FROM THE NEW EDITION OF DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY TO THE REEDITION OF NEW METHODOLOGICAL DEBATES

DA REEDIÇÃO DE DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY À EDIÇÃO DOS NOVOS DEBATES METODOLÓGICOS

DE LA REEDICIÓN DE DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY A LA EDICIÓN DE NUEVOS DEBATES METODOLÓGICOS

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ABSTRACT: The article revisits the methodological discussions proposed in KKV's work on the occasion of the publication of a new edition of Designing Social Inquiry. The starting point is KKV's work, which is used to analyse contemporary discussions on causality, explanation and science. The premise is that KKV's inferential logic is projected as a single model for producing knowledge, which contrasts with the plurality of conceptions within Political Science and International Relations. Using the contributions of the philosophy of social sciences to evaluate the work and contemporary debates in both disciplines, three problems in KKV's work are pointed out: the problem of causality, the problem of explanation and the problem of methodological unification. The analysis of these problems highlights the logic of science that KKV projects onto the disciplines of Political Science and IR, summarized in a vision of causality derived from the Rubin-Holland model, centered on causal explanation as the only form of legitimate explanation, and proposed as a universal model for the production of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Political methodology. Methodological debates. Quanti vs. Quali. Causal explanation. KKV.

***RESUMO**: O artigo revisita as discussões metodológicas propostas na obra de KKV por ocasião da publicação de uma nova edição de Designing Social Inquiry. Utilizo como ponto de partida a obra de KKV para analisar as discussões contemporâneas sobre causalidade, explicação e ciência. Parte-se da premissa de que a lógica inferencial de KKV projeta-se como um modelo único de produção de conhecimento, o que contrasta com a pluralidade de concepções dentro da Ciência Política e das Relações Internacionais. Recorrendo aos aportes da filosofia das ciências sociais para avaliar a obra e os debates contemporâneos em ambas disciplinas, aponto três problemáticas na obra de KKV: o problema da causalidade, o problema da explicação e o problema da unificação metodológica. A análise desses problemas evidencia a lógica de ciência que KKV projetam sobre as disciplinas de Ciência Política e RI, sintetizada em uma visão de causalidade oriunda do modelo de Rubin-Holland, centrada na explicação causal como única forma de explicação legítima, e proposta como modelo universal de produção de conhecimento.*

***PALAVRAS-CHAVE**: Metodologia política. Debates metodológicos. Quanti vs. Quali. Explicação causal. KKV.*

***RESUMEN**: El artículo revisa las discusiones metodológicas propuestas en la obra de KKV con motivo de la publicación de una nueva edición de Designing Social Inquiry. Utilizo la obra de KKV como punto de partida para analizar los debates contemporáneos sobre causalidad, explicación y ciencia. La premisa es que la lógica inferencial de KKV se proyecta como un modelo único de producción de conocimiento, lo que contrasta con la pluralidad de concepciones dentro de la Ciencia Política y las Relaciones Internacionales. Utilizando las aportaciones de la filosofía de las ciencias sociales para evaluar la obra y los debates contemporáneos en ambas disciplinas, señalo tres problemas en la obra de KKV: el problema de la causalidad, el problema de la explicación y el problema de la unificación metodológica. El análisis de estos problemas pone de manifiesto la lógica de la ciencia que KKV proyecta sobre las disciplinas de la Ciencia Política y las RRII, resumida en una visión de la causalidad derivada del modelo Rubin-Holland, centrada en la explicación causal como única forma de explicación legítima, y propuesta como modelo universal de producción de conocimiento.*

***PALABRAS CLAVE**: Metodología política. Debates metodológicos. Quanti vs. Quali. Explicación causal. KKV.*

Introduction

In 2021, and almost three decades later, a new edition of the emblematic methodology book *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inquiry in Qualitative Research* (henceforth, DSI), by political scientists Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sydney Verba (henceforth, KKV), was published. Considered one of the fundamental works for teaching methodology in undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Political Science and International Relations in Brazil and around the world, the KKV text - as it became known - not only marked a methodological debate, but also determined the direction taken by political methodology in the decades following its publication (DOWDING, 2016). To a large extent, the schism between quantitativists and qualitativists, already deep in 1994, when the work was first published, takes on new contours with the questions raised and, above all, the solutions proposed by KKV. Underlying the text was an attempt to make the social sciences, specifically Political Science, more "scientific", especially the work associated with qualitative traditions. The solution to this would be to recognize inferential logic as the model for producing knowledge about political and international phenomena, a logic that could be adjusted to qualitative research - hence the book's subtitle aimed at a qualitative audience (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 1994; 2021).

