between the extreme Realist position of the classical physicist, to the anti-Realist position of the literary theorist and others.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994: 108), worldviews centre around three principal questions: an ontological question, an epistemological question and a methodological question. The ontological question asks about the nature of the object of study, about the nature of the world and whether it is out there or inside us. The epistemological question asks about what kind of relationship we can have with that knowledge; and the methodological question asks what we can do to find out more about this object of study. According to which of the many ways these questions may be answered, so there are as many appropriate research paradigms in which there is a connection between the worldview and the research paradigm that is constructive and functional, and in which one could say that research actions were appropriate. This use of the term paradigm differs from Kuhn's (1996) earlier use. For Kuhn, a paradigm is a large-scale set of dependent concepts that determines a view of the world across a wide range of subjects. It forms a way of thinking that pervades enquiry in all fields until it is replaced by a new paradigm. For Kuhn, paradigm shifts occur when the existing way of thinking becomes stretched to breaking point. For Guba and Lincoln, paradigms do not shift. For them, a paradigm is a way of addressing the world according to a worldview. At any one time there are many different paradigms in operation, presenting the possibility of what Gage (1989) calls "paradigm wars". In this paper we mainly contrast Realist (Positivist) and anti-Realist (Constructivist) paradigms.



*Figure 1. Representation of the vertical Worldview/Research Paradigm relationships, and horizontal cross-paradigmatic relationship.*

As one introduces different responses and answers to the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions, so one defines a range of possible worldviews and paradigms (cf. Figure 1). Issues such as the role of evidence become very strong on the left-hand, Realist side of this diagram; and as one goes further along towards the right, towards the anti-Realist position, the role of evidence changes. It is not that evidence stops being meaningful, it is that evidence stops being significant. The anti-Realist does not really look for evidence in the sense that the Realist does, or at least the meaning of the term evidence changes radically as one moves into more interpretative or Constructivist paradigms.

We felt, as a research group, that the worldview with which the arts were confronted when they entered the academy was dominated by concepts from the Realist position (UKCGE 1997: 8). This is perhaps just one more phase of a general historical shift. With the entry of new subjects into the Universities over hundreds of years, the dominant paradigm has changed. Nonetheless, when we looked at the kind of regulatory framework that Universities set up – that was supposed to be generic for all subjects – and the language that the research councils were using, there was a strong Realist component in them. For example, the use of the terms “question” and “answer” by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council in their “definition of research” (AHRC 2008b), could have been made less Positivistic by the use of the terms “issue” and “response”. The

former are not necessarily appropriate for the arts. As one goes further towards Constructivist anti-Realist paradigms in which the individual's experience becomes not just an unavoidable nuisance but is constitutive of the kind of content that one thinks there is in a subject like the arts, so one moves away from what seems to be the preferred model of the Universities. It was more and more difficult for artists and performers to express what it was they were doing in terms that would satisfy the Universities for the award of a PhD, for example. So in the UK, and elsewhere in Europe, one can see individual institutions struggling with this, and struggling with what it is that artists and performers could do for which universities would feel able to award a PhD, or for which research councils would feel able to award a research grant.

We speculated that the arts represent an extreme alternative to this traditional model. Even the most liberal institutions have perhaps only moved about halfway across this possible range, from left to right in our diagram, and therefore the arts are still relatively difficult to encapsulate within these structures. It would be significant should PbR turn out to be something novel: to be a new research paradigm and a new worldview. If so, the arts would be able to say: our ontological position is this, our epistemological position is this, our methodological position is this, and all of these are coherent and that is why we warrant special, different conditions to the ones that have formerly been recognised. Now that, we think, is a desirable position: but only if it is also defensible. What is undesirable, and what we wanted to react against at the beginning of the project, was the idea that: because the arts couldn't easily be described in terms of the traditional research paradigm, this somehow indicated that they needed to have special, compensatory conditions, that is to say exemptions and excuses from the normal requirements. This is like the British always wanting exemptions from European Union regulations, because the British way is claimed to be special and different. These are not good arguments and on the whole tend to produce a weak outcome for the person who is claiming them.

## **Analysis**

What we have shown is a map of existing, recognised research paradigms - including ones possibly yet to be recognised. What we want to claim about this situation is that the test for the existence of a valid worldview is that there is a coherent connection to, and therefore a functional relationship with, its research paradigm and the actions that are taken within that paradigm. As a result there is a coherence on the vertical axis of this diagram (Figure 1). However, it is very difficult to make connections horizontally across paradigms. When one identifies changes in response to the epistemological question for example, it is difficult to map one paradigm onto another. Not only is there a terminological shift, there is also – and perhaps more instrumental – a conceptual change too. As described above regarding evidence, it is not just that evidence becomes less important, it falls off the map, it just isn't a concept that one would introduce. This problem has been described by Hirsch (1967; 1984), who comes from somewhere on the left of our diagram, as being the difference between "meaning" and "significance". The former is something straightforward incorporating the common-sense distinction between



meaningful and meaningless utterances. The latter incorporates the impact or relevance of the content for the interpreter. Thus an anti-Realist argument relies on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof (Guba & Lincoln 1994: 108). The concept of evidence in another paradigm simply becomes something one doesn't really want. One wants something else, and not just another word for evidence, but a whole different concept and a whole different network of relations between this and other concepts in that paradigm.

