

DANSK

EVALUERINGSSELSKAB

The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'des' in a stylized, cursive font. The letters are a vibrant red color with a slight gradient, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The 'd' is the largest and most prominent, with a long, sweeping tail that curves upwards and then downwards. The 'e' is smaller and sits to the right of the 'd', and the 's' is the smallest and sits to the right of the 'e'.

Evaluative Thinking: A Compass to Navigate the Future Landscape of Evaluation



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┌ A FORK IN THE
ROAD



- a cursory overview of NPM
- some thoughts about evaluation's idealized role in society
 - place of values and valuing in evaluation
 - debates about what constitutes credible evidence
 - insights from the sociology and philosophy of scientific knowledge
- how and why 'evaluative thinking' is a compass for us as we navigate the future landscape of evaluation

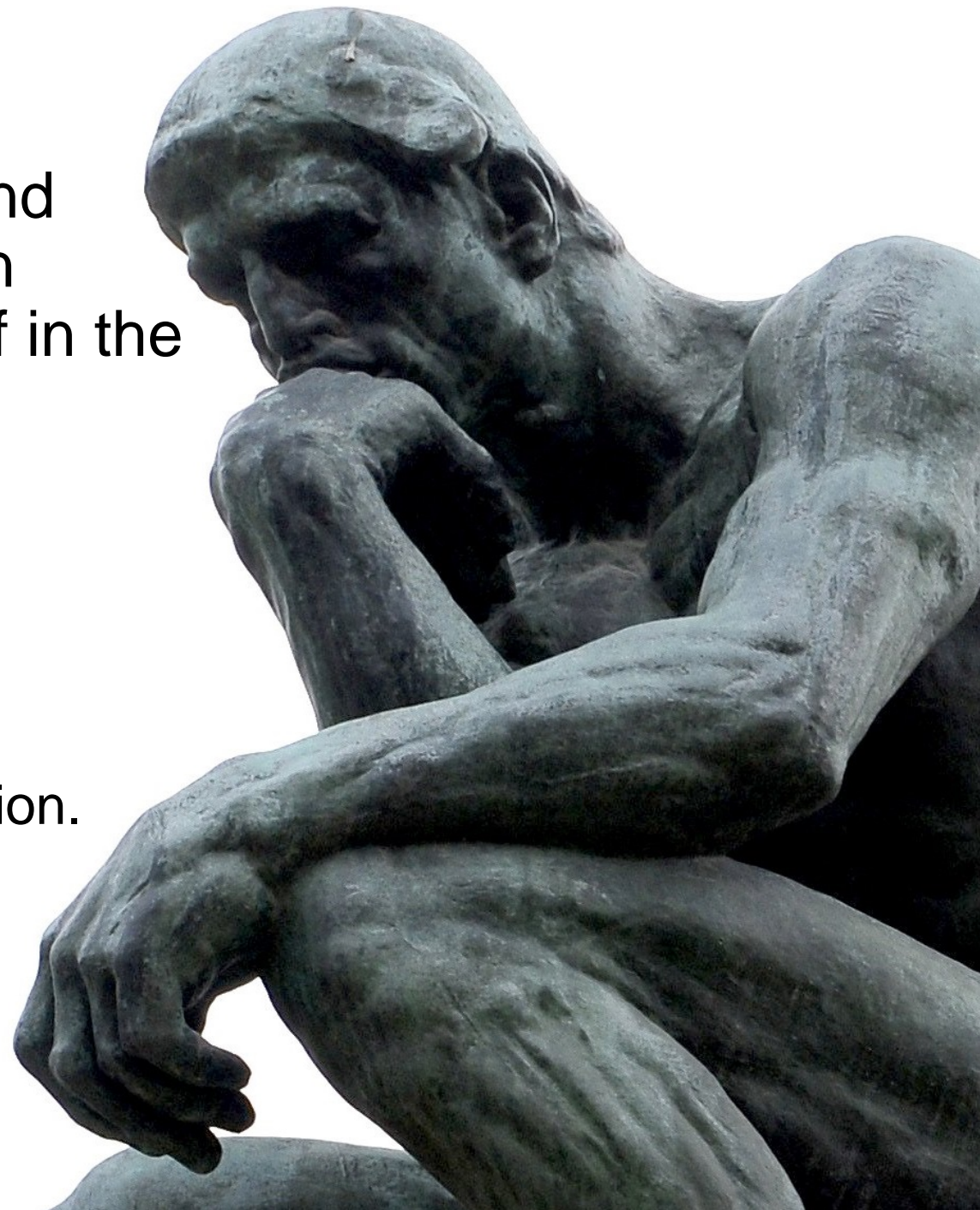


┌
INTRODUCTION
TO EVALUATIVE
THINKING

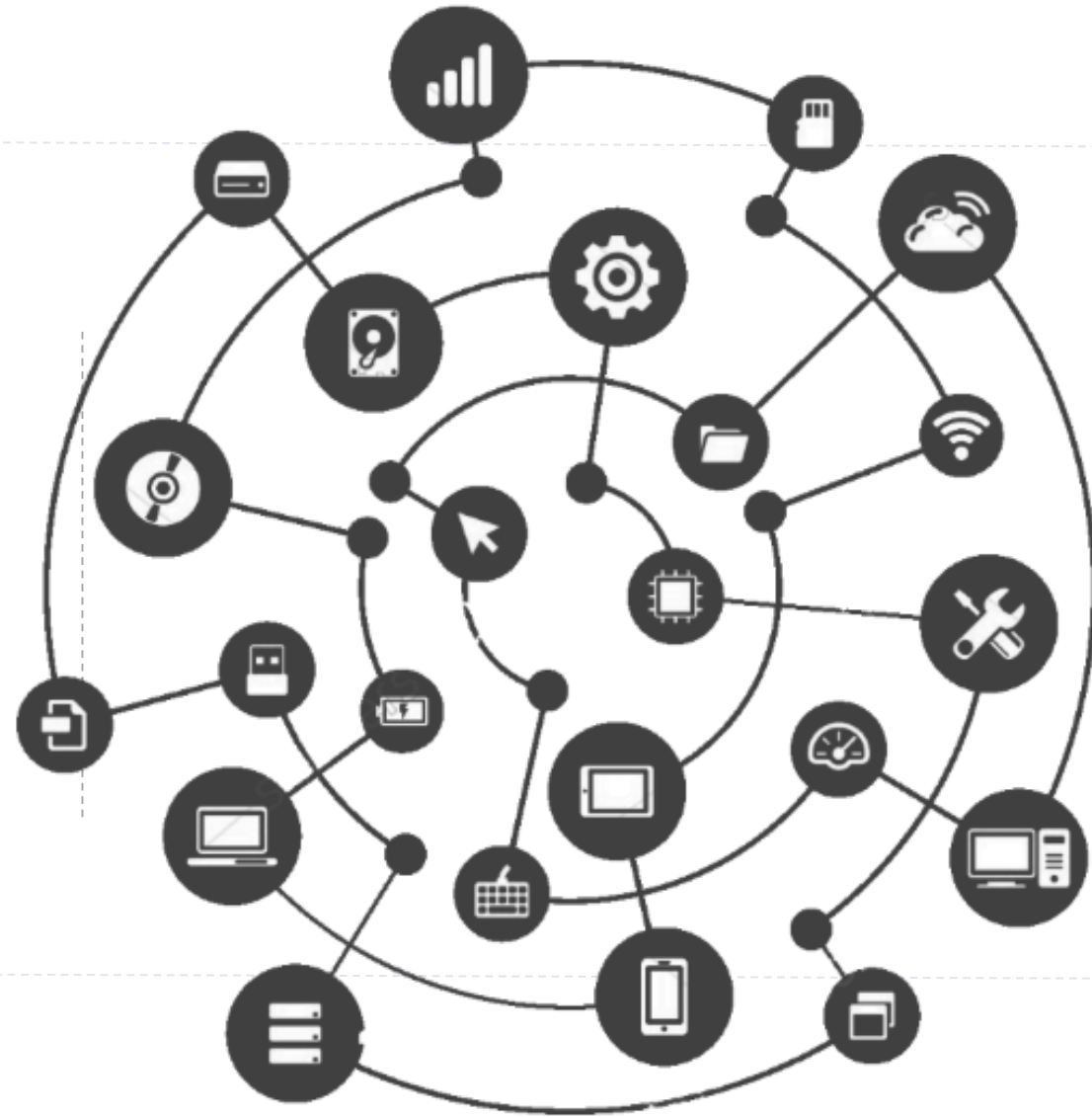


- Evaluative thinking is critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation and project management, motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves
 - identifying assumptions
 - posing thoughtful questions
 - pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective taking, and
 - informing decisions in preparation for action.