The new edition comes at a time of reactivation of methodological schisms in the discipline. In the current context, not only has KKV's work been appreciated and criticized by

different political scientists, but other movements within the discipline have also provoked reactions to attempts - sometimes subtle, but often declared - to define predetermined models of knowledge production (ISAACS, 2015; KING, 2014; SCHWARTZ-SHEA; YANOW, 2016). In the early 2000s, the Perestroika Movement set the tone for theoretical and methodological divisions in the discipline, especially in what was seen as a kind of undeclared predilection for quantitative and formal approaches; in the 2010s, the establishment of the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Data Access and Research Transparency (DA-RT) initiative provoked new reactions in academia (LENINE; MÖRSCHBÄHCER, 2019; 2020). On all these occasions, one vision of science tried to impose itself over the others, as if the production of scientific knowledge were something singular and uncomplicated (HAWKESWORTH, 2015). Therefore, it is in this accumulation of debates, questions, criticisms and clashes that the new edition of DSI is situated.

For this reason, the rediscussion of such a relevant work is urgent. Now, if what we understand by scientific knowledge and political methodology today reflects the discussions present in KKV and generated from the work, revisiting this new edition three decades later implies questioning the architecture of Political Science and International Relations today, recognizing how both have been impacted by the authors' text. This is the aim of this article: to examine DSI, but not in the form of a traditional text review, but above all from a critical perspective on the issues produced by the work. In this sense, I consider three themes that deserve attention in KKV and that echo persistent epistemological and methodological disputes within Political Science and IR: the problem of causality, the problem of explanation and the problem of methodological unification. These three problems run throughout KKV's work, and they underpin his central argument about the existence of: 1. a single logic of science, the inferential one; 2. the production of causal explanations; 3. causality as a probabilistic relationship associated with the Rubin-Holland model.

First of all, a few points need to be made about this article. Firstly, the arguments I outline do not detract from or reject KKV's work. Quite the contrary: if today DSI is still a living work, reverberating in our research and deserving of a new edition, it is because it has assumed a role of profound relevance for methodology in Political Science and IR. Revisiting and discussing it, even critically, confirms this importance and demonstrates its relevance to the discipline. Secondly, the term "problems" used earlier refers more to epistemological and methodological issues or problems than to an argumentative flaw. I chose to keep it, however, because it highlights the need to pay attention to the diversity of perspectives on the issues to

which they refer, something that is sometimes masked in the KKV text, as if such problems did not exist or were easily solvable.

The article is structured in five sections, in addition to this introduction and conclusion. In the first section, I give an overview of DSI, summarizing the central arguments of each chapter. Next, I present the problem of causality, pointing out how it arises in KKV and how it is perceived in the philosophy of the social sciences and in contemporary methodological debates. In the third section, I discuss the problem of explanation, which KKV assumes to be intrinsically causal. Explanation, however, is more contentious than the authors' view, especially within the context of causal mechanisms and the interpretive turn, not to mention the philosophy of science and the social sciences themselves. In the fourth section, I discuss the conception of a single inferential logic, questioned by qualitativists affiliated with the idea of causality and by interpretivists, and how it involves a conception of science that is not very pluralistic - if not dogmatic. Finally, I highlight the challenges for the type of science of politics and of the international proposed by KKV in contemporary times, as well as doing justice to the value of the work for methodological discussion in Political Science and IR.

Designing Social Inquiry: brief overview of the work

DSI was published for the first time in 1994, resulting from the cooperation of three political scientists, two of them renowned in Political Science (Sydney Verba and Gary King) and one in IR (Robert Keohane). Their centrality in different fields of study in these disciplines results from their previous research experiences, which led them to produce a work that systematized the production of knowledge about political and international phenomena. At first, DSI was intended as a guide for qualitative research, since, according to the authors, it lacked a more transparent and objective systematization of its methodological procedures (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 1994; 2021). However, the vast majority of their arguments are referenced in quantitative approaches, constantly resorting to formalizations typical of this research model.

The new 2021 edition contains the same six chapters as the first edition, plus a preface written by King and Keohane. Entitled "Designing Social Inquiries: K and K on KKV", the preface takes stock of the book's impact; reaffirms the context of the first edition, which was to help improve qualitative research; and presents an optimistic and conciliatory view between qualitativists and quantitativists (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021). More notable, however, is the quantification of the impact of the 1994 work by evaluating the use of inference in

academic articles published in the ten journals with the greatest impact on the discipline in 1990 and 2019[2], according to King and Keohane, "in 1990, 13% of the articles used this language [of inference], while in 2019, 71% used it" (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021, p. 14). According to the authors, this transformation in research output demonstrates a greater focus on inference and the issues associated with it.

As mentioned, the new edition reproduces the original chapters, which I will briefly examine below. Chapter 1 is probably the best known among Brazilian undergraduate and postgraduate students and researchers of Political Science and International Relations in the country. In it, KKV outlines more than a general overview of the book: the authors build the foundations of what they understand by science and how this understanding is based on a single logic of knowledge production, namely inferential. Here we highlight four maxims that guide the book, namely: the goal of scientific research is inference, whether descriptive or explanatory (*id est*, causal); the analytical procedures of science are public; the conclusions of any scientific research are permeated by uncertainties due to the complexity and non-linearities of the real world; and (perhaps the most important) the content of science is the method (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021). The subsequent discussion in the chapter orbits around the research design that would conform to these four maxims, namely with regard to the construction of the research question, the use and refinement of theories and the quality of the data. This brief and objective outline, replete with practical examples of research in Political Science and IR, is largely responsible for the book's importance in introductory methodology courses.

