Reflections on Social Science Research and the Evaluation of Its Outcomes from a Knowledge Innovation Perspective (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose / Significance] With the advancement of social civilization, social sciences and their research are becoming increasingly important. From both theoretical and practical perspectives, investigating social phenomena and problems and promoting the flourishing of social sciences constitute an eternal theme of humanity. At present, social science research and its outputs fail to meet the demands of socio-economic development. In particular, the issue of unscientific evaluation of social science achievements has drawn considerable attention from all sectors of society, engendering criticism and skepticism toward social sciences and thereby impeding their due development. [Method / Process] Based on a knowledge management perspective and proceeding from the significance of social sciences and the characteristics of social science research, this study reconsiders the evaluation of social science achievements. [Result / Conclusion] The study provides new reflections on the evaluation of social science achievements from the perspectives of evaluation principles, evaluation viewpoints, evaluation priorities, evaluation systems, and evaluation indicators, with the aim of fostering a proper understanding of social science research and its outputs.

Full Text

Thinking about Evaluation of Social Science Research Results

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Abstract

[**Purpose/Significance**] With the progress of social civilization, social science and its research have become increasingly important. Theoretically and practically, studying social phenomena and problems to promote the flourishing development of social sciences represents an eternal theme of humanity. Currently, however, social science research and its achievements struggle to meet the needs of socioeconomic development. Particularly, the unscientific evaluation of social science results has attracted widespread societal attention, generating criticism and doubt about social sciences, which in turn hinders their proper development.

[**Method/Process**] Based on a knowledge management perspective and starting from the significance of social sciences and the characteristics of social science research, this paper reconsiders the evaluation of social science achievements.

[**Result/Conclusion**] The paper proposes new reflections on social science evaluation from the perspectives of evaluation principles, evaluation viewpoints, evaluation priorities, evaluation systems, and evaluation indicators, aiming to achieve a correct understanding of social science research and its achievements.

Keywords: social science; research achievements; knowledge management; evaluation

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The Significance of Social Sciences

As human socioeconomic activities develop, society generally progresses toward civilization, though it is undeniable that various adverse social phenomena and prominent social problems have emerged along the way due to multiple factors. Solving these problems requires the joint efforts of all humanity, necessitating not only natural and engineering sciences but, more importantly, social sciences.

The significance and role of social sciences are immense and irreplaceable. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated in his important speech at the Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences on May 17, 2016: "Philosophy and social sciences are important tools for people to understand and transform the world, and an important force for promoting historical development and social progress. Their development level reflects a nation' s thinking ability, spiritual character, and civilizational quality, and embodies a country' s comprehensive national strength and international competitiveness. A country' s development level depends not only on the development level of natural sciences but also on that of philosophy and social sciences. A country without developed natural sciences cannot walk in the forefront of the world, and likewise, a country without prosperous philosophy and social sciences cannot walk in the forefront of the world. To uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics, we need to continuously explore both in practice and theory, and use developing theories to guide developing practice. In this process, philosophy and social sciences have

an irreplaceable important status, and philosophy and social science workers have an irreplaceable important role" [**?**].

Social sciences play a fundamental theoretical guiding role in solving or future-solving various social problems in development. They also serve to inherit and lead social civilization and culture, as well as shape worldviews, outlooks on life, and values—meeting the requirements of social civilizational progress while embodying humanity' s new ideas, concepts, values, and ethos. In practice, social science development is necessary for national governance and socioeconomic development [**?**]. With improving governance capacity and service levels, the demand for social science talent, particularly think-tank talents who provide knowledge innovation and services for scientific decision-making, ecological governance, and business environment optimization, is increasing. However, the repeated emergence of certain social phenomena, especially adverse ones, and their symptomatic solutions demonstrate that social science development has rarely elevated practical social issues to the level of theoretical inquiry to reveal their inherent essence and developmental trends, thereby providing fundamental decision-making support for solving practical problems.

