

Research Article

**The radical humanist view in accounting**

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**Abstract**

The shift in the accounting paradigm is marked by accounting users who were originally only understood as a tool to report historical financial transactions, then turned into a science that has scientific provisions. This study aims to analyze one's thinking about multi-paradigm accounting research and the process of spreading it in the radical humanist paradigm. The method used in this research is literature review, by collecting literature related to radical humanist from journals, books, and previous studies. The results of this study indicate that radical humanists believe that everything must be grasped as a whole, because the whole dominates the parts in a comprehensive sense. Radical humanists' focus on the "superstructural" aspects of society reflects their attempt to emphasize Hegelian dialectics.

**Keywords:** Radical Humanist, Paradigma, Accounting.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Accounting is at the forefront and plays an important role in running the economy and social system. The decisions taken by individuals, governments, other business entities are determined in their use of the resources owned by a nation. In its development, accounting continues to change over time. Scientists in the field of accounting have provided evidence through the development of open-ended accounting science in the form of openness and collaboration with other disciplines, such as the inclusion of social and exact theories in the development of accounting. So that the nuances of accounting developments are not monotonous, fixated on the range and interpretation of mere numbers, but have touched on the behavior and control in corporate management.

In an effort to prove and explore science, there is one thing that is no less important, namely the perspective on the problems raised and their solutions. The perspective on a problem and its solution is important to understand because it will affect the conclusions drawn on the answer to a problem. This perspective is called a paradigm. The shift in the accounting paradigm is marked by accounting users who were originally only understood as a tool for reporting historical financial transactions, then turned into science that has scientific provisions. In scientific research, the existence of a paradigm can lead a person to determine what problems will be raised, research questions raised, how to obtain information, and directions in interpreting the information obtained to produce a conclusion (Anggraini, 2017).

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The development of the business world has an impact on accounting to develop theories and views on the accounting actors themselves. This provides different views among accounting actors, resulting in several views. These various views or paradigms are called multiparadigms. Multiparadigm results in the diffusion of different schools of thought. In producing diffusion there are several challenges or obstacles that make it a gap in the diffusion process. The gap that occurs among accounting thinkers encourages the desire of individuals to think radically.

This study analyzes the radical paradigm among accounting thinkers, through literature review, previous research and books that describe the radical humanist paradigm.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Paradigm**

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), the assumptions that underlie the establishment of knowledge (knowledge), include: ontology (ontology), epistemology (epistemology), human nature and methodology (methodology). Ontology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature or nature of reality or the object under investigation. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that pays attention to how to obtain and spread knowledge.

Departing from the basic framework of ontology and epistemology, it eventually results in the variability of scientists' perspectives in obtaining the truth of a science. The impact that occurs is the emergence of various research paradigms with various consequences of contradictions and claims between justification and blame. Things like that also happen on the map of the development of accounting science, which in turn has made accounting grow and develop acceleratingly towards the development of business phenomena as it is today.

The Subjectivism (anti-positivism), emphasizes that knowledge is very subjective and spiritual (transcendental), relatively tendentious to the conditions of knowledge and human views. This is in line with the ideographic approach, which holds that a person will be able to understand the "social world" and the phenomena being investigated, if he or she can obtain them on the basis of "first-hand knowledge". In contrast to the Objectivism (positivism), which holds that knowledge exists in intangible, measurable and observable forms. Objectivism people consider objects to be outside that need to be defined and measured in observation. Burrell & Morgan, (1979), Jayasinghe (2021), Burritt (2019) Ontologically, objectivism views that reality is a source of knowledge that is independent of human beings. This positivist view seems to be in line with the nomothetic approach which has standard and protocol methods in research design.

Voluntarism (voluntarism) emphasizes the essence that human existence in this world is to solve social phenomena as creatures who have free will and choice. Humans according to voluntarists are seen as creators and have a perspective to create social phenomena with their creative power (Sukoharsono in Ishak and Ikhsan, 2005). This is different from the point of view of the determinists who view that humans and their activities are determined by the situation or environment in which they are located. The determinists assume that they do not have the ability to change the social world, but humans have the sensitivity and ability to adapt to the environment in which they are located. Of course, different perspectives on how to acquire knowledge (subjectivism vs objectivism) have an impact on different scientific products, which in accounting give rise to normative, descriptive and sociological accounting.

### **Radical Humanist**

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) mapped knowledge in three paradigms, namely functionalist-interpretative (functionalist-interpretative), radical humanist (radical-humanist), and

radical structuralist (radical-structuralist). This paper focuses on the development of the radical humanist as one of the paradigms in accounting.