Chapter 2 deals with descriptive inference, providing a concise definition. According to the authors, "inference is the process of using the facts we know to learn about the facts we do not know", where "the facts we do not know are the subjects of our research questions, theories and hypotheses" and "the known facts form our data or observations (quantitative or qualitative)" (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021, p. 45, our translation). In a more technical and particular way, descriptive inference refers to understanding an unobserved phenomenon through a set of observations, distinguishing the systematic component from the non-systematic component of the phenomenon (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021). The examples listed by the authors throughout the chapter serve to highlight these definitions, formalize the idea of

[2] The list of journals analyzed by the authors included: *American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Public Administration, European Journal of Political Research, International Organization, Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Politics, Political Psychology* and *World Politics*.

inference and offer recommendations for dealing with practical research problems. In this process, the use of terminology from quantitative methods becomes more evident, and the authors justify themselves by warning that this is just a more practical way of consolidating the concepts and discussions.

Similarly, chapter 3 discusses causal inference. Its centrality in the book comes from the fact that KKV's conception of explanation is deeply associated with the idea of causality: scientific research, according to the authors, acquires its value to the extent that it reveals causal relationships. KKV recognize that the term causality is "confusing" and, in order to clarify it, they use the language characteristic of quantitative research, namely dependent, independent and control variables. Not by chance, their starting point is the Rubin-Holland causal model, adjusted to the reality of social research and summarized as follows: "the causal effect is the difference between the systematic component of observations made when the explanatory variable takes on one value and the systematic component of comparable observations when the explanatory variable takes on another value" (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA 2021, p. 80, our translation). It is on the basis of this model that the authors evaluate causal inference in qualitative research and also alternative approaches to causality, namely causal mechanisms (which specify how causes produce effects), multiple causality (when a given result is caused by the combination of different independent variables) and causal symmetry/asymmetry (differences in causal effects between increasing and decreasing values of the explanatory variable). In this chapter, KKV also discusses the assumptions of the causal model, specifically the homogeneity of the units and the conditional independence between the independent and dependent variables, topics also covered in the seminal article by Paul W. Holland (1986). The chapter closes with a series of strategies for developing causal theories, which would be the fundamental objective of the social sciences.

Chapter 4 deals more directly with the constitution of the research design based on discussions of descriptive and causal inferences. The main concern of the chapter is to outline strategies to avoid indeterminate research designs, in which: (1) there are more inferences than observations; and/or (2) there is multicollinearity between the explanatory variables. In addition, KKV describes problems associated with the choice of cases (or observations, as they prefer to call them to avoid the imprecision of the term "case"), specifically the different modalities of selection bias. As they detail these issues with examples from research in Political Science and IR, the authors formalize part of these problems using simple statistical models.

Chapter 5 deals with the different sources of error and bias in Political Science and IR research. Using a technical discussion that draws strong parallels with quantitative solutions to these problems, KKV offers "universal" recommendations applicable to any quantitative or qualitative research. When discussing bias and inefficiency, the authors warn that "qualitative researchers try to achieve exact measures, but they often have less precision" (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021, p. 149, our translation), but argue that, because they have quintessential similarities, quantitative and qualitative research are not only qualified, but also have the tools to solve these problems. The chapter focuses on proving this possibility, presenting suggestions and recommendations for improving the choice and measurement of variables, avoiding the omission of explanatory variables and dealing with endogeneity.

Finally, in chapter 6, KKV outlines strategies for increasing the number of observations in order to solve problems of uncertainty and indeterminate research designs. They look at everything from single-case studies, and how different observations can be made within them; to comparative studies, and how to increase the number of observations in them (for example, by taking subunits as observations), as well as dealing with the challenges associated with heterogeneous analytical units. In part, the chapter echoes discussions held both in comparative politics research (LIJPHART, 1971) and among quantitativists (KELLSTEDT; WHITTEN, 2015). Also noteworthy is the brief attention given to process tracing, a causal approach central to qualitative research, and whose potential to produce causal inference the authors recognize. More than a pro-forma conclusion, KKV maintains in this final space the series of recommendations and strategies that characterized the previous chapters, demonstrating, after all, that the problems and solutions that arise in research are, safeguarding the particularities, similar for qualitativists and quantitativists. In his words:

> In principle and in practice, the same problems of inference exist in quantitative and qualitative research. Research designed to help us understand social reality can only be successful if it follows the logic of scientific inference. This maxim applies to qualitative, quantitative, large-n, small-n, experimental, observational, historical, ethnographic, participant observation and all other social scientific research. However, (...) the fundamental problems of descriptive and causal inference are generally more difficult to avoid with a small-n research project than a large-n one (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 2021, p. 227, our translation).