Therefore, flourishing social sciences is an inevitable choice with considerable room for development and potential. The key lies in how to achieve this development. First, from a knowledge innovation perspective, social science achievements represent the fruits of human intellectual labor and constitute knowledge that becomes important content in humanity' s knowledge base—such as monographs, papers, research reports, and policy consultation reports that demonstrate new social science ideas, methods, institutional systems, laws and regulations, and policy recommendations. Thus, social science research is a process of knowledge innovation. In this process, researchers conduct theoretical and practical innovation based on social science development trends and academic logic, combined with actual social problems, to serve both "reaching the sky" (theoretical breakthroughs) and "standing on the ground" (practical solutions).

Second, to promote the flourishing development of social sciences, we must start with the "baton" and "bull' s nose" of social science achievement evaluation. From the perspective of social science development trends and knowledge innovation theories and methods, and considering research questions, research thresholds, research practice, research methods, and research achievements, we need to rethink social science research and its achievement evaluation from the perspectives of evaluation principles, evaluation viewpoints, evaluation priorities, evaluation systems, and evaluation indicators. This will help build a new academic evaluation system and foster a favorable academic ecology for social sciences.

Characteristics of Social Science Research

To reanalyze and understand social science achievement evaluation, we must recognize the characteristics of social science research. As mentioned earlier, social

science research is a process of knowledge innovation. Social science researchers are knowledge innovators and also knowledge appliers. They apply social science theories and methods, and even natural and engineering science theories and methods, to social science practical problems—innovating (creating new knowledge) through application, and applying through innovation. They either propose new social science ideas, viewpoints, theories, and methods, or solve practical problems or provide new perspectives and ideas for future problem-solving. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of social science research is crucial for both researchers and evaluators, as it is significant for building research integrity and ethics, eliminating academic misconduct (regulation) and academic mediocrity, and fostering a good academic ecology.

Research Questions: As is well known, asking questions is more important than solving them. From a knowledge management perspective, researchers propose "research questions" based on their research interests, strengths, and capabilities, applying relevant theories and methods to observe, understand, think about, and cognize phenomena in certain research fields, and conducting literature collection, collation, analysis, and other research work. This is the starting point and foothold of knowledge application and innovation.

Social science research questions arise from various social phenomena in human socioeconomic activities, particularly adverse social phenomena. Unlike natural and engineering sciences, which focus more on science and technology and where researchers can win Nobel Prizes by solving specific practical problems through a single paper or patent, social problems are the results of demands and behaviors of all stakeholders—including individuals and organizations—in human socioeconomic activities. Researchers mainly lead social value through monographs or papers that form their own ideological systems, providing ideas for future solving of macro-level problems. Therefore, social science research is always problem-oriented, and based on research purposes and actual conditions, it applies relevant theories and methods to break down problems and form main research content, clarifying research difficulties, key points, and breakthroughs. For the same research question, even with the same research purpose, different approaches can be taken for research and innovation.

Any social problem arises from and influences human socioeconomic activities. Therefore, the questions, purposes, content, theories and methods, difficulties, key points, breakthroughs, and innovations in social science research are all human-related, focusing on human development. Natural and engineering science research questions concern "natural phenomena or objective things," which are not human-related, but through studying them, they reveal and discover inherent objective laws—that is, following laws, creating, and satisfying people' s needs for a better life. Social sciences, by studying social phenomena and problems in human socioeconomic activities and innovating based on relevant theories and methods, reveal the characteristics and trends of human-natural phenomena matching, as well as the essence and developmental trends of social phenomena and problems.

Social problems originate from human socioeconomic activities, featuring complexity, arduousness, universality, and long-term nature. Social science research develops through the process of discovering new problems while solving them. Solving problems means providing scientific, reasonable, and effective theoretical and practical guidance for problems controlled within a reasonable scope. That is, social problems cannot be completely (absolutely) solved, only relatively solved—controlled within a scientific and reasonable range—while generating other new problems. This is why social problems are complex, research is difficult, and consensus on achievements is hard to reach.

