

INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRING ON THE SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL NATURE OF INTELLIGENCE AS A STATE INSTITUTION

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Motto: "Nothing can be more in harmony with the nature of any thing than other individuals of the same species. And so (...) nothing helps a man to stay in existence and enjoy a rational life more than a man who is guided by reason. Also, the most excellent particular thing we know of is a man who is guided by reason; so our best way of showing what our skill and understanding are good for is by educating men so that at last they live under the sway of their own reason."

Baruch Spinoza

Abstract

Intelligence is about speaking the truth to the policy-maker. However, this truth is not simply the result of an intellectual enquiring on something which is not in the eyes of the beholder. Intelligence is a social enterprise performed by a collective agent, namely the intelligence agency. Then, intelligence strives for the truth although this endeavor is a very difficult achievement indeed, so much so that intelligence is grounded on performing an entire intelligence cycle completed by an entire institution. Social epistemology is a new branch of analytic philosophy and it inquires the nature of social knowledge and collective agents. This paper considers the role of social knowledge inside intelligence as an institution of the state and it tries to address some fundamental questions related to the social epistemological nature of intelligence.

Keywords: *intelligence, social epistemology, theory, knowledge.*

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Introduction

It is always said that intelligence is about speaking the truth to the decision maker. However, this truth is not simply the result of an intellectual enquiring on something which is not in the eyes of the beholder. Indeed, intelligence deals with many different kinds of facts, such as natural facts (weather, environmental conditions, geography etc.) and social facts (states, institutions, organizations, armies etc.). Then, intelligence strives for the truth although this endeavor is a very difficult achievement indeed, so much so that intelligence is grounded on performing an entire intelligence cycle completed by an entire institution. The intelligence cycle is an entire epistemic activity based on gathering data and information, collecting them in order to analyze them to deliver a report whose goal is to enhance the rationality of a decision-maker. Then, intelligence is not an individual research agenda in which the analyst is the bookworm behind an esoteric piece of research. The analyst is just one social role to be performed by an individual, who is part of an institution whose main goal is the knowledge and foreknowledge of enemy's intentions, behavior and capability. Then, to reach this knowledge, the state needs an entire institution to perform this substantial and fundamental set of epistemic activities. The word "epistemic" here means that the main core function is deeply related to knowledge, although, of course, many other activities could be part of the process. However, if intelligence is about knowing the truths, then it is an *epistemic* activity. And as far as it is a collective enterprise, it is a *social* epistemic activity. Therefore, the intelligence outcome is the result of an institution that requests the coordination and activity of many people, as recognized by the scholars (Warner (2002), Ehrman (2009), Gill, Phythian (2012), Breakspear (2012),¹ Van Cleave (2013)). As it was stated by two prominent scholars, Mark Phythian and Peter Gill: "These all reflect the point that intelligence is a pre-eminently social and political phenomenon, not simply a technical discipline" Gill, Phythian (2016), p. 8. Then, intelligence is a collective group-activity formalized in a bureaucracy in order to let the intelligence officers work together for a common goal. The goal is defined by the policy-maker, who needs knowledge and information.

This paper is devoted to analyzing the social epistemological nature of intelligence. Jules Gaspard stated that "intelligence ultimately does not have just one essence, or none at all, but in fact it has more than one..." (Gaspard

¹ Breakspear considers intelligence as a "corporate capability to forecast change in time...". Therefore, he conceives intelligence as a social epistemic activity.

(2017), p. 558). If it is true, then one essence of intelligence is its social nature as it will be argued. In addition, intelligence today includes many different social epistemological institutions and activities, but this paper is focused only on intelligence as *state institution*. Although the following analysis can be easily applied also to the private sector, the focus here is to intelligence as state institution because it is still the most important of all. The paper is structured as follow: I will provide a philosophical analysis of intelligence as a fundamental social activity. Then, it will be considered what social epistemology is and why is so important for intelligence. In order to ground a social epistemological analysis of intelligence, it will be necessary to consider different aspects of its nature, from individuals to epistemic relevant organizations. Finally, an account of intelligence agencies as epistemic relevant institutions will be provided.