(Buckley, Archibald, Hargraves, & Trochim, 2015)



NEW PUBLIC
MANAGEMENT



- NPM “emphasizes economy, efficiency and effectiveness of governmental organizations, policy instruments and policy programmes. NPM strives for a greater quality of service delivery” (Leeuw, 1996)
- From Osborne and Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (1993)
 - Governments have a responsibility to “steer” the delivery of public services (which perversely often turns into privatization)
 - Government ought to be “community-owned”
 - Competition is a positive force (which perversely often turns into skimping)
 - Citizens are seen as customers of the organizations which provide public goods (which poses problems when knowledge, interests, power are asymmetrical)



- accountability is a “slippery rhetorical term” (p. 3) containing two distinct, interchangeable meanings:
 - technical management processes
 - democratic accountability (Charlton, 2002)
- “knowledge control lies at the heart of all New Public Management projects” (Kushner & Norris, 2007, p. 3).
 - a ‘technology of control’
 - an internal system of self-monitoring and self-surveillance
 - a ‘culture of compliance’
 - a form of disciplinary power



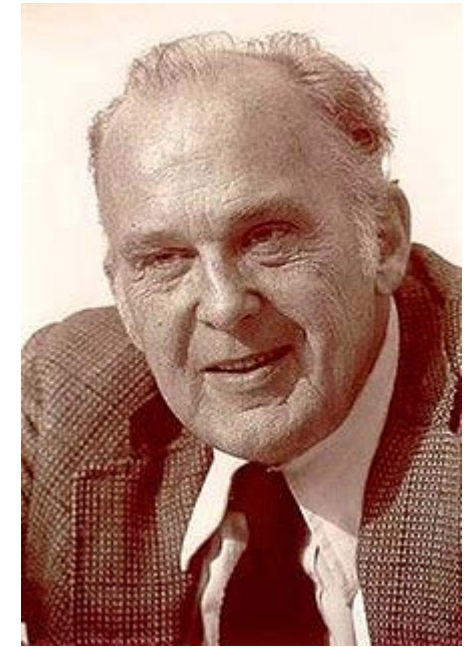
- NPM risks transfiguring evaluation into a professional activity that “functions less like a critical voice weighing in on the value (or lack thereof) of public programs and policies and more like a technology that operates with well-defined procedures and indicators” for constant checking and verification—an audit society (Schwandt, 2015, p. 96).
- NPM embodies a techno-utilitarian perspective that in most respects resembles the kind of instrumental rationality that Max Weber exposed, criticized, and feared because it could foster a decline of democracy and individual freedom.



- Technical rationality: a positivist epistemology of professional knowledge and practice in which “professional activity consists of instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique” (Schön, 1983, p. 21).
- The dominant epistemology of practice, “the view of professional knowledge which has most powerfully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relations of research, education, and practice” (Schön, 1983, p. 21).