The word 'radical' is broadly and often used to refer to almost anything that is considered new or extraordinary. It has been used to define various extremist political or religious beliefs, regardless of how deviant, inhuman, or principleless. Reflecting on the cruelty of fascist totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt concludes that it is not the result of very evil thinking, but 'recklessness'; from the fearful absence of moral reasoning; of 'mind defiant banality'. He argues that 'only the good has depth and can be radical' (1978, 250-251). From this perspective, the term 'radical Islam', for example, when applied to the spread of Islamic doctrines that deviate from ISIS or Al Qaeda, or the term 'radical right' when applied to a racist populist movement, is highly misleading (see Tibi 2012; Laclau 2005; Jacoby 2008). In the following discussion we will use 'radical' as Marx used it; refers to the human capacity for ethical reasoning, which – fully realized or not – remains a unique and defining characteristic of the human species. 'Humanism' has many manifestations, some of which accommodate themselves to religious beliefs; others who claim to assert principles that Nature is supposed to ordain, or that are supposed to be self-evident. Humanism can be an arrogant assumption of superiority over other species and dominance over the planet and its resources; or as a search for secular alternatives to religious beliefs, or some value system considered apolitical (Cave 2009). The humanist philosophies of the 'Classical' and 'Enlightenment' eras are reflected in the main competing ideologies of the modern era that followed (Hamilton 2003; Harari 2017). It has been argued that contemporary social welfare policy is informed by what Brian Ellis (2012) identifies as a form of progressive 'social humanism'. This he claims to be the 'moral and political philosophy of the welfare state', though perhaps better described as a form of liberal humanism, albeit guided by 'socially derived' moral principles. However, the concept of humanism that informs the following discussion derives, again, from Marx and his notion of essential human 'species-being'; characteristics that define not only human differences from other species, but also their distinctive and historically developed relationship with Nature and one another.

The radical humanist paradigm assumes that reality is created and maintained socially. It provides a critique of the status quo. He tends to view society as anti-human. He views the process of creating reality as feedback on itself; so that individuals and societies are prevented from reaching their highest potential. That is, human consciousness is dominated by the ideological superstructure of the social system, which results in their alienation or false consciousness. This, in turn, prevents true human fulfillment. Social theorists regard the prevailing order in society as an instrument of ideological domination. The theorists' main concern is how such ideological domination occurs and finding ways in which human beings can escape. They seek to change the social world through a change of consciousness.

Macintosh (1994) radical humanist paradigm assumes a subjective social world but takes a position of radical change. The position taken is contrary to the interpretive position. Radical humanists have a vision of people-oriented management accounting, namely prioritizing humanistic ideals and values compared to mere organizational goals.

### 3. METHODS

This study uses an interpretive paradigm because it aims to understand one's thinking about multiparadigm accounting research and the process of spreading it. This research uses narrative and qualitative methods. This research also uses case studies in relation to their thinking and development. This research uses literature review data and the required articles.

## 4. RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Result

The radical humanist paradigm is concerned with the development of a sociology of radical change from a subjectivist point of view. The radical humanist paradigm has similarities with the interpretive paradigm in terms of subjective and anti-positivist views. However, this paradigm is more concerned with providing a critique of the status quo (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.32). The radical structuralist paradigm with the radical humanist paradigm also has similarities in its attention to the development of a sociology of radical change. However, the radical structuralist paradigm advocates an objectivist point of view. Because the functionalist paradigm is the dominant paradigm in accounting research, and this paper discusses the radical humanist paradigm Radical humanists

believe that everything must be grasped as a whole, because the whole dominates the parts in a holistic sense. Moreover, truth is historically specific, relative to a particular set of circumstances, so one should not seek generalizations for the laws of motion of society.

The radical humanists' focus on the "superstructural" aspect of society reflects their attempt to emphasize the Hegelian dialectic. Through dialectics, the objective and subjective aspects of social life interact. The superstructure of society is believed to be the medium through which human consciousness is controlled and shaped to fit the requirements of the overall social formation. Radical humanists emphasize the political and repressive nature of purposive rationality, the logic of science, the positive function of technology, and the neutrality of language.

The radical humanist paradigm is similar to interpretive, with the emphasis that social reality is created and socially maintained depending on the awareness of the perpetrators. They understand that by establishing a reality, they are forming their own boundaries, because the formation of reality is influenced by physical and social processes and limitations attached to the mind (human minds). In general, it can also be said that this paradigm tries to break away from the shackles of the functionalist. For example, if according to the functionalist it is said that auditing is necessary for every company, the adherents of this understanding will say that the degree of importance of auditing depends on several arguments.