This paper tries to expand the discussion of a particular side of the intelligence theory. Other scholars developed theoretical perspectives (Marrin (2007), Warner (2009, 2017), Khan (2009), Gill (2010), Jackson (2010) Spadafora (2016), Galli (2016), Gaspard (2017), Phythian (2017), Marrin (2018)²). However, my approach is based on social epistemology and analytic philosophy, which is something still untried in the intelligence studies literature with some exceptions (Herbert (2006), Horn (2003), Bruce (2008), Rønn, Høffding (2013)). However, this would be one of the first attempt to develop a social epistemological understanding of intelligence as a state institution.

Intelligence is *inherently* a social activity – a philosophical proof

Before starting the social epistemological analysis, a general definition of intelligence would be useful:

(I) Intelligence is a secret epistemic social process, carried out by a bureaucratic governmental society, which starts with a decision-maker's request and ends with knowledge and foreknowledge of enemy's intention and behavior to avoid surprises and to ground rational decisions.³

² This paper is particularly interesting as it is an update review of the state of the intelligence studies literature about the intelligence theory.

³ I defended this definition in another work, Pili (forthcoming).

The definition conceives intelligence as a “secret epistemic social process”, which will be the subset of intelligence which will be considered in detail below. The definition suggests that intelligence is indeed a collective group-work in which the main goal (knowledge and foreknowledge to be provided to the decision-maker) is provided by a team of different individuals, identified by their different role, mainly the intelligence gatherer, the intelligence analyst, the decision maker and the enemy. Then, a brief discussion of these distinctive roles is given to ground the argument. Is a decision-maker needed to intelligence? First, intelligence is knowledge and foreknowledge of the enemy’s intentions, behavior and capabilities, and this knowledge is practically oriented, namely it is needed to take a rational decision. The decision has to be taken by an individual whose social role determines the responsibility to elaborate a rational choice. Then, the decision-maker is the individual who creates the need for intelligence. This means that intelligence without decision-maker is unthinkable. In a slogan, there is no intelligence without decision-makers. Then, intelligence is needed to enhance the effectiveness of power (Marrin (2007), p. 827, Warner (2009), p. 19, Gill, Phythian (2012), p. 19). However, the intelligence functions have to be performed by who have two epistemic duties: (a) to gather data and information and (b) to refine the information and deliver the product. These two core functions are performed by the intelligence gatherer and the intelligence analyst. Without the gatherer, the cycle of intelligence simply cannot start: intelligence process delivers an intelligence outcome selecting and refining information, which has to be gathered by somebody. However, gathering information and data is not enough, insofar it is a fundamental task of the intelligence process. Then, intelligence gathering has to be coupled with intelligence analysis. The two different functions must be performed by two different social roles, namely even though they can be done by the same *individual*, that individual is indeed entitle to have two different social roles with different duties and responsibilities (one thing is to gather information and data, another thing is to refine them to write a report understandable by a busy decision-maker). Then, ordinarily, the two intelligence functions are often (if not always) performed by different individuals with different social roles and related epistemic duties and responsibilities. Finally, the most counterintuitive of the four categories: the enemy. Many scholars agrees that enemy is essential to intelligence (Clausewitz (1832), Horn (2003), Treverton, Gabbard (2008), Luttwak (2009) Gill, Phythian (2012, 2016)). The main goal of intelligence is to discover enemy’s intentions, capability and behavior.

"Intelligence is about nothing if not about 'out-thinking' the adversary". (Treverton, Gabbard (2008), p. 48). Eva Horn argued in favor of this position because enemy is an alive entity who always try to fight back. It would be interesting to discuss how enemy is defined, as far as it is a social construction of a social object that follows the rule of many other social objects. However, this would bring us too far from the main topic of this paper. Then, the social relation involved in intelligence could be expressed in this way:

R_{IV} (decision maker, intelligence gatherer, intelligence analyst, enemy) = Intelligence Social Roles

This is a quaternary relation among four different social roles and it shows that there are different relations among the related social roles:

R_1 (decision maker, intelligence gatherer)
 R_2 (decision maker, intelligence analyst)
 R_3 (decision maker, enemy)
 R_4 (enemy, decision maker)
 R_5 (enemy, intelligence analyst)
 R_6 (intelligence analyst, decision maker)
 Etc.