Of course, this brief summary of the chapters does not exhaust the wealth of examples, questions, strategies and recommendations discussed by the authors: in fact, the careful treatment of all these themes makes the book more palatable and interesting for the reader,

presenting the research process in a way that is accessible to researchers at different stages of their methodological training. Even the formal models based on statistical references are sufficiently accessible for anyone with a basic knowledge of quantitative research.

However, since its publication, the work has become contentious within Political Science (DOWDING, 2016; GOERTZ; MAHONEY, 2012). To a large extent, the debate that KKV launched influenced the discipline both in the Anglo-Saxon world and in other national academies, but in a way that translated into an attempt to subsume qualitative methods into the inferential logic of quantitative methods. As Dowding summarizes:

> To some extent, (...) the modern debate was triggered by King, Keohane and Verba (1994) and their claim that there is a logic of inference. The underlying implication of the logic of inference is that only quantitative evidence can (a) determine causality and (b) test hypotheses drawn from theory. One response was that qualitative evidence can define causality by (c) filling in the gaps and helping to demonstrate the actual mechanisms and (d) using a different model of causality. Interestingly, partly as a result of the debate, quantitative studies are coming under increasing scrutiny for their causal claims, leading to new statistical techniques and to the experimental turn (DOWDING, 2016, p. 162, our translation)

The issues pointed out above are reflected in the three problems highlighted in the introduction to the article and which I will address next: the problem of causality, the problem of explanation and the attempt at methodological unification. The choice is not fortuitous: DSI has been under the scrutiny of researchers affiliated with various fields within Political Science and IR who are devoted to epistemological and methodological issues. Although discussions of this nature are often avoided by empiricists (BEVIR, 2008), the repercussions of DSI have generated a large academic production on methodology, both to reaffirm the positions of KKV (e.g. Kellstedt and Whitten, 2015) and to challenge them (e.g. Goertz and Mahoney, 2012). The nature of explanation and causality is a central theme in these discussions. At the same time, institutional and sociological developments in the discipline have reactivated schisms between qualitativists and quantitativists: these were the cases of the aforementioned Perestroika Movement and DA-RT. As a result, the idea of methodological unification was called into question.

The problem of causality

The KKV conception of causality outlined in the text is based on causal inference, and is linked to the very idea of causal explanation. Although the authors briefly expose other conceptions of causality - and argue that they are not incompatible with their own - there is a profound silence about philosophical discussions on the subject. In fact, by deliberate choice, KKV elides debates of this nature, restricting themselves solely to an exposition of Karl Popper's philosophy, since it serves the practical interests of their inferential approach.

The authors develop their proposal for a causal approach with reference to the text by statistician Paul W. Holland (1986), who addressed the issue known as the Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference. According to Holland, it is impossible to observe the treatment value in a unit and the control value in the same unit to ascertain the causal effect of the treatment on that unit (HOLLAND, 1986). This would imply the impossibility of causal inference, since the analysis of the causal relationship presupposes the ability to verify whether a given treatment given to the unit generates any effect. Holland proposes a statistical way out by working with a population instead of a single unit to analyze the average causal effect, and a significant part of this approach is used by KKV in its causal model.

KKV propose that the Rubin-Holland model be adjusted to the context of Political Science: instead of assuming a deterministic position, which is evident in Holland's text, political research would be better situated from a probabilistic perspective, given the uncertainties underlying social phenomena, which are intrinsically subject to human agency and intentionality (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA 2021). The data that researchers collect in the world, even if it results from this myriad of uncertainties, could be treated in such a way as to produce causal inferences with the appropriate degree of confidence required by science. It is no coincidence that the set of strategies presented throughout the book - especially from the fourth chapter onwards - serve precisely to conform to this conception of causality present in the Rubin-Holland-KKV model[3].

KKV's treatment of causality is, as can be anticipated, contentious. Cartwright points out that the term cause is a multifaceted and intrinsically polysemic concept, and points out at least six ways in which causality is currently understood: probabilistic theory of causality and Bayesian methods of causal inference; modularity; invariance; experimentation; causal process

[3] The authors refrain from adding their surnames to the model. I use this composition only to highlight the difference between the original Rubin-Holland model and the model adjusted for Political Science proposed by KKV, resulting in the Rubin-Holland-KKV model.

theories; and efficacy (CARTWRIGHT, 2007). Faced with this philosophical pluralism, the idea of a single way of expressing causal relations would be an epistemological and methodological undertaking that is at the very least suspect. Contrary to this proposal, the author suggests that "our philosophical treatment of causality should make clear why the methods we use to test causal claims provide good warrant for the uses to which we put those claims" (CARTWRIGHT, 2007, p. 2, our tanslation).

