



## Objectivity and Values in the Islamic Social Sciences<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The major motivation for the development of Islamic social sciences in the thought of ‘Allāmah Misbah is the observation that values play an essential role in the social sciences, and that in many works in these fields, the underlying values are inimical to religion, particularly to Islam. ‘Allāmah Misbah’s position on the Islamicization of the social sciences is best understood as a form of scientific pluralism. One of the major challenges to any form of scientific pluralism is how to maintain the objectivity of scientific research. Several approaches to objectivity are surveyed and it is suggested that a risk-account of scientific objectivity may be adopted to bolster claims for the objectivity of the islamized social sciences.

### Keywords

Objectivity, Scientific pluralism, Islamic social sciences, Islamicization, Value-free science, The fact-value dichotomy.

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1. **Received:** 2020/01/10 ; **Revised:** 2020/01/22 ; **Accepted:** 2020/01/26 ; **Published online:** 2020/01/26  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.22034/jspt.2020.180751>

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**Publisher:** Urwat al - Wuthqa International Academic Research Institute  
<http://www.jspt.ir>



## Options for Islamicization

The major motivation for the development of Islamic social sciences in the thought of ‘Allāmah Misbah is the observation that values play an essential role in the social sciences, and that in many works in these fields, the underlying values are inimical to religion, particularly to Islam. In economics, for example, it is often assumed that rational economic actors seek to maximize profits; while according to Islamic teachings; rational agents should be willing to sacrifice profits when this conflicts with religious prescriptions, aims, and morals. In view of the contradiction between the value presumptions in the social sciences and Islamic teachings, Muslims have several options:

1) Toleration. Although there are conflicts in value between the secular social sciences and Islam, the value of the social sciences is sufficient to warrant their acceptance and employment despite the conflicts;

2) Rejection. The conflicts between the secular social sciences and Islam are so great that the secular social sciences must be abandoned and new Islamic social sciences must be developed;

3) Reform by elimination. The secular social sciences must be retained but reformed by excising from them those value assumptions that conflict with Islam;

4) Reform by replacement. The secular social sciences must be retained but reformed by replacing secular value assumptions by religious ones.

It is not evident that ‘Allāmah Misbah would have opposed the first two options; and it is even less clear whether he would favor the third or fourth options, a combination of them, or something else. In order to begin to assess the undertaking of social science in conformity with Islamic values, it will be helpful to consider discussions in the philosophy of the social sciences about the various ways in which values are interwoven with the practice of doing social science as well as with presentations of findings, theories, and other results. I will argue that ‘Allāmah Misbah’s position on the Islamicization of the social sciences is best understood as a form of scientific pluralism. One of the major challenges to any form of scientific pluralism is how to maintain the objectivity of scientific research. Several approaches to objectivity are surveyed and it is suggested that a risk-account of scientific objectivity may be adopted to bolster claims for the objectivity of the islamicized social sciences.

In the philosophy of religion generally,<sup>1</sup> and in Islamic discussions of the relationship between religion and science, the focus has been almost exclusively on whether and how religion and science can be made *compatible*; and this is also one of the issues addressed in ‘Allāmah Misbah’s works. The concentration on the issue of compatibility in the literature on the topic of science and religion in the philosophy of religion and in theology, however, has led to a relative neglect of the question of how religious understanding in the social sciences is to be conceptualized.

If the project of the Islamicization of the social sciences is to be more than just the decoration of secular social science with affirmations of religious truths and references to religious sources, at least three widely held theses must be rejected:

- (1) The myth of purely objectifying inquiry;<sup>2</sup>
- (2) The empiricist/naturalist dogma that everything that can be known can be known exclusively through the methods of the empirical/natural sciences; and
- (3) Reductive materialist and naturalist metaphysical assumptions that conflict with sound religious teachings and prevent theological understanding.

In addition to the rejection of theses that are incompatible with religious teachings, to embark on the Islamicization of the social sciences will require inquiry into how Islamic understandings of social phenomena can be achieved, for the aim of any Islamic science is not merely to amass knowledge of empirical facts about the subject of inquiry, but also to provide an understanding of phenomena that coheres with Islam.<sup>3</sup> This can also be seen as a justification for the project of the Islamicization of the social sciences in particular and of science more generally.