This list is provided to show that the social relations among the four different social roles are *not* symmetrical. In order to understand the relation between the decision-maker and the intelligence analyst, it is needed to see the same relation by both sides,⁴ e.g. the decision maker comes before the intelligence analyst from a logical and temporary perspective: the decision maker has to put forward a request to the intelligence analyst to start the intelligence cycle.⁵ Then, the combinations of these relations (R_1 - R_6) show that

⁴ This actually shows that

R (decision-maker, analyst) $\neq$ R (analyst, decision maker)

Where we can stipulate that the relation **!R** (decision-maker, analyst) is defined as follow:

!R = R (decision-maker, analyst) $\wedge$ R (analyst, decision-maker)

Therefore, there are two different relations that bound the decision-maker and the analyst. This should be taken into the account when we analyze the relation between intelligence analysts and decision makers. Again, this means that the relation is composed by two different relations which are not symmetrical and that should be studied accordingly.

⁵ Where $R_1 \neq R_5$ even if the relata are the same two social roles. This applies to all the couple of social roles presented in the list.

the intelligence is double bounded to both the enemy and the decision maker. Therefore, the complexity increases taking into the account the asymmetrical nature of that relations.⁶ Now, I want to start with a brief introduction to social epistemology in order to go on the direction of a social epistemology of intelligence.

Social Epistemology – a brief introduction

Social epistemology is a relatively new branch of analytic epistemology. Its goal is to inquire knowledge, its role and its dynamics in social contexts. Since recent times, analytic epistemology was focused exclusively on individual epistemology, i.e. roughly, the study of how the cognitive subject knows something. Nevertheless, Alvin Goldman recognized that human knowledge cannot be understood only by one discipline: “epistemology should be a multidisciplinary affair” Goldman (1986), p. 1. Indeed, Goldman (1987) enlarged his interest on other sides of epistemology and he started a new way to think about knowledge in social contexts:

My conception of social epistemology has some affinities with these disciplines [i.e. sociology, philosophy of science etc.], but the epistemological aim is not coterminous with theirs. These disciplines have strictly descriptive and explanatory goals, while the central aim of epistemology is normative, evaluative, or critical. (...) The epistemologist wishes to investigate epistemologically relevant properties of the mechanisms. What those epistemic proprieties are remains to be specified. Goldman (1987), p. 10.

Social epistemology is a normative discipline that evaluates the social practices involved in the production of knowledge in social domains. However, social epistemology is not interested only in the description of the social dynamics in which knowledge is involved. Social epistemology is not a sociological description of how a group of people forms knowledge in some specific social contexts (Goldman (1987, 1999, 2009, 2015)). In addition, it is not part of the philosophy of science, even if it considers some of the related problems (Goldman (2010)).

Social epistemology is divided in different subsets: (A) testimony and peer disagreement, (B) collective agents and their epistemology, (C) the analyses of institutions and systems (the taxonomy is based on Goldman-

⁶ And it should increase furthermore if we consider that a relation that bounds three different entities is different by the simple sum of the relations that bound the entities per se.

Beddor (2015)). These areas can be furtherly divided. In the first categories, epistemologists study testimony and its capacity to justify beliefs (Code (2010), Goldman (2011), Millar (2011), Lackey (2011), Adler (2012), Goldman-Beddor (2015)); they study also how our beliefs, formed by the testimony of experts, are justified (Goldman (2011)). Finally, epistemologists consider also the problems of the peer disagreements (Sosa (2010), Kelly (2011)). Even if, historically, analytic philosophy is bounded on the assumption that knowledge is a matter of individual cognitive subjects, social ontology is a new branch of ontology (Bottazzi (2010), Mejers (2003), Searle (1990, 1995, 2007), Gilbert (1989), Bratman (2002)). Social epistemology considers under which conditions we can ascribe beliefs, justified beliefs and knowledge to social objects, e.g. collective agents such as institutions, organizations and societies (List and Pettit (2002), List (2011), Pettit (2011), Bird (2014)). Finally, some epistemologists consider specific aspects of institutions or organizations, which are important from an epistemological point of view (Goldman (1999, 2009, 2015), Anderson (2006), Talisse (2009), Fallis (2011), List (2011), Pettit (2011), Sunstein (2012)).

Social epistemology tries to understand how knowledge is formed and spread in social contexts. For this reason, epistemologists have different attitudes toward social epistemology: an individual based social epistemology, the epistemology of collective agents, and the specific analyses of particular domains. I do not want to go further in the description of the social epistemology but I want to say something more about its relevance for the intelligence studies.