It is in line with this suggestion that critics of KKV confront its view of causality and its relation to inference. Goertz and Mahoney (2012) point out, for example, that qualitativists rely on branches of mathematics other than the statistics underlying the Rubin-Holland-KKV model: in the causal qualitativist tradition, recourse to logic, set theory and process tracing is more frequent. This results in different strategies to highlight causal relationships, such as acyclic graphs (WALDNER, 2017), Bayesian inference (BENNETT, 2008; 2014) and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (RAGIN; RIHOUX, 2004; RIHOUX, 2008), just to name a few. Gerring (2017) points out that these efforts demonstrate how multifaceted and therefore complicated the idea of causality is, and that it cannot be reduced to the quantitative model advocated by KKV. In IR, a literature on causality has been developing mainly since the 1990s, pointing out that the discipline has systematically evaded examining the meaning of cause ontologically (KURKI, 2008; LEBOW, 2014; PATOMÄKI, 1996; SUGANAMI, 1996; WIGHT, 2006). In doing so, two processes occur simultaneously: firstly, the researchers subscribe to an ideal of causality based on the Humean conception of cause, taking it as given and unequivocal; secondly, the notion of cause is not problematized in its essence, becoming merely an epistemological (can we discover causes?) and methodological issue (what techniques produce and test causal inferences?). Kurki summarizes:

> Although the Humean model of causal analysis has its strengths in terms of systematizing the empirical analysis of general patterns, it is methodologically, epistemologically and ontologically restricted in important ways: methodologically, it does not give an adequate role to historical, qualitative, discursive and interpretive approaches and methods; epistemologically, it provokes theorists to set excessively objectivist goals for social knowledge; and ontologically it has difficulty dealing with unobservable causes, such as ideas and reasons, and the social construction of social life (KURKI, 2008, p. 7, our translation).

As a result of this complexity of causality, by eliding a more in-depth discussion of the topic, including linking it to the issue of causal inference, KKV misses the opportunity not only to reframe what they understand by causality, but also to recognize the existence of other

philosophical approaches to causal relations. It is only in a distracted footnote that the authors describe themselves as Bayesians, which per se does not make their view of causation explicit (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA 2021). Even in their brief exposition of alternative understandings of causality - in which they discuss causal mechanisms, multiple causality and symmetry - more questions arise than are resolved, making the very exposition of these alternatives something of a caricature.

But why is an exposition of causality necessary? If the notion of cause is central to the conception of science and scientific knowledge proposed by KKV; and if what is meant by cause is ontologically undefined, the implications for the construction of a research design are dramatic, especially with regard to: 1. what is considered valid evidence for research; 2. the type of social knowledge produced (whether objective, subjective/intersubjective); 3. The nature of causal processes and what they are capable of encompassing (ideas, reasons, social construction, indicators, estimators, concrete textual artifacts, etc.). More important than all of these elements, however, is the question of the type of explanation that can be produced depending on the meaning of causality that a particular piece of research adopts. I'll come back to that next.

The problem of explanation

As we have seen, explanation for KKV is defined strictly in causal terms: it is scientific insofar as it manages to establish causal relationships for empirical phenomena. However, the authors elide - either by deliberate choice or by refusing to engage with the philosophy of the social sciences - a plurality of debates involving the linguistic, logical and philosophical dimensions of explanation. This choice reveals a conception of explanation that is not only unequivocal, but also self-intuitive, which is not in line with the issues underlying the topic.

This choice is not surprising when one considers that, although explanation is central to scientific research, researchers in Political Science and IR rarely explain the metatheoretical and methodological foundations of what they understand by explanation in their texts - even in those published in highly prestigious journals (CHERNOFF, 2014a). This is partly the result of the very dynamics of the philosophical debate on the justification of knowledge, which included names such as David Hume and his critique of causation and induction; Carl Hempel and Paul Oppenheim and their deductive-nomological model, based on the conception of scientific explanation founded on general laws (HEMPEL; OPPENHEIM, 1948); Saul Kripke (1980) and

the debate on reference, with implications for the plurality of understandings of explanation in contemporary social sciences (DOWDING, 2016); Karl Popper (2013) and the falsifiability criterion for judging models derived from theories based on their ability to explain empirical data from the real world, just to mention a few important authors in the empiricist tradition of the philosophy of science and philosophy of social sciences. Underlying empiricism is the idea of explanation as empirically adequate, i.e. the virtue of a theory and its explanations lies in its ability to "account for" what exists in the real world; and predictive accuracy in the face of real phenomena (CHERNOFF, 2014a; DOWDING, 2016).