Research Threshold: The research threshold refers to the necessary and foundational theoretical and practical knowledge required for a researcher to conduct research in a certain field. Researchers' inherent research potential is continuously unleashed through sustained research, thereby strengthening their research foundation, improving research capabilities, and elevating research levels. The research threshold is important for both researchers' self-awareness and selection, ensuring that the most capable people (researchers) do the work they are best at (research work).

Because social problems are all around us and inseparable from us, everyone can more or less express reasonable feelings, opinions, or views. This often creates the misconception that the threshold for social science research is low, as if anyone can engage in it. In reality, the threshold for social science research is entirely different. Natural and engineering sciences have prominent technical ladder thresholds—missing one rung makes entry impossible. Social science research appears to have no explicit technical ladder threshold, but it has numerous implicit non-technical threshold requirements, such as the breadth, depth, and height of understanding and judgment of social problems' past, present, and future; the degree of familiarity and flexible application ability regarding relevant institutions, policies, management, and culture; and long-accumulated experience, 阅历, and insights. Particularly, a foundation in literature, philosophy, and history may not affect entry, but bottlenecks in these areas make it difficult for ordinary people to conduct in-depth research, let alone produce insightful and valuable viewpoints, ideas, and theories. Just as without solid Chinese proficiency, it is difficult to achieve the "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" in translation, let alone reach the realm of Professor Xu Yuanchong' s translation theory of preserving truth and beauty, and his three-beauty theory of "beauty in meaning, sound, and form" for poetry translation. In essence, the threshold for social science research is very high, and producing insightful and valuable achievements is very difficult, especially reaching consensus (in fact, non-consensus achievements are more valuable, demonstrating flourishing diversity).

We know that learning calligraphy requires both entering the model and exiting it—entering is easy, but exiting is difficult. Social science research is even harder to "enter (the model)" and harder still to "exit (the model)." Therefore, both reading and thinking are important. I propose the motto "Find joy in the joy-

less, achieve through purposeful action" to share with colleagues and knowledge management workers.

Research Practice: In knowledge management, research methods are the most important knowledge and indispensable in research and practice. Inspiration, ideas, innovation, and thought are important, but without methods, they are difficult to realize. As mentioned earlier, social sciences differ from natural and engineering sciences. In research, they require not only theoretical and technical methods, investigation, experiments, and models, as well as research capabilities, but also comprehensive understanding of research questions, especially long-term, in-depth field tracking investigations. Based on this, some experiences formed in long-term social science research can be expressed as explicit knowledge, while some knowledge becomes tacit knowledge that is not expressed, such as feelings from the heart, eyes, hands, and emotions.

Any research requires familiarity with the research question as a prerequisite; otherwise, it cannot be called research. We know that any social problem, unlike the objectivity and closedness of natural and engineering science problems, involves the demands and behaviors of various stakeholders in socioeconomic activities, as well as requirements across social fields, aspects, and levels, while balancing macro, meso, and micro perspectives, efficiency and fairness, past and future, short-term and long-term, etc. These mutually constraining relationships determine the subjectivity and openness of social science problems, which in turn determine their complexity and difficulty.

Therefore, based on these characteristics of social problems, besides corresponding theoretical methods and conventional literature and data, long-term, in-depth field tracking investigations are needed to grasp first-hand materials and comprehensively understand the real situation in breadth and depth. On this basis, thinking and analysis lead to insights and grasp of problems, accurate understanding of the past and present demands and behaviors of different stakeholders in corresponding social phenomena or problems, and predictions of the future. This is the most important and indispensable research practice foundation in social science research. In other words, social science research without solid research practice as its foundation, no matter how powerful its theories, methods, and research capabilities, will produce results that are castles in the sand—untenable and worthless. As "excavating and using original materials" was one of Chen Yinke' s research principles, this research practice is relatively more important for social science research and "writing papers on the earth."