First above all, intelligence is a social activity and, I think, it could be better analyzed by a social epistemological perspective much more than by an individual account of it. It would be impossible to exhaust its epistemological issues without a social epistemological analysis. Moreover, social epistemology should matter to the intelligence studies in many different ways: (a) intelligence analysts have to rely on other human beings to form their beliefs. It is impossible to have a good intelligence outcome without knowledge formed by testimony.⁷ A specific analysis about testimony under secrecy should be of invaluable significance. This kind of analysis would be

⁷ Human Intelligence is entirely based on the relationship between two different subjects. Open source intelligence is grounded on the open sources, which are basically video, audio and texts, i.e. testimony of facts reported through different ways of communication.

very interesting from a philosophical perspective as well. In fact, I did not find any useful philosophical analysis of secrecy within the epistemological theories. As stated by Stephen Marrin: "Finally, while there are efforts to develop intelligence theories related to intelligence analysis and produce-consumer relations, there are ideas being explored by other disciplines which could be considered intelligence theory" (Marrin (2018), p. 486). I think social epistemology could be one of these disciplines. (b) I will try to consider an analysis about the intelligence institutions. In fact, I think that the analysis of the epistemological practices of social objects is particularly fruitful to intelligence studies. (c) A detailed rational reconstruction (description) of intelligence organizations would be extremely useful for social epistemological accounts applied to systems and for the intelligence studies as such. Finally, (d) there are social epistemological accounts that deals directly with the evaluation of precise social systems whose goal is to provide knowledge. Don Fallis analyses Wikipedia and the Encyclopedia Britannica from an epistemological perspective in order to assess their relative and absolute epistemic efficiency (Fallis (2011)). I think that similar analyses could be useful for the epistemology of intelligence as well. This kind of studies would request some intelligence experts, interested in social epistemology. A social epistemological analysis of intelligence would be a great step toward an epistemology of intelligence.

A social epistemological account of institutions

Individuals, social relations and societies: Now I want focus my attention to the intelligence agencies and their nature. CIA, KGB, GCHQ, AISE, STASI are examples of intelligence agencies. Intelligence agencies are organizations: they are groups of individuals bounded by social relations. These groups have epistemic relevant goals to be reached according to their mission. In fact, different intelligence agencies can have multiple aims and some of them are not necessarily 'epistemic goals' (e.g. covert actions). An epistemic goal can be defined as a question or a problem that can be solved by the formulation of a set of propositions, formed by a reliable cognitive process. Although the intelligence agencies have many objectives, they are constitutionally grounded on their epistemic goals defined by their mission as the scholars point out.

In order to understand the nature of an intelligence agency as a social object, it is requested to distinguish different kinds of social objects and social subjects, e.g. society, organizations, institutions, and epistemic relevant

institutions. Let us start from the simplest social object. A society is *at least* a set of individuals. In fact, a set of individuals not bounded some social relations can be intended as a 'society'. For example, a random group of American people is still a kind of society. Nevertheless, this is not the case of an institution, because the social relations that bound the members are complex and not fixed by chance. Therefore, an institution is a particular kind of society. First, social relations bound the members of an institution: there is an interaction among the individuals part of an institution. Let us suppose for a moment that this is not the case. The members of an institutions simply cannot work together without the stipulation of social relations among them. They would not be organized as a group. They can just work together in the sense that they act alone even if they are grouped in some ways (for example, they stay in the same buildings). Therefore, these relations have to be 'social'. They have specific features that characterize them: they are not generic relations. For example, *a* and *b* are in spatial relations such that *a* is on the left of *b* and *b* is at north respect on *a*: these relations are not essential to characterize the social bounds among the members of an institutions. Therefore, an institution is a society in which all social relations bound the behavior and the beliefs of *all* the members of that organization. Of course, other kinds of relations appear (spatial relations, time relations and so on), but they are *not* essential to the definition of the nature of an institution as such. Therefore, an institution requests a set of social relations that bound the behavior and beliefs of the members of a particular institution.

Societies and Organizations: An institution is not only a set of people related together by social relations, e.g. a chess club. An institution is an *ordered* set of individuals, i.e. the social relations among the individuals shape a formal structure, whose shape depends on the institution's goals and rules. An intelligence agency, a football team, the public transport system, a university, an army are organizations with a different formal structure. In fact, their formal structures vary because of their different goals. This does not mean that organizations or institutions with similar or identical goals have necessarily the same structure. The point here is just that the goal of an organization shapes its structure and different kinds of organizations and institutions have different structures because of their different aims. Let us consider a possible characterization of an organization:

(Org) An organization O is an ordered set of individuals $i_1... i_n$, related through social relations $R_1...R_n$, in order to reach a declared common goal g such that the formal structure of O depends on g .