Other anti-realist/anti-naturalist traditions, such as interpretivism, have other conceptions of knowledge - and, consequently, its justification - which reject the notion of causal explanations and the methods associated with them (WINCH, 2008; YANOW; SCHWARTZ-SHEA, 2015). For the interpretivist, interpretation is "a process of assembling (even if in an unconscious way) existing cultural resources to form specific patterns", which "involves the manipulation of intersubjective resources of meaning" in a conversational process (JACKSON, 2015, p. 270, our translation), resulting in explanations that, rather than consisting of a linearity of causality, represent the circularity of the subjective and intersubjective nature of knowledge itself. The idea of circularity is deeply associated with the philosophy of language developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (2014), according to which the learning process and the use of language that constitute our experiences are intrinsically circular, in that they involve the recurrent use of words according to pre-specified rules and within given contexts. Ultimately, words shape what we know about the world and how we approach it, while they are mobilized by us to shape reality itself. It follows that an explanation is not dissociated from our Lebenswelt (or lifeworld): in fact, the explanations we produce about the world result from our individual experiences, mediated by language and its individual manipulations (YANOW, 2015, p. 12).

In a position diametrically opposed to interpretivism, explanation has often been associated with the concept of prediction in Political Science and IR, mainly within the strand of scientific realism (CHERNOFF, 2014ab; DOWDING; LENINE, 2021). The term itself carries a certain ambiguity, and commonly provokes reactions in sectors that accuse the Social Sciences of emulating the Exact Sciences - namely Physics. However, the idea of explanation as prediction is based on a dual understanding: on the one hand, there is scientific prediction, which consists of the logical implication of a theoretical model; and pragmatic prediction,

which consists of a forecast[4] of types of future events (DOWDING; MILLER, 2019). Of these, only scientific prediction is intrinsically explanatory, since it results from a logically organized theoretical construct. Furthermore, it is explanatory to the extent that: 1. a given "outcome y could be different in a counterfactual situation in which condition C would not be verified, and we could infer what value y would have assumed if condition C* were verified" (DOWDING; MILLER, 2019, p. 1004, our translation); and 2. A causal mechanism is associated with this relationship between the condition and the outcome (DOWDING; LENINE, 2021; YLIKOSKI, 2017). As Chernoff summarizes:

> A prediction in the context of the natural or social sciences is 'a singular or general proposition that is indexed in the future; is based on a rationally justified, broadly constructed body of theory; can be based on imperfect evidence; can be deterministic or probabilistic; and can be conditional, *id est* in the form: 'if conditions C are met, then outcome E will happen'. (CHERNOFF, 2014b, p. 9, our translation)

At the same time in IR, metatheoretical discussions have turned to a conformation of the meaning of explanation that advocates, at the same time, an ontological, epistemological and methodological commitment to the conceptions of cause and causation; as well as a clarification of what it really means to explain, without falling back on the dominant philosophical traditions in the philosophy of science (JACKSON, 2011; KURKI, 2008; PATOMÄKI, 2017; KURKI; SUGANAMI, 2012; SUGANAMI, 1996)[5]. Explaining, according to this literature, means conveying an understanding, which per se makes the way we produce explanations, and therefore knowledge, more flexible. In this context, the use of causal narratives is a strategy that allows us to conform to this ideal of explanation, insofar as "explaining the occurrence of an event in world politics" means "answering how the relevant segments of the world moved from a particular point at which the event had not yet occurred to a point at which it did occur" (SUGANAMI, 2008, p. 334, our translation). Mechanistic processes, human acts and intentionality, ideas and social constructs play a central role in the construction of explanation (KURKI, 2008). After all, as Jackson (2017) postulates, offering an explanation of a phenomenon is equivalent to offering an account of "making something happen", which is defined by a set of instructions of a causal nature that result in the production of the phenomenon.

[4] The English terms prediction and forecast, in this context, express these different forms of prediction. I translate pragmatic prediction as prognosis only as a way of distinguishing these terms.
[5] This literature often draws on the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar.

As you can see, the idea of explanation is far from being consensual in the Social Sciences, which casts doubt on KKV's proposal, especially on a natural derivation of his proposal, which is the determination of the best explanation between rival explanations. The hierarchization of explanations has been a challenge of scientific research in Political Science and IR, but it is marginally discussed in KKV, even when the authors describe quantitative methods and affirm their greater lexical and formal precision. In various fields of study, the accumulated knowledge about causal relationships does not allow us to distinguish which ones have the greatest explanatory power: this is the case, for example, with nuclear proliferation studies, which point to various causes for the phenomenon, including the use of sophisticated statistical models, but are unable to order these causes in terms of explanatory power (BELL, 2016; WINTER; LENINE, 2020) - even from a Popperian perspective, a constant philosophical reference in KKV discussions. Although the authors present theorizing (or building better theories) as a fundamental step in improving our hypotheses, this gap still persists in their presentation of explanations. This is exacerbated when confronted with the plurality of understandings of explanation, such as those listed above, casting a shadow over the proposal to unify the logic of research, the objectives of science and the nature of the knowledge produced.