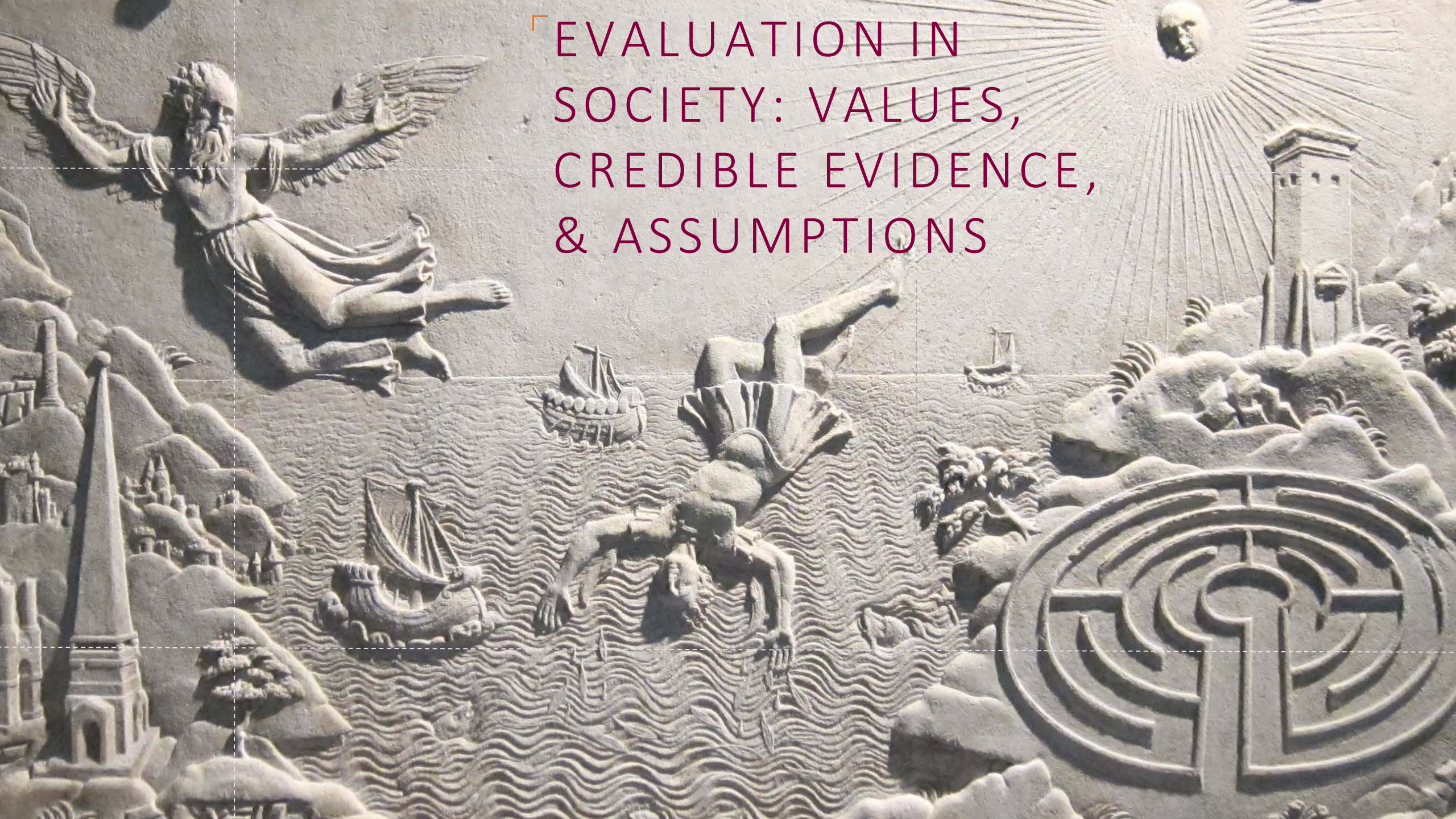
- ‘the constitutive effect’ of evaluation in society (Dahler-Larsen, 2011):
 - When indicators become a way of seeing reality
 - When an indicator system defines what it claims to measure
 - When it shapes a landscape of meanings in which action takes place
- definitional operationalism: an “unmitigated disaster” imported from logical positivism, “which persists long after the substantial revision or rejection of positivism within the philosophy of science. It persists most perniciously in social policy science, in the accountability movement, or in managerial control efforts employing single explicit quantitative criteria” (Campbell, 1984, p. 18).



- If management is perceived as ‘context-free technical problem solving’ emphasis will be placed on reducing uncertainty through evidence. On the other hand, if management is understood as ‘context-dependent practical action’, the emphasis is placed on dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty through communicative processes of dialogue, argumentation and social learning. (Abma & Noordegraaf, 2003)
- critiques of uses of “evidence in social policy should not aim at the idea itself but at overconfidence in the application of the idea as an institutionalized auto-pilot” (Dahler-Larsen, 2017, p. 243).