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1. See, for example, (Plantinga, *Where the conflict really lies: science, religion, and naturalism* 2011).

2. The term *objectifying inquiry* is from (van Fraassen 2002), 160-164; for further discussion with regard to the science and religion issue, see (Plantinga, *Science and religion: why does the debate continue*, 2010); also (Plantinga, *Methodological Naturalism?*, 1996).

3. For the aim of understanding in the sciences, see: (C. Elgin 2007); (Grimm, Baumberger and Ammon 2017); (de Regt, Leonelli and Eigner, *Scientific Understanding: Philosophical Perspectives* 2009); (de Regt, *Understanding Scientific Understanding* 2017); and (C. Z. Elgin 2017).

To be religious, it is normal to accept various practices and beliefs characteristic of the denomination to which one adheres. Muslims are expected to have beliefs in God, the afterlife, the intervention of God in the world through the sending of prophets (and, for the Shi'ah, the appointment of Imams), and a bodily resurrection at the end of the world. These beliefs contribute to Islamic worldviews or *Weltanschauungen*. In order for a Muslim to gain an understanding of some phenomenon, what they learn about the phenomenon must be incorporated into an Islamic *Weltanschauung*. In many cases, what is learned about a phenomenon is consistent with an Islamic *Weltanschauung* because of irrelevance. For example, understanding how an automobile engine works poses no challenge to a religious worldview. In other cases, however, there are clear challenges, as in the case of economic rationality mentioned earlier. Such challenges are obstacles to understanding. A Muslim will not be able to achieve some level of understanding of a phenomenon if that understanding is to be provided through a theory that is inconsistent with any Islamic *Weltanschauung*. However, the aim of science or, at the very least, one of the most important aims of science is to provide understanding of the phenomena under investigation. So, if science is to fulfill its function for Muslims, the project of the Islamicization of the sciences must be taken up in the sense of the development of sciences through which Muslims can gain understanding of phenomena by developing them in ways that cohere with Islamic worldviews.

### **1. The Debates about Values in the Philosophy of Science**

Debates in the philosophy of science during the twentieth century led many to the conclusion that analogously to the manner in which observations are said to be “theory laden”, scientific theories are “value laden”. Scientific theories are value laden at several levels. First, the choice of topics to be subject to scientific investigation is made on the basis of judgments about the relative values of competing directions of research. Second, the acceptance of research for publication depends on the value judgments of those who review the work. Third, value presuppositions influence judgments about plausibility. A theory that conforms to a reviewer’s values may appear to be more plausible than one that conflicts with them. Fourth, it is generally required that the methods of scientific investigation, presentation, and evaluation should conform to the dominant moral norms.

While in many cases the influence of values on research is justifiable, either morally or epistemically or both, this is not always the case. Research design has the avoidance of inappropriate value bias as one of its primary goals. How to avoid bias and how to prioritize factors that may contribute to objectivity are questions that also require value judgments. The progress of science is by no means a simple matter of gathering evidence and testing hypotheses. These observations have been made with regard to the sciences generally, but they have been considered to identify issues that are particularly prominent in the social sciences.

A number of philosophers have attempted to categorize the kinds of values that are influential in the practice and evaluation of scientific inquiry. Some hold that the only kinds of values that can legitimately play a role in science are *epistemic*. Epistemic values are features of theories that are taken to give them a right to preferential treatment, such as simplicity, scope, accuracy, comprehension, and fruitfulness, where the preferential treatment is justified on the basis of epistemic goals: truth, understanding, avoidance of error, and the advancement of science. The epistemic values may be contrasted with other kinds of values: aesthetic, moral, political, etc. Simplicity might be considered to border on the aesthetic. Mathematicians are famous for the preference they give to beautiful proofs. Whether aesthetic values have any legitimate place in science might be disputed, but many have argued that moral and political values must be excluded, not to mention religious values.