This connection between the worldview and the research paradigm, between the belief set and the actions that are taken that correspond to that belief set, can be described as functional or dysfunctional. In well-established research paradigms such as the scientific method, hundreds of years of refinement have led to a very functional connection. But in newly academicized areas such as the arts we identified that there was a dysfunctional relationship between the actions that were being taken (the methodological question) and the beliefs that were being claimed (the ontological and epistemological questions). We found some indicators of this dysfunctionality, and we have chosen to mention three in particular, although we could have illustrated this dysfunctionality using other examples.

The first was a problem of circularity. Newly academicized research areas such as painting would base their claims for what constituted basic research practices by appeal to earlier examples of painting-as-research that had gained PhDs or gained research funding. But of course in the early pioneering days such examples were not robustly founded as examples of research. They were, perhaps, held up as interesting examples but we cannot necessarily lean on them for definitions; we cannot necessarily analyse them in order to find out reliably what makes them research. Perhaps it was just a shot in the dark that we awarded a PhD or a research grant to these early examples, in the pioneering spirit of letting people have a go and see what happens. There was therefore a problem of circularity in some of the discussions about what should constitute second-generation research owing to the understandable weakness of the identification of first-generation research. The second was a foundational problem, which affects Foundationalism in all areas and accounts for its present unpopularity as an approach. The problem arises from the difficulty to find grounds that people agree are foundational and upon which one can build a superstructure. The third problem was a Coherentist one, in which we identified failures in argument that connected belief structures to actions. For example, if one believes the nature of painting is X then we claim it would be incoherent for the researcher to take action Y: these things do not fit together as a coherent chain of reasoning and actions. So on the basis of these three flaws, we diagnosed that there was a dysfunctional relationship between the creative arts worldview and the research models that were frequently adopted for the development of academic research in these areas. Furthermore, we reasoned that we needed a different, non-paradigm specific way of cutting into these problems. We called our new approach a criterion-based approach (Biggs & Büchler 2008b).

The criterion-based approach, rather than embedding itself in a particular research paradigm, tries to stand outside the paradigm and identify features of something being

research before it is identified as belonging to a particular paradigm. In this respect the criterion-based approach adopts a meta-position comparable to the common structure of research paradigms identified by Guba and Lincoln. In the latter there are three persistent questions for which different worldviews provide different answers. Likewise the criterion-based approach poses persistent issues to which different paradigms provide different answers, even in the most extreme anti-Realist approaches. The four issues that we identified as being persistently indicative of something being a research activity were: the possession of a question and an answer, the presence of something corresponding to the term "knowledge", a method that connected the answers in a meaningful way to the questions that were asked, and an audience for whom all this would have significance. A functional relationship between these four issues represents a functional connection of the worldview and the corresponding research paradigm. The audience has quite a strong role in our analysis because it determines the meaningfulness and significance of the question, and whether the actions that are taken actually generate something that is relevant for that community in response to the question. The audience is composed of the greater academic community as a whole, within which there resides a smaller, more specialized academic community that is in a situated position from which to judge the meaningfulness and significance of the research (Biggs & Büchler 2008b: 11f.). We felt that these four issues were reasonably persistent, and were transferable to most subject areas. This is a development of other kinds of classification and criterion-building that have been attempted before, including the "CUDOS" system of Merton (1973), and others in the philosophy of science.

However, the generic four issues of question, answer, method and audience from our criterion-based approach seemed to lack something when applied to the creative arts community. It did not seem to respond to some of the key concerns that we felt and heard from our colleagues who were operating inside this paradigm and making claims for it. They had some additional concerns that they felt were not adequately represented, i.e. that there were characteristic features of the arts worldview but that were not accommodated by these four initial issues. So with their help we came up with four additional issues that seemed to be specific to research in the arts, and cognate disciplines. For example, creative practitioners seemed to want a particular role for the image, or the piece of music: broadly for the creative component often manifested through an artefact or that was distinct for being non-textual. This was unlike the kind of relationship that text and image had in other subject areas where the image was merely an illustration of something that was otherwise described in text. They claimed something more instrumental: where the image or the artwork was either generating the question, or was an instrumental component in the response to the question, or formed an integral part of the communication of the outcome without which it was incomprehensible. Removing such an artefact would have a catastrophic effect on the research. Similarly we came to the conclusion that the novelty of the outcome: the fact that one ended up with a performance or a piece of architecture was perhaps misleading. It was not that which was novel, but the type of content that came along with this artefact which was significant. That was perhaps something we should be additionally concentrating on. There were

