

On Heuristics in Terms of Communities and Individuals

Heuristics refers to an approach of how an individual or community perceives, addresses, and considers possible solutions to a problem, learning, or discovery in a useful way that follows a practical method, which might not be perfect but appropriate for short-term goals.

From a philosophical perspective, heuristics pertain to the discovery of how one aspect of a concept is connected to other aspects in the formation of a clear description of that concept. In a sense, using heuristics is a method of model building in order to understand what the model is supposed to represent to a community and to each individual within that community.

When an individual or community uses heuristics in solving a problem, learning something new, or in discovering how something works, they are doing so not from a principle-free perspective. The individual or community has a particular goal in mind that benefits either the individual, the community, or, ideally, both. Identifying what principles are at play early on in a dialogue or discussion can determine the application of heuristics toward perceiving, addressing, and solving a particular problem, learning something new, or discovering how something works.

Individuals and communities applying heuristics as the driving force behind a cause or movement can speed up the decision-making process in the sense that the decisions reached are not given long lifespans that might create a certain sense of dedication or commitment to them in case they need to be discarded or changed upon the arrival of new decisions based on new information and knowledge.

Essentially, using heuristics allows individuals and communities to make decisions in the short-term without neglecting more long-term goals. Presenting questions about a topic is one example of applying heuristics. A strategy commonly employed involves all of the individuals in a community to list any questions they have on a topic prior to them discussing it as a group. The questions are then addressed by the community as a whole at a meeting. An individual in the group can act as a note-taker, or archivist, keeping a list of questions and the responses given. This strategy can also apply to the decisions made by the group. Sometimes, two individuals can act as note-takers, archivists, comparing their notes after each discussion or meeting. These notes can be shared with the group.

In a sense, heuristics can act as the way in which an idea develops or enters into an individual's philosophy or community's discourse as well as determine the weight the idea holds in particular conversations. The previous sentence suggests that an idea can exist outside of an individual thinking it or a community discussing in a given context. The individual or community must determine early on in a conversation on a topic if a particular idea is appropriate for the given context and is it being appropriately applied.