**Gila Sher - Lecture Abstracts - Peking University - October 2016**

**1. Foundational Holism: A New Epistemic Methodology**

A central task of epistemology is a substantial grounding, or foundation, for all knowledge, empirical and abstract, in both world and mind. Yet today the foundational project is held in disrepute. One major reason is its assimilation to a failed methodology, foundationalism. In this lecture I develop an alternative methodology, foundational holism, which is related to, but also differs from, other post-foundationalist methodologies. Among its distinctive features are: applicability to all branches of knowledge; a substantial grounding-in-reality requirement; focus on structural holism; sanctioning not only a rich network of connections among theories, but also a rich network of connections between theories and the world; and a fine-grained approach to circularity, including the introduction of “constructive” circularity. The result is a foundational methodology that is both more demanding and more flexible than other existent methodologies, including foundationalism, coherentism, and foundherentism.

**2. A Post-Quinean Model of Knowledge**

In this lecture I delineate a model of knowledge based on the foundational-holistic methodology developed in Lecture 1. My starting point is Quine’s model of knowledge in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951). Quine’s model, with its holistic structure and its rejection of the traditional bifurcation of knowledge to factual and conventional, is highly promising. But Quine is a radical empiricist and this creates tensions between his largely traditional center-periphery thesis (CP) and his anti-bifurcational, “no analytic-synthetic dichotomy” thesis (NAS). I resolve this tension by revising CP. Whereas in Quine’s model logic never reaches the periphery, in the new model all disciplines do, moving between center and periphery according to the task at hand. The result is a highly dynamic model of knowledge in which all disciplines are subject both to substantial “periphery norms” (i.e., veridicality) and to substantial “center norms” (e.g., pragmatic norms).The model also offers an integrated view of realism, reality, and reason (intellect). The starting point is the “basic human epistemic situation” - a situation in which limited yet resourceful beings seek to know their world in its full complexity. To understand the nature of knowledge from this perspective, we need to go beyond the traditional dichotomies of nominalism vs. Platonism and apriorism vs. empiricism. This involves (i) a conception of reality that puts abstract and concrete features of objects on a par, (ii) a conception of intellect as central to empirical as well as to abstract knowledge, (iii) a conception of intellectual knowledge as *quasi* rather than fully apriori, (iv) a new paradigm of intellectual activity - “figuring out”, and (v) a new conception of realism - “basic realism” - applicable to all fields of knowledge.

**3. A New Correspondence Theory of Truth**

In this lecture I delineate a new, substantivist (as opposed to a deflationist) theory of truth for the post-Quinean model of knowledge delineated in Lecture 2. The theory sets forth three basic principles of truth: the “fundamental principle of truth”, the “manifold correspondence principle”, and the “logicality principle”. The fundamental principle says that truth, as a standard for human thought, arises at the juncture of three basic modes of cognition: immanence, transcendence, and normativity. The manifold correspondence principle says that truth in all fields requires a substantial and systematic relation between thought and world, yet this relation may assume multiple forms, including relatively complex forms. The logicality principle says that a partial yet important factor in determining the truth value of thoughts is their logical structure. The lecture will focus on the application of the new theory to mathematics. I will offer a new account of mathematical truth as exhibiting a “composite” type of correspondence, explain its roots in Aristotle’s conception of mathematics, and show how it enables us to overcome well-known problems concerning correspondence and realism in mathematics, including Benacerraf’s Identity Problem and Cognitive Access Problem.

**4. An Outline of a Foundation for Logic**

Unlike empirical science and mathematics, logic has rarely received a systematic theoretical foundation. I argue that the foundational problem of logic is a methodological problem, due to the customary identification of “foundation” with “foundationalism”. A more promising approach is a shift to the foundational holistic methodology developed in Lecture 1. The lecture offers an outline of a foundation (grounding) for logic, employing this methodology. My approach is functional. Identifying the function of logic in knowledge, I show that considerations pertaining to this function require a dual grounding of logic in mind and world. But what facet of the world can ground logic? My answer is: its formal facet. Due to the special features of the formal facet - in particular, its strong degree of invariance - it is capable of providing an adequate grounding for logic. This includes an explanation of the formality, veridicality, generality, modal force, topic neutrality, strong normativity, certainty, and (quasi-)apriority of logic. This grounding also involves a new account of the relation between logic and mathematics - *semantic formalism* - with affinities to both mathematical structuralism and logicism. Additional explanations include error and revision in logic, the source of logical normativity, the scope of logic, and logical pluralism.