In knowledge management, the so-called investigation refers to research based on investigation—that is, people consciously examine, understand, and analyze research phenomena or problems to understand real situations for certain purposes. Various investigation methods such as questionnaire surveys, literature surveys, interview surveys, group interviews, field observations, field investigations, and 蹲点调查 are the most basic, important, and effective methods for studying social science problems. Based on relevant theories and literature analysis, through investigation and research to understand reality, and through in-

depth and broad thinking, analysis, and understanding of problems, researchers summarize and elevate insightful and valuable viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions. Of course, some necessary quantitative methods are needed in this process, especially some sophisticated and scientific methods from natural and engineering sciences. Practice has proven that such scientification is necessary and plays its due role, but there are also problems of abuse and misuse due to excessive scientification, which instead affects the value of social science research and brings great negative impacts.

Therefore, we should not discard scientification because of these problems, but it is worth considering its boundaries. A selection principle is needed—considering the compatibility and degree of compatibility between scientification and social science problems, as well as the appropriateness, rationality, feasibility, and effectiveness of scientification. It is worth emphasizing that the simpler the method that meets research needs, the better, and artificial complexity should be eliminated. For example, excessive artificial scientification leads to the tail wagging the dog—appearing very scientific and "high-end," but the scientific application does not reveal valuable viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions, or scientification does not play a role in revealing valuable new viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions. Just as mathematics cannot solve all economic problems, but solving economic problems without mathematics is also impossible, the same is true for social science problems—the key is the boundary of mathematization.

Objectively, natural and engineering sciences have unified standards and emphasize scientific logic, especially scientific experimental methods, while social sciences have no unified standards but emphasize viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions based on academic logic and reality. Moreover, not all natural and engineering science methods can be applied to social problems, and there are boundaries, compatibility, and degree of compatibility issues in their application; otherwise, they will backfire.

Features of Social Science Research Results

Social science research results (hereinafter referred to as "social science achievements") are the most universal, abundant, and valuable knowledge in the development of human social civilization, progress, and development. As mentioned earlier, they are the intellectual labor results of social science researchers and are the most typical knowledge. Social science achievements have two main types: The first is theoretical achievements, which propose systematic theories, ideas, and viewpoints, forming an independent academic system that provides theoretical support for solving (future) practical problems. The carriers of theoretical achievements are monographs or papers, and their authors can be called scholars—researchers who have achieved valuable and thoughtful theoretical innovations in social science fields. Unfortunately, the term "scholar" is currently overused and diluted. I believe a scholar is a researcher with rich experience, profound 阅历, insight, creativity, and thinking ability who, through long-term

deep and calm thinking, proposes their own viewpoints, ideas, and theories. They do not enjoy lively lights and socializing, do not pursue utilitarian wealth and luxury, are willing to endure loneliness and sit on a "cold bench," achieving "ten years to sharpen one sword." Clearly, theoretical innovation is very difficult and by no means accomplished in one day—it requires long-term observation and thinking. The second type is applied achievements, which utilize long-term theoretical accumulation combined with insightful grasp of practical problems to propose countermeasures and provide scientific decision-making services for problem-solving. Here, it is especially necessary to give play to the role of third-party professional think tanks. Nowadays, various think tanks and consulting institutions far from truly meet the needs of government departments, social organizations, and enterprises for scientific decision-making services.

Social science achievements have the following characteristics:

First, **knowledge nature**. Any social science achievement is the result of knowledge innovation and is knowledge with uniqueness. While encouraging researchers (mental laborers) to externalize the tacit knowledge (stored in the cerebral cortex) they create to gain academic peer and social recognition and to communicate, share, and apply it, we need to protect creators' rights and interests. Otherwise, it is not conducive to knowledge innovation, exchange, sharing, and application. In the externalization process, carriers and explicit technical craft methods are needed. For example, using printing technology and paper carriers to print monographs or papers stored in the brain into hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of paper copies (externalization) to become knowledge products. Knowledge emphasizes the uniqueness of content, while knowledge products emphasize the product nature of carriers. Due to the complexity and difficulty of social science research problems, as well as differences in research thresholds, methods, and practice, we should allow failure in social science innovation and treat failure tolerantly (after all, lessons and understanding gained from failure are themselves knowledge or knowledge update laws). Otherwise, it is not conducive to the flourishing and sustainable development of social sciences.