rhetorical questions: our participants were joining an academic structure with an established vocabulary and with structures that direct action, that were not necessarily compatible with the kind of vocabulary that our participants were using. In addition to what is meant by what is said, there is also an aspect of rhetoric that refers to the conceptual repertoire (which is an aspect of the worldview) and that defines what one thinks can be said. And finally, which relates to this conference's theme of subjectivity, the role of the personal experience in both the production and the consumption of the artworks, was much more central in many arts movements than it would be in the Realist model<sup>2</sup>. Right up at the left-hand end of the diagram in classical physics, personal experience and philosophical subjectivity were undesirable and to be designed out of a research programme. Whereas at the anti-Realist, arts end of the diagram we saw that personal experience, the subjective aesthetic response was the beginning of the interpretation of the object – something that defined it and not something that got in the way of the object.

### **Meaning and Significance of Subjectivity**

The case of subjectivity is useful to unpack as an illustration of how Hirsch's differentiation of meaning and significance can be used to describe research paradigms. In the Realist paradigm we are presented with an ontologically independent world: one that exists independently of the perceiving subject. Such a view is also the so-called common-sense view, i.e. that the world doesn't cease to exist when I am not observing it (cf. Moore 1925). This response to the ontology question establishes the possibility of certain epistemological relations between the perceiving subject and the world, and in particular it establishes the possibility, *albeit* an ideal one, of objectivity. The appearance of these two antonyms: "subjective" and "objective" needs some clarification. The term "subject" is used in the philosophical sense of the person who is observing the phenomenon: hence our use of the term "the perceiving subject". As a result, those things that pertain to the philosophical subject are "subjective". Unfortunately, "subjective" can also mean "biased, flawed, etc." and be intended pejoratively, especially when contrasted with "objective". We will use the term "objective" to mean "pertaining to the philosophical object". In the case we are considering the philosophical object is the world. Because in the Realist model it is separated from the perceiving subject by a distance and becomes an object of consideration by the philosophical subject, it can be labelled objective. The possible separation of the subject and the object is a consequence of the Realist ontology. In philosophical terms, within the Realist model, the term subjective is technical and not pejorative.

Maintaining the distinction between subject and object allows for an "objectivist" stance that results in the possibility of observing phenomena from a disengaged point-of-view. Indeed, since the subject and object are independent, this distance becomes not only possible but also desirable. Disengagement is therefore a Realist ideal. With this relative positioning established it becomes meaningful to speak in terms of evidence. Evidence is

symptomatic of underlying causes and causal relationships with real-world objects, which are described by us through theoretical explanations.

This superstructure of theoretical explanation based on evidence and critical rationalism is both meaningful and significant in the Realist model. It is meaningful because we can understand the way in which these concepts are fitted together even if we do not believe or subscribe to the particular model of the world that it describes. It is meaningful even to the anti-Realist. What is different is that this account of evidence is not significant to the anti-Realist. This statement needs some unpacking. In the anti-Realist model there is of course still the concept of evidence. It is meaningful in the same way that it was in the Realist model, that is to say, the Realist and the anti-Realist dictionaries would define it in the same way. However, what the Realist and the anti-Realist make out of the term, its significance in their worldview, is quite different. So being an anti-Realist does not entail denying that which others hold to be the case, and the disputes between Realist and anti-Realist are not adequately accounted for by different meanings and definitions. Instead we must look to the way in which elements are compiled and related to form a worldview.

Owing to the separation and desirable distance, disengagement and objectification of the external world, the Realist breaks all contact with the world. The Realist can only hypothesise about it and look for corroboration of those hypotheses. Evidence supplies that corroboration because it has a causal connection with that which it indicates or for which it is a symptom. However, evidence is just brute data and requires contextualization in a narrative in order to clarify the causality that gives it significance. But it is exactly this narrative, intended as contextualization by the Realist that the anti-Realist sees as fiction. The requirement to describe in addition to showing, introduces the opportunity for interpretation, as demonstrated by different scientific theories corresponding to basically the same set of data. Thus there is always an input from the perceiving subject even in the most apparently objective accounts, leading to a weakness in the objectivist claims of the Realist. The anti-Realist accepts this subjective element, and indeed elevates it to a greater status in the worldview than evidence. For the anti-Realist, the subject always constructs the worldview because s/he must interpret what is seen, heard, etc. The raw data is meaningless without a narrative that contextualises it. So the claim of evidence becomes less important because it shows nothing *per se* or, like statistics, it can be made to show anything.