As we proved before, the social relations among the members of an organization have to be of a particular kind. They are not as such by chance. They have to be defined by a strictly formal procedure that should be endorsed by the organization itself. Therefore, an organization is an ordered set of individuals whose structure is defined by a set of rules endorsed by the organization itself in order to reach a declared goal. This set of rules constitute the essence of the organization and it could be conceived as its 'constitution'. Every organization has a 'constitution', which is an explicit and defined set of rules, expressed in the natural language (Searle (1995), Bottazzi (2010)). John Searle considered this point:

(...) institutional facts exist only within systems of constitutive rules. The systems of rules create the possibility of facts of this type; and specific instances of institutional facts such as the fact that I won at chess or the fact that Clinton is president are created by the application of specific rules (...). It is perhaps important to emphasize that I am discussing *rules* and not *conventions*. It is a rule of chess that we win the game by checkmating the king. It is a *convention* of chess that the king is larger than a pawn. "Convention" implies arbitrariness, but constitutive rules in general are not in that sense arbitrary. Searle (1995), p. 28, italics in the text.

Thus, an organization O exists if and only if (a) the order of the set of individuals is defined by its constitution, expressed in natural language and (b) the set of relations among the members of the organization is defined by the organization itself. In fact, two individuals i_1 and i_2 part of O have two roles R_1 and R_2 and these roles shape their relations between them within O . An agency's chief has a different relation with his inferior than his inferior with a peer. These differences are not simply owed to a spontaneously self-organization of the people. On the contrary, they are fixed in advance by the constitution of the organization. The *quality* of the relations can vary but not the *nature* of the relations.

The definition of the social roles within an organization requests a particular function. Searle (1995) calls it 'status function'. Before recalling it, I

want to quote another passage, which is useful to sketch the notion of 'function' involved in this context:

1. Whenever the function of X is to Y , X and Y are parts or a *system* where the system is in part defined by *purposes, goals, and values generally*. This is why there are functions of policemen and professors but no function of humans as such – unless we think of humans as part of some larger system where their function is, e.g. to serve God.

2. Whenever the function of X is to Y , then X is *supposed to* cause or otherwise result in Y . This normative component in functions cannot be reduced to causation alone, to what in fact happens as a result of X , because X can have the function of Y -ing even in cases where X fails to bring about Y all or even most of the time. Thus the function of safety valves is to prevent explosions, and this is true even for valves that are so badly made that they in fact fail to prevent explosions, i.e. they *malfunction*. (Searle (1995), p. 19, italics in the text).

Thus, an organization has a constitution (i.e. a set of rules to define its goals and its structure) and the constitution formulates the function through which the organization defines the individuals' social roles. This function takes the general form: " X counts as Y or X counts as Y in context C " (Searle (1995), p. 28). Therefore, an intelligence analyst is not simply a cognitive subject. He is a cognitive subject part of an organization such that his specific role is defined by the organization through a function, allowed by the constitutional rules of that particular agency. This role is not an arbitrary concession of the organization but it is objectively recognized as such by all the members of that organization and by the state that founded that institution. In fact, all the members are obliged to follow the constitutive rules of their institution. I want to refine the (Org) definition:

(Org¹) O is an organization if and only if:

(a) O is an ordered set of individuals $i_1... i_n$;

(b) O has a constitution, i.e. a set of rules explicitly endorsed by O and expressed by a natural language;

(c) the order of the set of individuals $i_1... i_n$ is defined by the constitution;

(d) the social relations $R_1...R_n$ are defined by the status function (defined by the constitution);

(e) O has a goal g , defined by the constitution, such that the formal structure of O depends on g .

The definition of specific organizations could be obtained by some restrictions on (Org¹): (a) we can discriminate the organizations by their members. In this case, two different organizations A and B can have the same structure, the same constitution, and the same goals but they can be different according to their members. For example, two different scientific committees can share the same goals and structure but the rules and the organization of the composition of the groups can vary accordingly. (b) We can discriminate two different organizations by their constitutions. In fact, different constitutions imply different organizations. (c) Two different organizations can be different for their goals, e.g. an NGO is different from a football team because they have different purposes.