Second, **unpredictability**. Unlike natural and engineering science achievements that are predictable, social science achievements are unpredictable. This is because the former studies problems in objective, closed systems with linear value orientation, mainly discovering the regularity of objective phenomena or things' development; the latter studies problems in subjective (human-related), open systems with nonlinear value orientation, mainly revealing the trends of social phenomena or things' development.

Third, **diversity**. Different researchers studying the same problem achieve different social science achievements, and even their viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions and suggestions may be contradictory. However, as long as these achievements are supported by scientific logic and academic reasoning and can justify themselves, they can become independent academic viewpoints. Such "contradictory" differences precisely demonstrate the original flourishing

of "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend" in social science research.

Fourth, **relativity**. Given that social problems involve complex interactions among demands and behaviors of different stakeholders, environments and scenarios, locations and periods, conditions and constraints, any social science achievement is the result of comprehensively considering the dynamic balance of all aspects and levels of various subjects, with significant relativity limited by time, space, sample data and materials, and understanding.

The different characteristics of social science achievements from natural and engineering science achievements are like the realistic portrayal of "In literature there is no first, in martial arts there is no second." Clearly understanding this is very important for both social science achievement evaluation and evaluators.

Thoughts on Social Science Achievement Evaluation

In his important speech at the Philosophy and Social Sciences Work Symposium, President Xi Jinping also pointed out: "Letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend is an important guideline for the flourishing development of China' s philosophy and social sciences. We should advocate theoretical innovation and knowledge innovation, encourage bold exploration, carry out equal, healthy, lively, and fully reasoned academic contention, and enliven academic atmosphere. We must uphold and promote academic democracy, respect differences, embrace diversity, and advocate mutual discussion and equal debate among different academic viewpoints and different style schools" [**?**]. I believe this is the basic guiding ideology that needs to be followed in social science achievement evaluation.

Based on the characteristics of social science research, evaluation serves as the "baton" for social science research and development. Starting from the characteristics of social science research and achievements and the laws of knowledge innovation, we need to reflect on social science achievement evaluation to help create an academic cultural environment, form academic ecology, academic order, and academic achievements, establish a virtuous cycle of critical evaluation, and benefit the understanding of social science phenomena or problems, promote social science research and development, and serve national governance and socioeconomic development [**?**].

It can be said that social science achievement evaluation is the result of innovative thinking. It is a knowledge service system for evaluating social science achievements, including important aspects such as evaluation perspectives, evaluation priorities, evaluation scales, and evaluation indicators. Below, I will reflect on these important aspects and attempt to propose new and valuable viewpoints.

As the saying goes, "In literature there is no first, in martial arts there is no second," there is no unified or unique standard for evaluating social science

achievements, presenting diversity. This is also the objective reason for "scholars tend to look down upon each other." However, in social science achievement evaluation, we must correct ideology, academic attitude, academic responsibility, and academic norms—that is, seeking truth from facts is the only common requirement. Based on diversified standards, evaluation results for social science achievements will differ. As the saying goes, "The gentleman says it is reasonable, the lady says it is reasonable"—for the same achievement, evaluation results will differ across different times, scenarios, and evaluators; or the same evaluator' s results will differ across different times and scenarios, even becoming opposite. Importantly, based on the different theories, materials, methods, analytical logic, and reasoning adopted in social science research, different research results such as viewpoints, ideas, and theories, as well as conclusions and suggestions, will be produced for the same problem; research results will differ even more across different times and scenarios, and even the same researcher' s results will differ across different times and scenarios. This is precisely the characteristic of diversified evaluation and "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend" in social science achievements.