EVALUATION IN
SOCIETY: VALUES,
CREDIBLE EVIDENCE,
& ASSUMPTIONS



- Attempts to fuse an instrumental concept of politics with a political commitment to a humanistic conception of freedom became one of the central features of the Western political tradition. As a result, the role of knowledge and technique in directing and justifying action has become central to modern Western liberal-democratic notions of authority, accountability, and order, thus providing independent political rationales for the uses of knowledge, or claims of knowledge, in public affairs. (Ezrahi, 1990, p. 3)
- “Science is not a substitute for virtue ... Technical scientific knowledge does not make [people] sensible in their aims ... [and] science has not given [people] more self-control, more kindness or more power of discounting their passions” (Russell, 1924)

- “Aristotle was profoundly right in holding that ethics is concerned with how to live and with human happiness, and also profoundly right in holding that this sort of knowledge (‘practical knowledge’) is different from theoretical knowledge. A view of knowledge that acknowledges that the sphere of knowledge is wider than the sphere of ‘science’ seems to me to be a cultural necessity if we are to arrive at a sane and human view of ourselves or of science. (Hilary Putnam, quoted in Bernstein, 1983, p. 1)
- **episteme** “concerns universals and the production of knowledge which is invariable in time and space” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 55)
- **techne** is “craft and art, and as an activity it is concrete, variable, and context-dependent” (p. 56)
- **phronesis** is “prudence” or “practical common sense” and involves ethics and “deliberation about values with reference to praxis. [It is] pragmatic, variable, context-dependent” (p. 57).

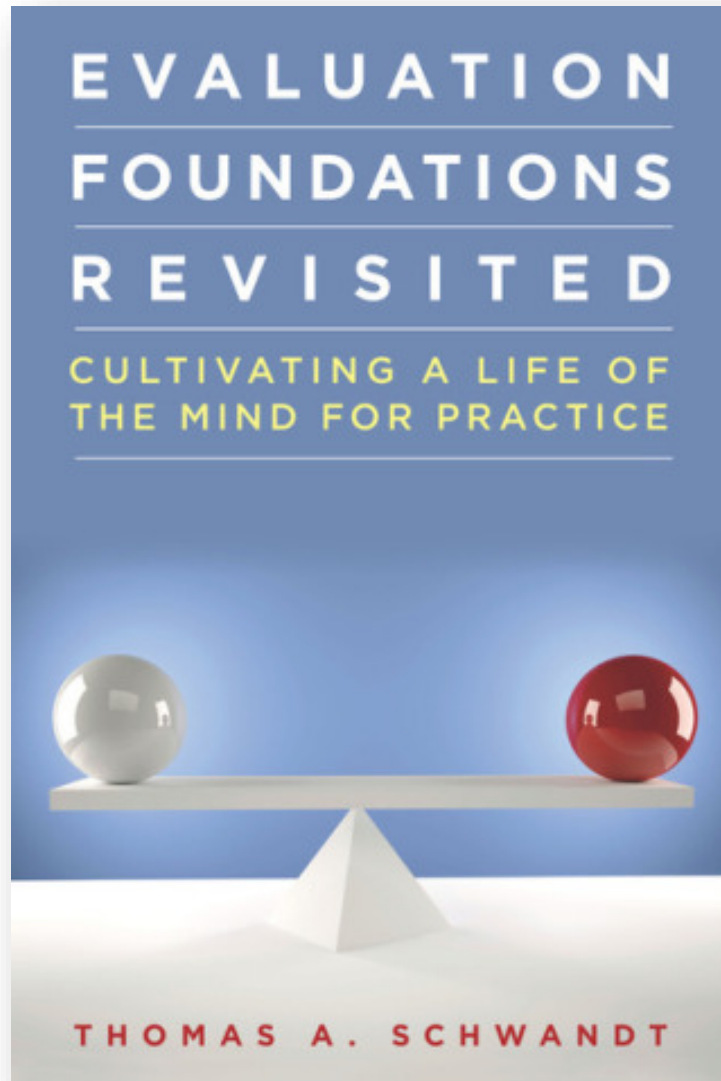
On 'evidence-based programs' (Biesta, 2010):

- The knowledge deficit in the epistemological domain
- The efficacy deficit in the ontological domain
- The application deficit in the praxeological domain
- “The tacit provisional performance of human ontologies in the making” (Leach, Scoones, & Wynne, 2005, p. 13)
- Are RCTs and evidence-based approaches “rooted in democratic theory,” as Gary Henry (2009, p. 39) claimed, or do they pose “a threat to democracy itself” (Biesta, 2007, p. 21)?