Epistemic-relevant organizations: Now, I want to focus my attention on a particular kind of organization. If the primary goal of an organization is to form and spread knowledge, then, it is an epistemic-relevant organization. 'Epistemic relevance' means that the institution has an epistemic goal and it works only if it succeeds in delivering knowledge. The intelligence agencies are epistemic-relevant organizations. In fact, an intelligence agency has to provide knowledge and foreknowledge. Then, a general definition could be this one:

(ERO) An organization O is an epistemic-relevant one if and only if O is an organization whose primary goal g involves or requires knowledge to be reached.

(ERO) endorses the notion of organization, which is defined by (Org¹). Therefore, it is possible to consider a new detailed definition of an epistemic relevant organization, restricting the conditions expressed in (Org¹). However, I think the point is sufficiently clear.

Before turning our attention to institutions, I want to add that 'knowledge' can mean simply true belief in social epistemological contexts. According to Alvin Goldman:

One reason I focus on W[eak]-knowledge is to circumvent the intricate issues that surround the notion of S[trong]-knowledge. (...) A

second and more important reason is that people's dominant epistemic goal, I think is to obtain true belief, plain and simple. They want to be *informed* (have true belief) rather than *misinformed* or *uninformed*. The usual route to true belief, of course, is to obtain some kind of evidence that points to the true proposition and away from rivals. But the rationale for getting such evidence is to get true belief. Goldman (1999), p. 24.

In fact, an institution or an organization have an epistemic goal even if they do not want to find 'strong knowledge', i.e. at least justified true belief. For example, a comic review has an epistemic goal but it is not interested in a higher scientific endeavor. Thus, an epistemic goal is not necessarily to form 'strong knowledge' but something less, e.g. information, true belief. Of course, there are institutions and organizations that tries to form and to spread strong knowledge: a scientific magazine, a journal of philosophy, a paper of formal logic, and an intelligence analysis try to form and spread 'strong knowledge'. Therefore, an epistemic-relevant organization is committed to form weak or strong knowledge to reach its goals. An intelligence agency is an institution whose goal is to provide knowledge and foreknowledge of the enemy's intention and behavior to the decision maker. Therefore, the intelligence agency is an epistemic-relevant institution whose nature is set on the previous conditions.

Organizations, institutions and state institutions: An institution is a particular kind of organization. It can be an epistemic relevant organization or not. A state institution is a trustworthy organization part of a state, which is an institution itself. A state institution has a political goal, i.e. its goal is to allow the ordinary life of the state.

As I said before, we can operate some restrictions to (Org¹) in order to define some specific organizations. In this case, the best way to do it is to specify that (a) the 'constitution' of an institution is based on a political agreement set by the proxy of the state. (b) The goal of the institution is a political aim to be reached employing the state's resources. (c) In ordinary cases, the members of an institution are citizens of the state that founded that institution, or their right to be part of that institution was allowed by the state. Therefore, a definition of institution is given:

(In) *I* is a state institution *S* if and only if:

(a) *I* is an ordered set of individuals $i_1... i_n$, where $i_1... i_n$ are citizens of *S*;

(b) I has a constitution, i.e. a set of rules explicitly endorsed by I and expressed by a natural language, and this constitution is based on a political agreement;

(c) the order of the set of individuals is defined by the constitution;

(d) the social relations $R_1...R_n$ are defined by the status function (defined by the constitution);

(e) I has a goal g , defined by the constitution, such that the formal structure of I depends on g and g has a political value.

(In) is a detailed definition, provided by a set of restrictions on (Org¹). However, (In) is long and complex. Then, I want to add a different formulation:

(In¹) In is an institution of a state S if and only if In is an organization with a political goal, grounded on a political agreement fixed in a constitution, whose members are citizens of the state S in ordinary cases.

I think that (In) and (In¹) catch the same set of organizations. It is worthy to underline that an institution exists only within a state. In fact, an institution, as a state organization, is founded for a political goal and its resources are allowed by the state. Moreover, the members of an institution are citizens of a state. And even the people that are not part of that state, need some further documents or rights (given by the state) to be part of that state organization. Therefore, a state is requested to define who can be part of a certain institution and who cannot be part of it. The state founds an institution in order to defend its own existence, or secure or expand the ordinary life of the citizens. Then, the state allows the institutions to have the proper means to work. An intelligence agency is in fact an institution, it has a political goal and it is founded by a state, the state defines who can be part of an intelligence agency and it allocates the means and resources.