Due to the characteristics of social science research, even with the same research purpose, each researcher breaks down and conducts research based on their own strengths and expertise, reflecting the characteristic of "same work, different tunes." Therefore, in evaluation, evaluators first need to maintain a scientific attitude and tolerant mindset, and must understand the researcher before evaluating—that is, they need to stand from the researcher' s perspective, establish a matching analytical framework, and evaluate based on the theories, materials, and methods used, as well as the analytical logic and academic reasoning. Second, they need to consider the degree of insight into the research problem (whether theoretical or practical), whether the scientific question extracted from the problem hits the research purpose, whether it is forward-looking, whether it has academic value, and whether it is targeted. Third, they need to consider whether cited previous achievements are cutting-edge and compatible with the research problem, and whether the academic logic and reasoning are scientific. Finally, they need to consider whether the new viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions proposed in the research are novel and valuable, and whether the policy suggestions can solve practical problems or provide new perspectives and theoretical support for future problem-solving [**?**].

In actual peer evaluation of social science projects, achievements, journal papers, dissertations, and research reports, some evaluators often evaluate achievements from their own perspectives and logic, which is biased and unacceptable [**?**]; some evaluators criticize achievements as soon as they find their viewpoints, ideas, theories, conclusions, or suggestions inconsistent with their own, which is even more unacceptable. Worse still, some stand high above, use a magnifying glass, and "look for bones in eggs"—all of which are very detrimental to academic research and the growth of young researchers, do not meet the requirement of seeking truth from facts, and especially hinder the creation and emergence of first-class research that challenges authority, overthrows established conclusions,

and makes history.

Based on the characteristics of social science research, evaluation should not cover everything but should adopt a focused evaluation. For social science theoretical achievements, evaluation should focus on academic value and contribution, such as new viewpoints, ideas, and theories. Particularly, it needs to consider the theoretical explanation of relevant factors and mechanisms, as well as appropriate and complete research methods to test the theory. For social science applied achievements (such as policy consultation), evaluation should focus on the pertinence, feasibility, operability, and effectiveness in solving practical problems. This will benefit rather than restrict the flourishing development of social sciences.

However, in practice, there are significant problems in evaluating social science papers. We know that papers are the main carriers of social science theoretical achievements and the result of thinking, analysis, and summarization in the theoretical innovation process. Therefore, papers have three components: content, academic innovative content, and the form of expression. The scientific writing paradigm (the so-called "eight-legged essay" paradigm) summarized from long-term experience is valuable, especially for training students' academic literacy, norms, and capabilities in scientific research, and is very necessary for beginning researchers. However, in actual evaluation, the explicit "eight-legged essay" paradigm of papers is often emphasized while the substantive academic innovative content is ignored. As a result, papers published in today's academic journals uniformly display the "eight-legged essay" paradigm, making it difficult to see papers in non- "eight-legged essay" forms, let alone papers with truly academically valuable innovative content. The reason is the reversal of evaluation essence, putting the cart before the horse, "picking up sesame seeds and losing watermelons" —not paying attention to substantive academic innovative content but focusing on the writing form. Consequently, papers appear correct and scientific, standardized, and beautiful in form, but the so-called "academic innovative content" lacks new viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions, has little academic value, cannot stand up to scrutiny, and is merely papers manufactured according to established templates—truly "gold and jade on the outside, but rotten cotton inside." As a result, a large number of mediocre papers occupy journals, seriously affecting social science research, let alone flourishing social sciences. As 2018 Nobel Prize winner in Physiology or Medicine Tasuku Honjo believes, truly first-class work is often not published in top journals [**?**]. This is because first-class work often overthrows established conclusions and is therefore unpopular; reviewers will give many negative comments, and your article cannot be published in top journals. Articles that cater to the trends of the times are more easily accepted; otherwise, it takes a long time to gain recognition. As a result, 90% of viewpoints in journals like *Nature* and *Science* are incorrect, and after 10 years of publication, only 10% are still considered correct [**?**].

