

Glossary

Anthropocentrism: the practice of regarding the existence and/or concerns of human beings as the centre of the universe. In anthropocentrism, all things in the universe are to be judged in their relationship to man.

Anthroposophy: an attempt to investigate and describe spiritual phenomena with the same precision and clarity with which natural science investigates and describes the physical world. It is also called spiritual science by its founder Rudolf Steiner.

Biodiversity: the variety, distribution and abundance of different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the ecological functions and processes they perform, and the genetic resources they contain in a certain locality, region or landscape.

Cocreation: the act of engaging in a conscious creative partnership, with the innate impulse of creation, the intelligence of nature and natural systems design, the intuitive collective consciousness of humanity.

Co-evolution: process in which a number of different systems evolve simultaneously, partly on the basis of their own dynamics, and partly as a response to their interaction with other systems.

Constructivism: views all of our knowledge as ‘constructed’, because it does not reflect any external ‘transcendent’ realities; it is contingent on convention, human perception and social experience. Constructivists believe that representations of physical and biological reality, including race, sexuality and gender are socially constructed. The common thread between all forms of constructivism is that they do not focus on an ontological reality, but instead on the constructed reality.

Determinism: the proposition that every event, including human cognition and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences. No mysterious miracles or wholly random events occur. Determinism is associated with, and relies upon, the ideas of materialism and causality.

Disenchantment refers to the devaluation of mysticism. The concept was introduced by Max Weber to describe the character of modernised, secularised society, where scientific understanding is valued more than plain belief.

Dualism: the existence of two fundamental classes of things, or principles, often in opposition to each other. In philosophy of mind, dualism refers to the views that mind and matter are two ontologically separate entities.

Nondualistic perspective: the position that there is no fundamental distinction between mind and matter. Many traditions state that the true *condition or nature of reality*

is non-dualistic, and that these dichotomies are either unreal or (at best) inaccurate conveniences.

Endogenous development: development based mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources, local knowledge, culture and leadership, with openness to integrating traditional as well as outside knowledges and practices. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retention of benefits in the local area.

Epistemology: the study of the theoretical background and dynamics of a knowledge system, including its nature, origin and scope. Epistemologists analyse the standards of justification for knowledge claims, that is, the grounds on which one can claim to know a particular fact.

Globalisation: the growing economic, social and political interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services, international capital flows, and more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology and communication systems.

Global knowledge: knowledge that has resulted from global processes of knowledge and technology generation, processes of regional specialisation and global integration of communication, production and trade. This knowledge cannot claim exclusive regional origins. An example of global knowledge is information and communication technology (ICT).

Gnoseology: the study of the way to come to a deep understanding of reality. It includes direct observation, direct experience, intuition, or insight and the belief that such experience is an important source of knowledge or understanding. It may involve a belief in the existence of realities beyond immediate perceptual apprehension, or a belief that true perception of the world goes beyond intellectual understanding.

Hermeneutics: a philosophical technique concerned with the interpretation and understanding of texts.

Heurism: the approach to deriving knowledge from empirical study and practical adoption of experience.

Holism: the idea that all the properties of a given system (biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, linguistic, etc.) cannot be determined or explained by the sum of its component parts alone. Instead, the system as a whole determines in an important way how the parts behave.

Indigenous or local knowledge: knowledge generated, used and developed by people in a certain area. It is not limited to indigenous peoples and can include knowledge originating from elsewhere that has been internalised by local people through local processes of learning, testing and adaptation. It forms the basis of the art of identifying, combining, unfolding and protecting local resources. It is rooted in

and stems from local practices, hence it is specific to the local context and often gender specific.

Inter-cultural dialogue: exchange of experiences, ideas and values by representatives of different cultures, with the aim of mutual learning and enhancing the co-evolution of a diversity of cultures.

Intra-cultural dialogue: exchange of experiences, ideas and values by persons within a particular culture, with the aim of mutual learning and enhancing the same culture.

Inter-scientific dialogue: exchange of ideas, experiences and concepts related to different scientific paradigms and knowledge systems, with the aim of joint learning and the co-evolution of the diversity of sciences.

Learning: the process of sense making and acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes or values, that causes a change of behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, self-image or values. Learning can take place through copying behaviour, study, introspection, reasoning, experience or teaching.

Materialism: the position that the only thing that can truly be said to exist is matter; that fundamentally, all things are composed of *material* and all phenomena are the result of material interactions. In terms of singular explanations of the phenomenal reality, materialism stands in sharp contrast to vitalism.

Modern knowledge: knowledge that results from a systematic process of fact-finding and understanding, based on methods that use sensory experience and quantification. Predictability and control are important goals. It uses mechanistic models and follows the principles of Descartes, and is therefore often labelled as Cartesian. This knowledge is developed further in formal research centres and taught at formal educational institutes.

Monotheism: in theology, the belief in the existence of one deity or God, or in the oneness of God.

Objectivism: states that there is a reality or realm of objects existing independent of the mind. Metaphysical objectivism, opposed to subjectivism, thus believes in the existence of an objective reality.

Ontology is the study of being or existence. This most fundamental branch of metaphysics theorises on the basic categories and relationships of being or existence to define entities. Ontology has one basic question: 'What actually exists?' Different worldviews provide different answers to this question.

Paradigm: a compact outline of the major concepts, assumptions, theories, methods, procedures and propositions used in a particular scientific school.

Participatory Action Research: Research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts that make sense of it and by designing and testing methods of development and development support.

Polylogue: the word polylogue comes from the words poly (many) and dialogue. A number of dialogues occurring simultaneously.

Post-modern knowledge: knowledge resulting from a diversity of concepts that aims for an organic, holistic and ecological understanding of reality. As a reaction to modern knowledge, it integrates insights from various scientific sources. It accepts uncertainty, lack of control and limitations, as well as the complementarity of different knowledge systems.

Rationalism: a philosophical doctrine that asserts that the truth can best be discovered by reason and factual analysis.

Reductionism: the theory that asserts that the nature of complex things can always be reduced to (or explained by) simpler or more fundamental things. Reductionism in science says that a complex system can be explained by *reduction* to its fundamental parts. Essentially, chemistry is reducible to physics, biology is reducible to chemistry and physics, and psychology and sociology are reducible to biology, etc.

Relativism: the view that the meaning and value of human beliefs and behaviours have no absolute reference. Relativists claim that humans understand and evaluate beliefs and behaviours only in terms of, for example, their historical or cultural context.

Transdisciplinarity: is a principle of scientific research that describes the application of scientific approaches to problems that transcend the boundaries of conventional academic disciplines. Such phenomena, such as the environment, energy and health, are referred to as **transdisciplinary**.

Scientific knowledge: knowledge that results from systematic processes that include observation, understanding, description, explanation, fact-finding and experimentation. Abstract concepts and symbols are linked with reality through experimentation. Traditional, indigenous, modern and post-modern knowledge can all be considered scientific if they respond to this definition.

Vitalism: the doctrine that 'vital forces' are active in living organisms, so that life cannot be explained solely by mechanism. This element is often referred to as the 'vital spark' or 'energy', which some equate with the 'soul'.

Worldview: (or cosmovision) the way a certain population perceives the world (or cosmos). It includes assumed relationships between the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world. It describes the perceived role of supernatural powers, the relationship between humans and nature, and the way natural processes take place. It embodies the premises on which people organise themselves, and determines the moral and scientific basis for intervention in nature.