Throughout the history of the sciences, free inquiry has been wrongfully suppressed and threatened on grounds that some forms of research are inconsistent with moral, religious, or political values; although research that utilizes prisoners or other human beings without their consent is rightly condemned, and in 1964 the Helsinki Declaration was developed for the World Medical Association to publicly condemn unethical research practices.<sup>1</sup> There continue to be debates about the moral implications of the use of animals in scientific research. So, the interference of moral values in the conduct of research is legitimate in many cases; but this should not be taken as an excuse to control or prohibit recognized scientific work for the purpose of enforcing ideological conformity.

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1. See <https://www.wma.net/what-we-do/medical-ethics/declaration-of-helsinki/>.

In the discussions I was privileged to have with ‘Allāmah Misbah about the development of Islamic social sciences, he made it completely clear that the aim of this work was not to suppress research based on secular or non-Islamic values, but to prevent the suppression of research based on Islamic values. He emphasized the idea that Muslim researchers should make use of and develop theories, such as Freud’s, that have their origins in worldviews that are incompatible with Islam. Researchers who work in Islamic republics should not fear that their projects will not receive government funding unless they pay lip service to how their work will foster Islamic values.

It is because of the deleterious effects of the imposition of values on scientific research, that Max Weber defended the idea of value-free social science. In 1917, he introduced the term *Wertfreiheit*, because he held that questions of ultimate value are the responsibility of each individual, and answers to them should not be smuggled into empirical research in such a manner that some controversial principles may be protected by the authority of a “science”.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Weber was well aware that the relations between values and theoretical issues as well as the influence of values on scientific development are undeniable. He admits, “even purely empirical scientific research is *guided* by cultural interests – that is to say: *value* interests.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Weber held that social science should be the investigation of what the facts are, independent of whether they fit with anyone’s particular moral, political, or religious values. Already in 1904, Weber argued that when investigating social phenomena, it is not the responsibility of the social scientist to issue any moral condemnations.<sup>3</sup>

The ideal of value-free science was attacked on several fronts. Members of the Frankfurt School engaged extensively with Weber’s views; but they rejected Weber’s value free methodology for the social sciences as surreptitiously legitimizing the status quo and supporting a kind of relativism inconsistent with the ideal of critical rationality they promoted.<sup>4</sup> Philosophers of language argued that the language of science includes

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1. (Bruun & Whimster, 2012), 318.

2. (Bruun & Whimster, 2012), 317.

3. “The ‘Objectivity’ of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy”, (Bruun & Whimster, 2012), 100-138. For the background to Weber’s position, see (Proctor, 1991).

4. (Villa, 2019).

terms with positive or negative value connotations; and that it is not possible to eliminate such terms in favor of ones with a neutral valence without impoverishing the descriptive capacities of the language. Pragmatists argued that all theoretical investigations were based on pragmatic decisions in which values are prominent, and that such decisions were needed not only for the adoption of an overall framework, as Carnap readily admitted, but also in experimental design, choice of hypotheses, and the degrees of confirmation of a theory required to justify further investigations on its basis. Quine's *holism* was taken by Putnam to show that science and value were inextricably entangled.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Kuhn's theory of science seemed to expose the idea of any value free science as a naïve illusion produced by a neglect of history.<sup>2</sup>

Many philosophers would agree with Hilary Putnam<sup>3</sup> that the fact/value dichotomy has indeed collapsed, and the implications for sociology have been drawn that a value-free sociology of the kind Weber sought is impossible.<sup>4</sup>

If facts and values cannot be neatly sorted and separated, so that the ideal of a value-free social science must be abandoned, the result would seem to be a crisis for the legitimacy of social science.

## 2. Science and Correspondence

Scientific realists claim that any acceptable scientific theory must be based upon evidence that provides good reason for thinking the theory is true because it corresponds to how the world is. Empirical facts are said to be what makes theories true or false. Pragmatists, on the other hand, allow that values can contribute to the factors that legitimately can influence theory choice. Pragmatists can be divided into those who agree that values can be distinguished in a meaningful way from brute facts, and those who question the distinction. As mentioned above, one of the foremost philosophers who have defended the "entanglement" of fact and value is Hilary Putnam. Putnam's entanglement thesis draws on the pragmatist

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1. (Putnam, 2002).