- Dahler-Larsen on the metrological versus sociological purposes of evaluation in society (both of which have advantages and blind spots):

	Metrological	Sociological
Purposes	Pre-ordinate	Constructed (mission drift)
Concepts	Clear	In the making
Values at stake	Quality	Quality, fairness, truthfulness, usefulness
Role of tool	Informative	Constitutive
Knowledge producers	Specialists	Multiple
Key to use	Official decision	Language, practice, interaction, imagination
Main orientation	Prescriptive	Descriptive

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ_zNkAYJ_Q



“This aim reflects my longstanding concern that training in technique in evaluation must be wedded to education in both the disposition and the capacity to engage in moral, ethical, and political reflection on the aim of one’s professional undertaking” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 9).

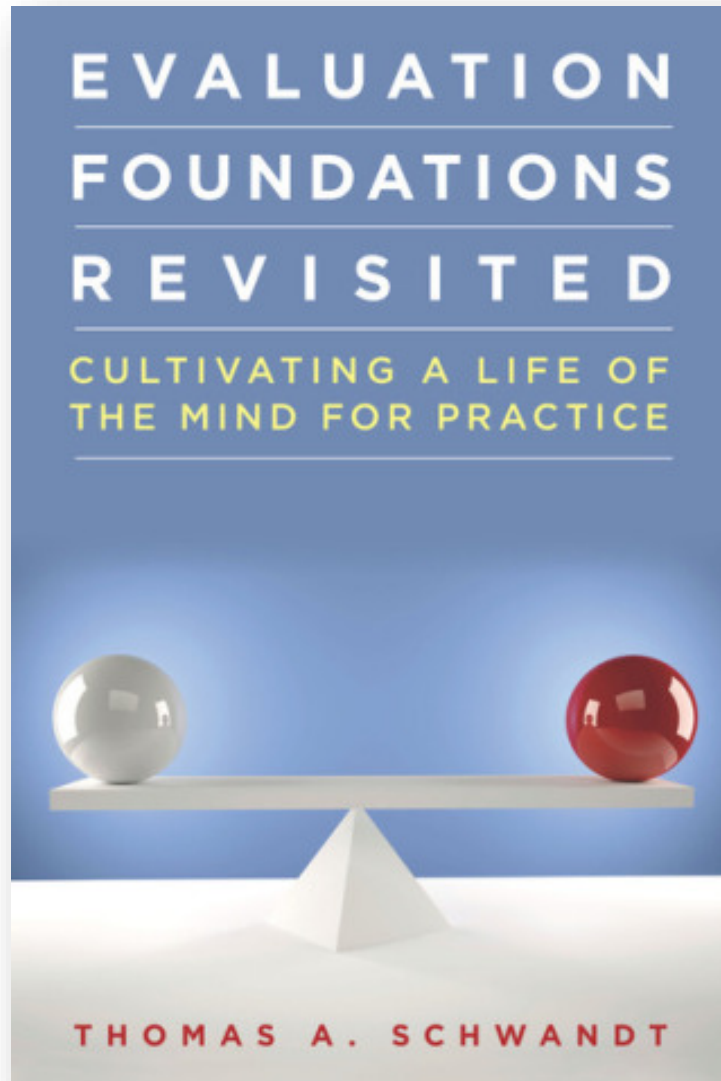
“[Evaluators] recognise patterns, perceive and frame situations, draw on intuition, deliberate on available courses of action, empathise, balance conflicting aims, improvise, make judgments and act in ways appropriate to the time and circumstances” (House, 2015)



If a Negro discusses the question, he is apt to discuss simply the problem of race prejudice; if a Southern white man writes on the subject he is apt to discuss problems of ignorance, crime and social degradation; and yet each calls the problem he discusses the Negro problem (Du Bois, 1898, p. 9)