I believe we cannot equate first-class work with papers that have received praise from certain famous people or been published in famous journals. Otherwise,

due to the lack of critical evaluation, what was originally a positive correlation relationship, because of celebrity intimidation, sectarian bias, preconceived notions, double standards, and misuse of probability laws and related concepts, will instead stifle papers that truly reflect first-class work.

Of course, papers that have both standardized form and academic value and innovative content are excellent but also rare. Therefore, we should always prioritize academically valuable innovative content as the foundation, manifested as personalized and diverse creative papers, to prevent and reject beautiful formal shells, even though they seem to avoid obvious academic misconduct but conceal the paleness of academic innovative content.

Therefore, in the choice between writing norms and academic innovation, we should prioritize whether the new ideas, viewpoints, theories, and conclusions presented in academic innovation are valuable, not the writing norms. Conversely, writing forms can be diverse as long as they clearly demonstrate the argument. It is worth noting that papers with non- "eight-legged essay" forms and personalized writing styles often have academically valuable viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions, while "eight-legged essay" papers rarely have academic value. The reasons are threefold:

First, producing ideas is much more difficult than following norms. The former requires researchers' long-term experience, qualifications, insights, and reflections, while the latter can be achieved through proper attitude and seeking truth from facts combined with scientific learning and practice over a certain period. Scholars who produce ideas are few, especially senior researchers with profound academic ideological foundations and strong practical insight and analytical abilities who are skilled at writing papers with pure text and academic logical reasoning. Authors who follow norms are the majority of researchers, especially young people skilled at writing papers by introducing complex models and quantitative methods. Unlike natural and engineering sciences, which cannot produce results without the "diamond drill" of mathematical tools, this situation is exceptional for social sciences. For social science research, when researchers understand, 洞察, think about, analyze, and cognize reality and conduct logical reasoning, they need a rich foundation in literature, philosophy, and history. As Mr. Hsu Cho-yun said, the "tempering skill of refining words" is very important.

Second, once norms are established, they often become standards, and finally, this "high-end" standard is used for evaluation, often eliminating good papers. Standardization is originally procedural, mainly considering whether product quality and production processes comply with regulations and have universality. However, social sciences have no standards, and such misuse and abuse of norms lead to the tragedy of the "eight-legged essay," seemingly unable to produce "bad articles"but making it difficult to produce good articles. Obviously, social science talent cultivation, scientific research, journals, and papers under standardized norms cannot produce new viewpoints, ideas, theories, and conclusions, which is worth deep reflection. Otherwise, social science research will struggle to

reproduce the contention of a hundred schools of thought and the blooming of a hundred flowers, let alone flourish.

Third, people with ideas are lonely and solitary. Since ancient times, sages have been lonely. Such people with ideas are often lonely. They pursue personal interests, are not moved by any utilitarianism, maintain their original aspirations, dare to break constraints and conventions, are willing to sit on a cold bench for a long time, persevere in research, sharpen one sword for ten years, form their own system, and become true scholars with ideas. In other words, truly academically valuable achievements are often not produced by team research or joint 攻关, but by individuals through long-term thinking, summarization, refinement, and sublimation. Of course, in the research process, they will examine relevant literature and voluntarily communicate with researchers who share interests and consistent worldviews, presenting a natural process.

Evaluation Scale and Indicators

For social science achievement evaluation, based on academic attitude, academic responsibility, and academic norms, and standing from the researcher' s perspective, a tolerant scale is needed to evaluate their viewpoints, ideas, theories, conclusions, and academic value and contribution [**?**]. As mentioned earlier, on the basis of judging whether researchers have correct ideology and academic attitude, fulfill academic responsibilities, and comply with academic norms, and whether citations and data materials are standardized, true, and reliable, we need to focus on judging whether the perspectives, theories, materials, and methods used, as well as the analytical logic and reasoning, are scientific, reasonable, and effective, whether viewpoints, ideas, and theories can justify themselves and become independent academic viewpoints, and whether they have academic value and contribution, and whether conclusions are novel, reasonable, and realistic. Particularly, we cannot demand perfection in social science achievements, let alone nitpick, and need to treat different viewpoints, ideas, and theories tolerantly.