2. (Kuhn T., 1962); (Kuhn T. S., 1977).

3. (Putnam, 2002).

4. (Davydova & Sharrock, 2003).

tradition in philosophy and its rejection of any simplistic definition of truth as correspondence with the (value-free) facts. However, the rejection of the correspondence theory and the legitimacy of consideration of values are widely affirmed among pragmatists who differ among one another about how the norms of truth and objectivity are to be understood. Apart from pragmatists, there are other approaches in which a legitimate role is found for both epistemic and other kinds of values in the evaluation of theories. Perhaps the most prominent direction of thought along these lines is to be found among feminist philosophers of science.<sup>1</sup> The legitimacy of value considerations in the sciences is also a topic debated in discussions of science and democracy<sup>2</sup> and science and governance.<sup>3</sup> Advocates of pluralism in science have also argued for the relevance of social values for theory evaluation.<sup>4</sup> But values may have an effect on scientific practice not only for the final evaluation of competing theories; they may also guide research in its directions and methods and be interwoven in the language used to describe the phenomena studied.

The project of the Islamicization of the social sciences can be carried out to varying degrees. A minimal Islamicization might consist of little more than the presentation of social theories in a manner that is free from inconsistencies with Islamic teachings. If Islamic values are to play a more intrusive role, the ideal of a value free science will have to be rejected. This poses a dilemma for advocates of Islamicization. The sort of epistemology developed by ‘Allāmah Misbah is one in which the value of knowledge is determined by correspondence to an objective reality.<sup>5</sup> The ways in which values may be taken to influence the sciences, however, generally assume that strict correspondence must be rejected as insufficient for theory choice. So, either Islamicized social science must restrict itself to the criticism of the influence of unislamic values in the social sciences and the elimination of such influences in its own research, or it must back down from the ideal of science validated exclusively by strict correspondence to objective facts.

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1. Among the most prominent arguments for the relevance of value in the evaluation of theories is that presented in (Longino, 1990).

2. (Kitcher, 2011).

3. (Jasanoff, 2012).

4. (Ludwig & Ruphy, 2021).

5. (Misbah Yazdi, 1999), Lessons 19-20.

According to ‘Allāmah Misbah, neither alternative is acceptable. He proposes that Islamic values are objective realities that can be discovered through the appropriate employment of the intellect. Science can retain validation as correspondence with the facts; but the facts will include those reported by Islamic value claims, which are argued to be confirmed by the intellect. Such value claims, however, are disputed on several fronts. Social scientists adhere to a variety of sets of values; and it is not uncommon for each to think that their own values are superior to others and backed by rational intuition. There are notorious disputes between religious and secular ideas about value. Among the advocates within each of these general groups, there are also myriad disagreements about values. Even among Shi‘i Muslims, there are significant differences about how to recognize the objective validity of values. So, the project of the Islamicization of the social sciences cannot be expected to win the kind of consensus demanded within the sciences to support claims of objectivity. Even if the claim to truth by correspondence is retained for Islamic values, there will be a need to consider how values that are not universally accepted can be used in the social sciences in such a manner that charges of dogmatism can be avoided. One can argue that Islamic science is objective because it is based on values that correspond to realities discerned by the intellect; but when this discernment is itself widely disputed, the insistence on it will not add to the credentials for the objectivity of islamicized sciences.

Even if we agree that sciences based on Islamic values will be objective because these values correspond to eternal verities, correspondence with value-free empirical facts alone must be admitted to be insufficient to justify the islamicized social sciences. Correspondence can still be argued through claims about rational intuition, but this will not suffice to win the approach to consensus that might bolster claims to objectivity. Furthermore, ‘Allāmah Misbah’s view was one that recognized the value of research even when it is inconsistent with Islam. The result is a plurality of ways of pursuing the social sciences that incorporate different sets of entangled values, emotions, policies and preferences, which, after Sophie Juliane Veigl, may be called *VEPPs*.<sup>1</sup> Relativism is to be rejected if it is

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1. (Veigl, 2021).

taken to mean that all of these pursuits are to be evaluated as having equal worth. Comparative evaluations of worth, however, will differ from different value perspectives, and there is no reason to expect that these differences will be resolved before the general resurrection. So, correspondence will not be able to secure any claim to objectivity, and the social sciences will continue to develop with competing underlying VEPPs that will not be acceptable to all participants in the developments.