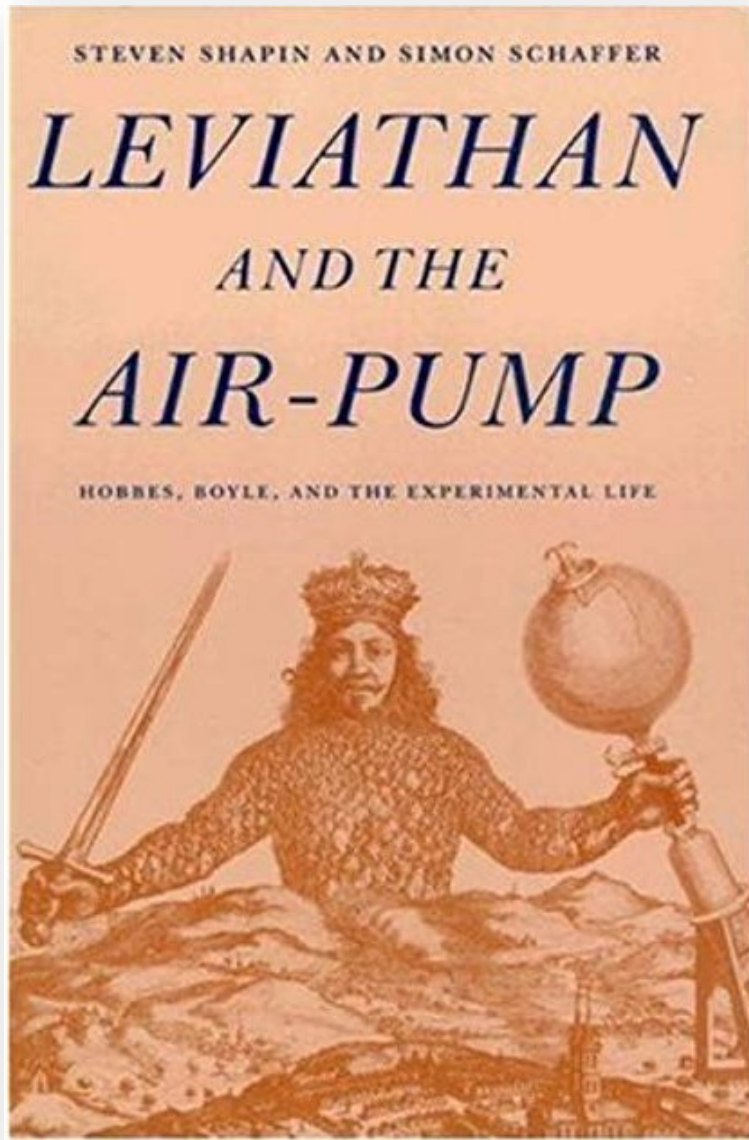
the key point is that social problems are not themselves objective phenomena. Rather, they are social constructions involving assertions that certain conditions constitute problems that require public attention and ameliorative programs. In this sense, community members, together with the stakeholders involved in a particular issue, **literally create the social reality that constitutes a recognized social problem** (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004, p. 107).

the lack of problem problematization is itself problematic; in other words, treating problems as self-evident can pose a risk for evaluation practice



The argument structure for an evaluative judgment (Schwandt, 2015)