Tolerance is also reflected in allowing personalized innovation and exploratory failure. The development of scientific knowledge is the accumulation of achievements formed through long-term 淘汰 and 沉淀, especially in social sciences. It is worth noting that "Gold is not pure, and man is not perfect." It is normal for social science achievements to have flaws. As long as we adhere to seeking truth from facts, it does not affect their value—that is, flaws do not obscure jade.

For social science achievement evaluation, we cannot deny the need for evaluation indicators. But with indicators, we lose the original intention of evaluation. This is what Goodhart' s Law states: When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure. If a characteristic of economics is used as an economic indicator, that indicator will eventually lose its function because people will start to game it. In the past, the approach of using a set of indicator systems to evaluate social science achievements and "gaming" indicators to the extreme has been questioned and should be abandoned. However, we cannot

discard them entirely because of this. Considering the characteristics of social science research and its achievements, we should abandon the pursuit of "comprehensive perfection" in evaluation and instead adopt the thinking of grasping "key points," determining a very few, such as 1-3 key indicators, supplemented by other non-indicator characteristic factual materials as the basis for evaluation. This way, while giving play to the role of key indicators, it can also accommodate personalized characteristic innovation and avoid the possibility of key indicators being "gamed." It can be said that whether evaluating projects, monographs, papers, and other achievements, or evaluating journals, selecting talents, awarding prizes, and evaluating professional titles, this principle should be followed. This is conducive to evaluators growing into true 伯乐 who can discover excellent social science research talents—especially young 千里马—and provide them with opportunities and resources to stand out; it is conducive to truly valuable achievements being published and academic ideas emerging, exchanging, sharing, and innovating, thereby creating an environment that respects and reveres academia, establishing scientific academic systems, purifying academic ecology, environment, and culture, and rejecting "bad money drives out good" ; it is conducive to changing the current situation where "the ability and level in academic propositions, academic ideas, academic viewpoints, academic standards, and academic discourse are not quite commensurate with our country' s comprehensive national strength and international status," and ultimately conducive to the flourishing development of social sciences [**?**].

Therefore, such imperfect evaluation is truly conducive to researchers doing real scholarship steadfastly and persistently, conducting original innovation, and completing "from 0 to 1" innovation to become true scholars. Only in this way can we select unique, advantageous, and contributing highlights. Otherwise, we will fall into "demanding perfection" and only select mediocre results. This also conforms to objective laws—imperfection is perfection.

If we select 100 talents according to this evaluation principle, we will essentially select 100 types of talents with different innovative characteristics, which is conducive to innovation. In contrast, selecting 100 talents according to traditional evaluation principles essentially selects one type of talent. As science continues to develop, any achievement may have flaws, social problems will always exist, and research is endless. For researchers, as Tolstoy said, "A morally perfect mediocrity is still a mediocrity; a hero covered with bullet holes is still a hero." I believe a flawless great person is a dwarf to step on, while a flawed great person is a giant to step on.

For both researchers and evaluators, eliminating academic mediocrity is important. The main manifestations of academic mediocrity are low-level repetition, superficial analysis, and gimmicks to attract attention. Its essential cause is the lack of thinking ability, which Hannah Arendt calls "the banality of evil." On the one hand, mediocre works appear attractive but are actually boring pseudo-academia. They are more pervasive and serious in eroding academia than academic misconduct and help solve problems with money, and should

be rejected. On the other hand, mediocre works occupy academic opportunities and resources, depriving those who do first-class imaginative work of their rights and affecting innovation. We should create conditions conducive to research that challenges authority, overthrows established conclusions, and makes history.

Therefore, as Honjo' s basic approach to science: Do not believe what is written in papers. For research, keep delving until you see it with your own eyes and convince yourself. That is, think with your own brain until you fully understand and fully recognize it. For researchers, how to achieve this? His proposed "6C" —curiosity, courage, challenge, concentration, continuation, confidence—is of important guiding value.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.