The radical humanist paradigm provides an explanation of radical change, modes of domination, emancipation, deprivation and potential by using a subjective approach. Thus, radical humanist researchers tend to be nominalists, anti-positivists, voluntarists and ideographers. The essential idea of the paradigm is that man's consciousness is dominated by the ideological superstructure with which he interacts, and that this fosters a cognitive wedge (the wedge of alienation or false consciousness that stands in the way of true human fulfillment) between himself and his real consciousness. (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

### 4.2. DISCUSSION

The radical humanist paradigm, in the form of critical theory in accounting, assumes that theories, bodies of knowledge and facts are merely reflections of a realistic worldview. It views accounting

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as creating a psychic prison and argues that accounting systems encourage and sustain alienation and conflict.

There are several research designs under the umbrella of the radical humanist paradigm which are applied to conduct research that is oriented towards change and seeks to advance the causes of social justice by identifying power imbalances and empowering individuals and/or society, i.e. the purpose of mixing methods in transformative design is more widely used for reasons value-based and ideological rather than reasons related to methods and procedures (Greene, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). According to Mertens (2009), Zeuschner et. el. (2021) from a transformative point of view, reality is socially constructed; Therefore, to conduct transformative research successfully, researchers must build interactive relationships between researchers and participants so that we can discover knowledge that is socially and historically situated in complex cultural contexts. Furthermore, he suggested scientifically that problem definitions, and methods should be adapted to accommodate cultural complexities; power issues must be addressed explicitly; and issues of discrimination and oppression must be recognized. Based on these assumptions, the transformative research design is directed by the radical humanist paradigm because it prioritizes qualitative orientation even though it uses quantitative research. Therefore, the design is guided by the radical humanist paradigm.

Lagoarde (2018) The radical humanist paradigm views technology as a form of ideology that is the subject of the majority of society. This view can be attributed to the Frankfurt School or to personalist thinkers. For example, according to Habermas (1968), Hyndman (2018), Gendron (2018), Yee (2020), Bebbington (2017) the rationalization of human activity serves as a veil that conceals forms of political domination by concealing a network of macro-sociological interests (*gesamtgesellschaftlich*) in which strategies are chosen, technology is used, and systems are designed. In other words, the search for technical efficiency, behind the mask of “rationality”, serves as an ideological justification for the balance of power that exists between groups of agents with conflicting interests.

The focus on "rationality" indirectly justifies existing production relations, given that it provides an adequate institutional framework for technological expansion. A different but related approach is provided by Ellul (1964, 1977), who argues that technology is characterized by "autonomy, unity, universality, totalization, automatic growth, causal development and absence of purpose" (1977, p. 56). This has led to the emergence of the "technical system" in which human society prioritizes the pursuit of technical efficiency over all other forms of potential. By virtue of its autonomy from the creator (human), technology, instead of being a means to an end, has become the main force shaping society. This new "technical order" is embedded in political institutions such as the state and has led to the emergence of total social organization incompatible with individual and collective liberties: man is reduced to "a snail stuffed into a slot machine" (1964, p. 135).

Cloke (2010), Ghosh (2021), Brown (2017) argues that the development of securitization – which was the origin of the global financial crisis – required, as a prerequisite, the development of a 'cyberenvironment' whose goal, through the speed of circulation and complex intermediation, is to hide value, ownership and location" (p. 7). The mass deployment of IT in deregulated and internationally integrated financial markets has evolved from “a complex, contingent and subtle blend of human actors and technical artifacts to form a network of actors (which is a sociotechnical

hybrid”) (Graham, 1998, p. 167). McPhail (2019), Vardon (2021), Gallhofer (2019) From a radical humanist perspective, this trend has reduced political autonomy and has gradually turned corporations, citizens and policy makers into financial subjects, for the benefit of financiers and the financial industry. At the critical extreme of radical change, the disruption of the status quo contrasts with the regulatory approach that explains the problem of social organizations trying to work in extant settings (Alsharari, 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Understanding from a radical humanist perspective emphasizes the role of humans in the development and thinking of accounting. This approach sees that accounting actors are human beings who have feelings, desires, interests and values, all of which will affect the understanding of accounting. So that we do not only see accounting knowledge as static knowledge, but see it as something that is dynamically developing according to the development of the organization and the environment in which it is applied. Because understanding in terms of language is very concerned about the elements of feelings, needs, interests, values, norms that are inherent in humans. The view of accounting as a radical humanist is that every human being has a different role and opinion and defends their respective opinions in accordance with the theories of the development of accounting itself.

Accounting practices can be developed or changed for the better according to the needs of the organization as long as it is in accordance with the rules of accounting practice and its development. However, these developments must be based on the background of each accounting actor.

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