The problem of methodological unification

At this point, it becomes clear that the differences between political scientists and internationalists contrast with the unifying claim of the KKV. Even among those who adopt the perspective of causal inference, subscribing to an ideal of explanation based on causality, there are significant differences in the conception of cause, in the way it is elucidated and in what is considered valid evidence for establishing causal relationships. The KKV therefore advocate a form that is distant from the multiple practices in both disciplines, which casts doubt on their normative objectives, particularly with regard to the imposition of a dogmatic vision of science[6].

This view is not restricted to DSI alone: both King and Keohane demonstrate on different occasions their dogmatism when it comes to the supposedly appropriate ways of

[6] The fact that KKV also distanced themselves from debates in the philosophy of social sciences on the subject of causality, engaging with only a few conceptions within the social sciences, makes their project of inferential logic even more out of place within interpretations of causality. For a brief and introductory discussion of causality, see Cartwright (2014) and Elster (1983).

producing knowledge. In an article published in Political Science and Politics, King (2014) reaffirms his position on quantitative and qualitative methods, advocating greater cooperation between them. However, this cooperation is not exactly on an equal footing: on the contrary, it reveals the idea that qualitative methods should be subsumed under quantitative methods. On various occasions, Keohane reaffirms his vision of causality as the goal of the social sciences. I would highlight the debates held with IR feminists, in which Keohane (1989; 1998) explains that the value of feminist research lies precisely in its ability to reproduce the ideal of causal explanation. This perspective is outlined mainly in his dichotomization between rationalists (like himself) and reflexivists (KEOHANE, 1988), which raises suspicions about his intentions regarding the nature of scientific knowledge in Political Science and IR.

Apart from KKV's work, since the mid-1990s both disciplines have been undergoing major methodological debates that have reactivated (and crystallized) the schisms between quantitativists, qualitativists and interpretivists. Two examples are striking in the Anglo-Saxon context: the Perestroika Movement and DA-RT. The first resulted from an iconoclastic anonymous email sent to APSA members, which denounced the preferences of the association and its main journal, the American Political Science Review, for quantitative and rational choice approaches. This triggered an intense debate that forced APSA to take initiatives to remedy a problem of methodological predilections (LENINE; MÖRSCHBÄCHER, 2020)[7]. The DA-RT, in turn, originated as a change to the APSA Research Ethics Guide, which sets out guidelines to facilitate access to data published in journals and ensure transparency in research. Among the different documents that make up the DA-RT umbrella are the guides for quantitative and qualitative research, which define parameters and protocols for designing research in a transparent manner and in a way that facilitates replication once the data is available; and the Joint Statement by Journal Editors, signed by editors-in-chief of highly prestigious journals with the aim of adopting the precepts of DA-RT. This caused numerous reactions, especially among qualitative and interpretivist researchers, forming a new split between the different methodological traditions (LENINE; MÖRSCHBÄCHER, 2019).[8]

Even in fields where there is a greater attempt at dialog between quantitativists and qualitativists - and here I am referring specifically to mixed-method engagements - obstacles

[7] For an in-depth look at the Perestroika Movement, see Kristen Renwick Monroe's edited collection, Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science (2005).

[8] For an in-depth look at the debates, check out the symposium Openness in Political Science, published in PS: Political Science and Politics, volume 47, número 1; and the symposium Data Access and Research Transparency (DA-RT), published in the Comparative Politics Newsletter, volume 26, número 1. Available: https://www.comparativepoliticsnewsletter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2016_spring.pdf.

of an ontological, epistemological and methodological nature persist for the unification sought by KKV. Research using different methodological approaches faces the challenge of combining different conceptions of causality in a single analytical work: on the one hand, the covariational approach characteristic of quantitative methods; and on the other, the mechanistic and equifinal approaches of qualitative methods (CHATTERJEE, 2009; PARANHOS *et al.*, 2016; SILVA, 2015). This does not mean, of course, that multi-method research is impossible: on the contrary, it has been seen as one of the main ways of improving research in Political Science, especially in comparative contexts (COPPEDGE, 2009; GOEMANS, 2007; REZENDE, 2014; WITTENBERG, 2007). However, the desire to equate different conceptions of causality points out how the proposal of a single inferential logic is not a solved problem - if it were, the conceptions of causality would not be an issue per se -, let alone something to be overlooked in a research design.

Given these complexities, it is worth questioning the extent to which inferential logic has penetrated the disciplines of Political Science and IR since the publication of DSI to the point of being able to pacify epistemological and methodological disputes. Perhaps the recurrence of discussions about pluralism and dogmatism is an indicator, albeit a limited one, of the problem at hand: if quantitative and qualitative researchers really agreed on their vision of science and knowledge, would there be a need for initiatives - such as discussion forums at conferences, congresses and national associations - aimed at ensuring that a particular research model did not become dominant? The existence of a concern about dogmatism reveals a scenario that is at least counterfactual to what King and Keohane say not only in the preface to the new edition, but also in the whole of DSI.