Intelligence agencies as institutions of the state: I want to move on in the social epistemological direction. Then, let us consider what an intelligence agency is. First above all, an intelligence agency is an epistemic relevant-organization.

An intelligence agency necessarily has to be as (ERO) prescribes. Let us suppose that this is not the case. It would turn to be an absurdum. In fact, according to the definition of intelligence provided before, intelligence is an epistemic social process that should “form knowledge and foreknowledge of

enemy's intentions". If we deny that an intelligence agency is an epistemic relevant organization, therefore we simply deny that it is capable to provide the intelligence outcome. Therefore, an intelligence agency has to be an epistemic relevant organization in order to deliver sound intelligence outcomes to the decision maker. Thus, an intelligence agency works when it respects (I) and (ERO). However, these conditions are not sufficient. An intelligence agency has to respect also (In) or (In¹) to work properly:

(In¹) *In* is an institution of a state *S* if and only if *In* is an organization with a political goal, grounded on a political agreement fixed in a constitution, whose members are citizens of the state *S* in ordinary cases.

In fact, an intelligence agency is an institution of a state *S*, it has a political goal and its members are citizens of *S*. Is it possible to deny these conditions? Let us see why it is not the case. (a) An intelligence agency has to respect (I). The intelligence definition explicitly considers that an intelligence agency is a bureaucratic activity, and then it is part of the state. (b) The goal of an intelligence agency is fixed by a policy-maker. Therefore, an intelligence agency has a political aim. (c) If intelligence is a bureaucratic activity, therefore it has to be done by the citizens of a state. In conclusion, an intelligence agency can be defined in this way:

(Int. Ag.) An institution *IA* is an intelligence agency if and only if it is an epistemic relevant state organization, whose political goal *g* is grounded on a political agreement fixed in a constitution, and the *IA*'s members are citizens of the state *S*, and *IA* provides intelligence in ordinary cases to reach *g* at time *t* both fixed by *S*.

I can give a detailed definition, such as (In). But I think that (Int. Ag.) is sufficient. The next step is to characterize some general features that an intelligence agency has to respect to work properly as an epistemic-relevant organization.

Intelligence agencies as epistemic relevant institutions

An intelligence agency has an epistemic duty to fulfill in order to reach its goals. The agency's goal shapes its own structure. An intelligence agency, as an epistemic-relevant organization, is capable to deliver knowledge and foreknowledge in ordinary circumstances. This is possible only if its members

fulfill their epistemic duties inside the agency: they have to solve problems that request their epistemic capabilities, e.g. information, beliefs, cognitive processes, communication etc. This epistemic activity is a social epistemic process carried out by the entire organization. The agency's members have also to cooperate to fulfill their goals *as members part of an organization*. Thus, the agency constitutive rules stipulate the members' social roles, which define their epistemic duties. In addition, coordination is requested in order to allow further refinements in the intelligence outcome throughout the entire intelligence process. Therefore, the intelligence outcome is the epistemic goal of the agency.

We can distinguish two different kinds of intelligence outcomes: (a) the single analyst's result and (b) the result of the institutional process. (b) implies (a) but not vice versa (the result of the institutional process is based on the result of the analysts' analyses). Therefore, the intelligence outcome is the result of a social epistemic practice in which the intelligence analyst's work is just a piece of it. The formal structure of an intelligence agency, as epistemic organization, is important for the final outline of the intelligence outcome. In order to show that the organization is much more important than its individuals are *per se*, I want to sketch a paradoxical case.

John and Jack are members of the same intelligence agency. John is the chief of Jack and Jack is an analyst. Jack has a source of information, Tom. John, Jack and Tom are part of an intelligence agency, which works in a strange way: John reports to the decision-makers information *I*, formed by wishful thinking. In fact, John never asks to Jack what Tom's knows. Jack speaks with Tom only if Jack feels to be lonely. Is this an intelligence agency? Let us suppose that this organization was founded by a state, Freedonia, and that John, Jack and Tom are citizens of Freedonia. Let us say that this agency was founded to warrant intelligence analyses to the Freedonia's policy-makers. This is a *bad* intelligence agency but after all, it is. Of course, it is not efficient and it is doubtful that it can provide an intelligence outcome at all. What is wrong with that intelligence agency? Why does it not work properly under the ordinary circumstances?