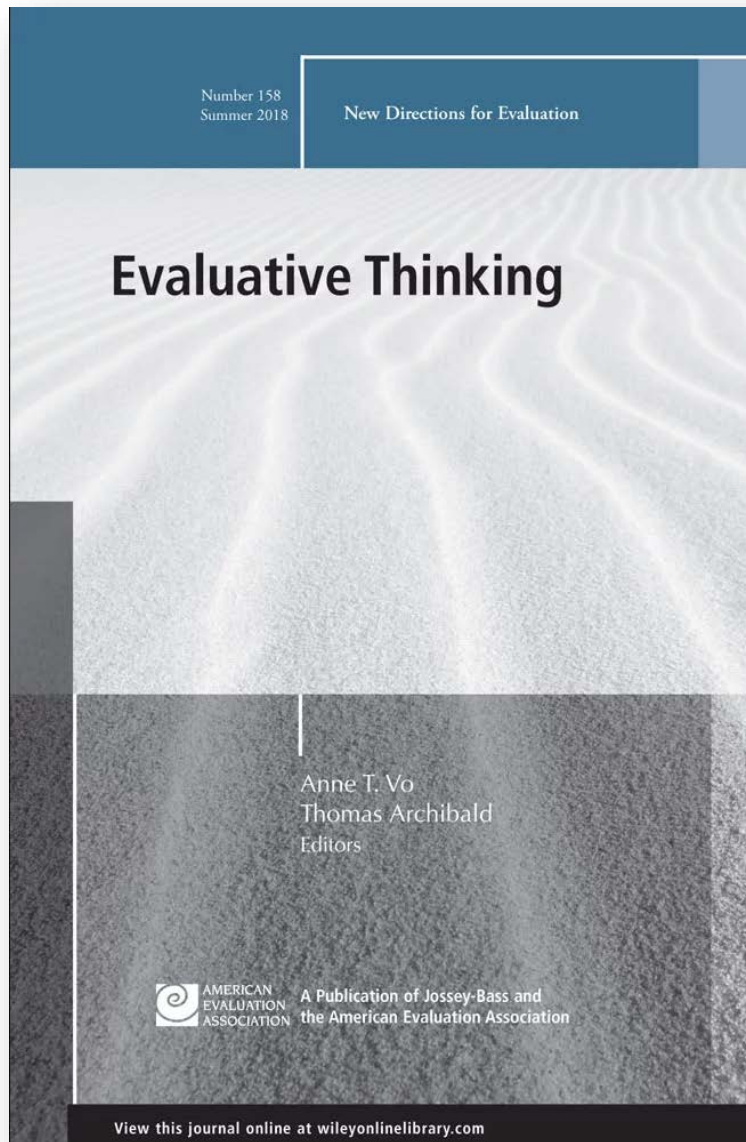
***evidence + inference + warrant
= judgement***



Analysis of the “historical circumstances in which experiment as a systematic means of generating natural knowledge arose, in which experimental practices became institutionalized, and in which experimentally produced matters of fact were made into the foundations of what counted as proper scientific knowledge” (Shapin & Schaffer, 1985, p. 3)

Argument is contextual and dialectical.

- “The idea that dominates most thinking about knowledge for the professions is that practice is the site where this theoretical knowledge is *applied* to solutions to problems of instrumental choice ... a matter of applying a toolkit or following a pre-approved set of procedures or practices” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 32)
- However, due to the messiness of “wicked problems,” practitioners more often engage in “reflection-in-action, a kind of ongoing experimentation, as a means to finding a viable solution to such problems” leading to “a particular kind of craft knowledge (or the wisdom of practice)” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 32)
- Evaluative thinking is a praxis to ***demystify theory*** and ***remystify practice*** (Lederach, Neufeldt, & Culbertson, 2007).



- “Evaluative thinking is a way of doing business.” (Patton)
- “...being results oriented, reflective, questioning, and using evidence to test assumptions.” (Wind & Carden)
- “Reflective Practice”(Baker & Bruner)
- “questioning, reflecting, learning, and modifying ... It is a constant state-of-mind within an organization’s culture and all its systems.” (Bennett & Jessani)

- Tools and procedures for evaluative inquiry are wonderful things, but manualizing and proceduralizing evaluation in society are not. ... [W]e need to develop more evaluation-thinking kits” (p. 149).
- We are facing a rather worrying brew of developments affecting practical intellectual life in modern society and the very well-being of society itself. These developments threaten to degrade the central role that the cognitive endeavor, known as reasoned evaluative criticism, plays in the achievement, maintenance, and enhancement of the good society. In this climate, we cannot simply teach about the ways and means of doing evaluation; we must also convey the idea of evaluation as a practical, intellectual disposition and outlook on social and political life. In sum, there is a pressing need to educate both aspiring evaluators and the citizenry for intelligent belief in evaluation. (Schwandt, 2008, p. 139)

**FREE-RANGE
EVALUATION:
EVALUATIVE
THINKING THAT
LIVES UNFETTERED
IN AN
ORGANIZATION**



TAK SKAL DU HAVE



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