We have therefore seen that the two accounts of "evidence": the Realist and the anti-Realist, differ not in the meaning of these terms but in their significance. For the Realist, evidence is something that shows us about the world from which we are disconnected. For the anti-Realist, the fact that we need to narrate the connection between evidence and the world means that we construct it. As a construction it is no longer distant from the subject, or even separate from the subject, but at best a projection of the subject. Thus the significance of evidence changes and it no longer provides a bridge because there is no longer a gap to be bridged.

## **The incommensurability argument**

There has been some discussion in the literature about whether cross-paradigmatic comparison results in incomprehension owing to the incommensurability of the elements in the various paradigms (Kuhn 1996; Poropat 2002; Giddings & Grant 2006). Our research suggests that incommensurability is an inappropriate analysis of the problem. Guba and Lincoln (1994) have shown that there is a meta-level at which the structure of research paradigms and worldviews are comparable. This structure comprises the three core questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. However, the resulting taxonomic tables are misleading owing to the presence of rows containing responses to each question (Guba & Lincoln 2005: 195). This implies that some degree of comparison may be made between the contents of cells in a row. In our view this is misleading owing to the conditions described in the case of subjectivity. The mere presence of similar terms in cells in a single row misleads us into thinking that the significance of these terms is comparable. Indeed, since it is the purpose of the taxonomy to facilitate comparison, the presence of terms with the same meaning but different significance makes comparison paradoxical. For example, the possibility of the presence of the term "evidence" in the Realist and the anti-Realist paradigms does not mean that evidence in each case is comparable. We believe that this difficulty is a major factor in the mutual incomprehension between paradigms. Such incomprehension would be more easily explained if there were *not* terms with similar meanings in most paradigms. If such terms were completely different across paradigms then clearly such comparisons would be more difficult to make, and would involve the selection of concepts based on their content and function. However, since many terms are shared across paradigms it is tempting to think that they hold a similar role and have similar significance. It is then doubly misleading if, as we claim, these terms share the same meaning but not the same significance. As we have shown in the case of "evidence", a discussion may be had between the Realist and the anti-Realist owing to common meanings, but masking different assumptions of significance. We claim that it would seem inconceivable to the Realist that the fundamental importance of evidence not be recognised by the anti-Realist given that each appears to understand the term as having the same meaning.

## **Conclusion**

We have designed a set of tools generated by the criterion-based approach, consisting of the eight issues: four that we thought were broadly transferable and four additional subject-specific issues that we identified for the arts area. We applied these issues to various research paradigms in order to test for functional and dysfunctional relationships. The issues acted as a diagnostic tool. In particular we were interested in applying them in the anti-Realist domain in order to understand more clearly what is the worldview of the artist and what is the epistemological question: the relationship of either the consumer of the arts research; or from the point of view of the artist, the production of the artwork, what is their relationship to this world: what are they finding out, what other way might one phrase that question, "what are they doing?". Analysing these questions would allow

us to determine what methods would therefore be appropriate, and whether a more functional relationship could be build between the arts worldview and their research methods and actions. This toolkit allows us to investigate the actions that are being undertaken without having to assume anything about the worldview or the research paradigm that we are investigating. As a result we can begin to tackle our initial proposal that the arts represent a distinct worldview and therefore has its own research paradigm, or whether it can happily be accommodated within models that we already have or can redesign. The toolkit also enables us to analyse how one could make more functional what is currently the dysfunctional relationship between the worldview and the research paradigm. Our claim is that functionality can only be established when the underlying belief set or worldview has been made explicit. This explication will take account of subject specific concerns such as an appropriate location for the perceiving subject, the role of subjective experience, etc.

This is the initial framework that we are using on the 3-year project "non-traditional knowledge and communication", that has just started at University of Hertfordshire (UK). The project is grounded on previous research into research paradigms and PbR, and will develop the toolkit for analysing what artists are doing as research without having to decide whether the arts can be or is research, whether something is a good PhD or a bad PhD, etc., which has blighted previous research. The project team aim to deliver a set of analytical tools that can be applied in order to understand more clearly what people are trying to do, before addressing the question whether they are doing it effectively.

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## Endnotes

1 <http://r2p.herts.ac.uk/ntkc>

2 When this paper was read at the CEPA conference in Valencia, Noël Carroll raised the point that not all arts movements prioritise the experience of the art object, e.g. Conceptual Art. In our view, artwork that does not raise special problems, such as Conceptual Art, can be evaluated within existing paradigms. We are concerned to provide conditions for the evaluation of the most problematic cases, whatever the aspect that most strains our existing frames of reference.