Challenges of DSI and appreciation of the work in contemporary times

The etymology of the word methodology reveals what the Greeks of Classical Antiquity thought about it: *meta* means "sharing", "common action", "search"; *hodos* means "path"; and *logos* means "study", "explanation", "truth". When combined, the three roots form a broader understanding of methodology: "a shared search for truth", "a shared study of truth", "the way in which a group legitimizes knowledge" among other possibilities (HAWKESWORTH, 2015, p. 28, our translation). This etymological examination points to parallels in our contemporary understandings of methodology: we are interested in the joint search for knowledge (even if not in the classic terms of "truth"); we share the ways (or paths) by which we produce knowledge;

and, most importantly, we define what, as a community, deserves the label of legitimate knowledge.

KKV's work, in this etymological sense of the word methodology, plays a fundamental role in recommending strategies for this search for knowledge about political and international phenomena. It is undeniable that DSI, since its publication, has exerted a profound influence on the academies of Political Science and IR, guiding discussions and disputes about research designs, inference and causality, as well as internal disputes within the scientific community of political scientists and internationalists. This dual nature of the book's reception demonstrates its importance for both disciplines, reflected in the way methodology courses are structured and in the research designs inspired by the authors' recommendations. In this sense, DSI has fulfilled its mission: it has become one of the main (if not the main) research methodology manuals in Political Science and IR, influencing different generations of researchers in the study of political and international phenomena.

At the same time, a balance sheet would not be complete if we did not recognize the role that DSI plays in advancing a particular conception of science. Although the language of scientific pluralism is currently in vogue (TAHKO, 2021), there are doubts about the extent of this pluralism in the face of attempts - subtle and outspoken - to define an ideal of science and knowledge production. The issue is urgent and has been addressed in different forums of national and international academia, including the International Political Science Association (LENINE; MÖRSCHBÄCHER, 2020). To a large extent, this concern is justified "given the hierarchy of power established within the discipline in the wake of the behaviorist revolution", since "'the way' to knowledge has often been presented as if it were uncomplicated, value-free and incontestable" (HAWKESWORTH, 2015, p. 28, our translation), which has resulted in preferences for specific causal methods and approaches at the expense of excluding alternative causal (and non-causal) methods and approaches.

In Brazil, KKV's work still has a strong appeal as an elementary manual of research methodology in Political Science and IR. Both disciplines still face difficulties when it comes to methodological specification in their academic productions. In Political Science, Gláucio Soares' (2005) sentence about the methodological heel is still present, both for quantitativists and qualitativists (LENINE; MÖRSCHBÄCHER, 2020; NICOLAU; OLIVEIRA, 2017). In IR, the situation is even more serious: the vast majority of studies published in Brazil lack any reference to a research methodology (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2021; MEDEIROS *et al.*, 2016). In this context, where structural challenges prevail in terms of knowledge about methodological

issues, reflection on their place in research and the mobilization of specific methods, KKV's book and the discussions it raises are even more topical and necessary.

Conclusion

KKV's work continues to be a landmark not only among methodology manuals in Political Science and International Relations, but also in methodological debates in both disciplines. Current, DSI persists over time as a classic that has influenced the direction of methodological debates since its publication. In this sense, it has become required reading precisely because of the centrality it has acquired in discussions about the ways in which we produce scientific knowledge about political and international phenomena.

Like any classic work, DSI is also contentious. The arguments defended by KKV have been seen by some as a synthesis of the modus operandi of contemporary social sciences, while for others, they have been shown to be an attempt to establish a model of science based on a research tradition that is not necessarily mirrored by other traditions. Perhaps the uncomplicated way in which the book is structured is responsible for its ability to convince, even if the forms and styles of quantitative research can be seen between the lines (and often in the lines themselves).

Regardless of the position we take on DSI and even on the authors, the debates provoked shed light on issues that are often neglected by political scientists. Epistemological and methodological discussions often take a back seat to the urgency of understanding the real world. KKV warns of the problems of such a stance in a science that is repeatedly confronted with uncertainty, the difficulties of observing and measuring real phenomena, as well as converting theoretical assumptions into empirical models that can be tested. Avoiding reflections of an epistemological and methodological nature would therefore be a misguided strategy that would result in research that is potentially inconsistent with the basic elements of explanation, interpretation and projection into the real world.

Therefore, by revisiting KKV's work, I proposed that we pay attention to themes that contribute to these reflections. By understanding what it means to explain and how causality fits into the possibilities of explaining and producing knowledge, we improve our practice as researchers. It is in this context that the legacy of DSI remains current: it is not just a research methodology manual, but an invitation to think and rethink our research, grounding it on a consistent ontological, epistemological and methodological basis. In this process, openness to

different modes of knowledge production and philosophies of the social sciences becomes a desideratum of political research. Losing sight of this openness means falling into a narrow view of science and, consequently, of knowledge.

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