First of all, it doesn't work because the analysts do not do their job properly, at least from an individual epistemic perspective. In fact, John forms his beliefs through wishful thinking, and Jack does not ask anything relevant to Tom (etc.). Then, there is a problem in the ways in which the single analysts work. However, these are not the main problems. Even if John, Jack and Tom are epistemic virtuous cognitive subjects, it is questionable that the *structure* of the organization allows them to fulfil the agency's epistemic duty. Let us recall a problem considered before. An organization is not simply a society

whose members work in the same room. An organization is a collective subject in the sense that its shape is structured to fulfill a collective goal, which cannot be reached without some level of coordination. In fact, we can work together in the same room without any further relation. An intelligence agency works properly because its members are not put together randomly. An intelligence agency is an epistemic-relevant organization because its structure is *truth-conducive* with a good truth-ratio, e.g. it is reliable in providing their intelligence outcomes. The truth-conduciveness is a property of the cognitive process whose function is to form knowledge: "A truth-conducive or reliable process is sometimes described as a belief-forming process that produces either mostly true beliefs or a high ratio of true to false beliefs" (Becker (2009)).

The structural truth-conduciveness of an epistemic organization is an important feature of it. It means that if the members fulfill their epistemic duties correctly, and they convey the right outcomes to their colleagues, and this is allowed by the rules of the agency, then the structure of the organization allows a reliable result. If this organization is an epistemic-relevant institution, then it can form and spread knowledge to the policy-makers reaching its goal in ordinary circumstances. Therefore, the formal shape of the institution is fundamental to reach the goal fixed by the state and to maintain a sufficient quality of its result. Moreover, for the reasons we discussed before, it is impossible to have an (epistemically) reliable organization, whose structure is not truth-conducive. An intelligence agency works properly if and only if its formal structure is truth-conducive in ordinary circumstances. To sum up, an intelligence agency works properly if and only if:

- (a) The members of the agency fulfil their duties, fixed by their social roles, and, among them, the epistemic duties;⁸
- (b) The agency's formal structure is truth-conducive under ordinary circumstances (i.e. if (a) is met));
- (c) The members of the agency join a common and efficient coordination.

(a-c) are disjointed conditions, i.e. if (a) is not met, (b)&(c) could be met. Nevertheless, (a-c) should be met altogether to have a functioning intelligence agency. The independence of (a-c) is important because it shows

⁸ I considered this point extensively in another place, Pili (forthcoming).

that an institution is much more complex than it appears. In fact, if its members fulfil their duties, but their social roles, fixed by institution's constitution, do not allow an efficient coordination, then the institution does not work correctly. However, an intelligence agency still resides on the quality of its analysts and members.

As Marrin put out, to be efficient an intelligence agency needs practitioners with a high sense of professionalization: "preventing corruption of the analytic product requires that intelligence analysts retain a strong sense of professional identity and integrity. (...) All that is required to prevent analytic politicization is a fair reading of the information available combined with integrity in its interpretation and honesty in its communication" (Marrin (2013), p. 54). But this is not sufficient for an intelligence agency to work. An intelligence agency works properly if all the members fulfil their epistemic duties, they are properly coordinated, and the agency's structure is truth-conducive. An agency cannot fulfil its goals without the ordinary fulfillment of the duties of its members. Therefore, an institution lives only if its members work properly.

Conclusions

The argument addressed two basic goals: to give a new theory of intelligence as "a function of government"⁹ and to referencing it to the existing literature. By the way, I consider my attempt as a first step to be further refined. The social epistemology could enlighten more aspects of what I have considered now. I tried to show that intelligence is a social activity, which has an epistemic impact over the rest of the society. I analyzed the intelligence agency from a social ontological perspective in order to clarify some important feature of its nature. The philosophical investigation showed that an intelligence agency is an epistemic-relevant organization whose goal is to provide knowledge and foreknowledge of the enemy's intentions and behavior. The formal structure of the intelligence agency is definitely important. In fact, the intelligence agency works properly only if its structure is truth-conducive. In addition to that, the professionalization of the members is necessary in order to provide reliable intelligence outcome. Finally, I showed that the intelligence agency, as a state institution, has a political goal and it depends on the rules of the state.

⁹ Marrin uses this expression. I preferred to frame the same concept in a different way but I think I am in the Marrin's line.

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