With some hesitation, I would call ‘Allāmah Misbah’s view of the social sciences a peculiar version of *scientific pluralism*. The reason for the hesitation is that there are differences between his view and those that are usually included under this heading. Scientific pluralism as defended in (Kellert, Longino, & Waters, 2006) rejects “monism”, the view that there is a single true complete account of the world. ‘Allāmah might well have agreed that there is no complete *human* account of the world because human knowledge is necessarily deficient. At least, human knowledge is incapable of providing comprehension of the divine essence; but even in the mundane realm, hopes for a single true scientific account of physical reality are fanciful. He would have agreed with the plurality thesis, that there are and should be (given the diversity of views this side of eternity) several scientific approaches to the same social phenomena, secular and religious, including Islamic. His attitude toward this plurality was one of acceptance and encouragement for Muslim researchers to participate in science without forgetting their own distinctive values. This would be enough to classify ‘Allāmah Misbah as a scientific pluralist, except that he would also have argued that the values informing the Islamicized sciences correspond to absolute truths. Not all VEPPs are equal, according to ‘Allāmah Misbah; but, then again, scientific pluralists also reject the “equal validity” claim often mistakenly thought to define “relativism”. So, there is still room for hesitation, especially since Veigl has persuasively argued that scientific pluralism might be best understood as a *stance*<sup>1</sup> rather than as a doctrine with necessary and sufficient conditions, where a stance is to be understood as involving a particular configuration of typical commitments, values, emotions, and policy preferences, VEPPs; and my impression is that the attitudes of advocates of the Islamicized social sciences those of

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1. (Veigl, 2021); Veigl’s notion of *stance* is derived from (van Fraassen, 2002).

scientific pluralism are not a good match.

Scientific pluralists would agree with ‘Allāmah Misbah that a limitation to purely empirical data will be insufficient for the development of theories that will enable one to achieve an adequate understanding of social phenomena. Theory is underdetermined by evidence, as Quine argued.<sup>1</sup> Epistemic relativists, scientific pluralists, and advocates of the Islamicization of the social sciences agree that the evaluation of theories on the basis of empirical data alone will be incomplete; and they agree that evaluation requires appeal to VEPPs. These evaluations will be situated in the epistemic systems that incorporate the proper VEPPs; and it is admitted that what is proper here is contested. Although advocacy of Islamicized science is often couched in the language of absolutism, it is undeniable that one group’s absolutes are another’s foibles. As Veigl points out, relativists, like scientific pluralists, deny that all epistemic systems are of equal validity, but they recognize a space between the absolutes and the foibles. The rankings that open this space are themselves not absolute, in the sense that they are disputed and there is no extra-systemic way to resolve all such disputes. Longino suggests that feminist values may legitimately be introduced where theory evaluation is underdetermined by evidence, although there is no guarantee that the introduction of any particular set of values will suffice to guarantee unique determination. The project for the Islamicization of the sciences will be seen as yet another agenda in the ongoing conflicts among VEPPs and epistemic perspectives on the basis of which quite diverse standards have been proposed not only for theory choice, but for the directions and methods to be employed in the social sciences, as well.

### **3. Islamicized Objectivity**

When charges were raised against Thomas Kuhn that his views of the development of science would lead to a pernicious relativism in which theory choice would be arbitrary, he responded by defending the objectivity of science. He did not claim that scientific theories correspond

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1. See (Quine, 1992), 16. For a monograph on the issue, I recommend (Stanford P. K., 2006). For a shorter introduction by the same author, see (Stanford K., 2021). For a review of the development of Quine’s thinking on the issue and a rebuttal to an objection posed by Scott Soames, see (Adeel, 2015).

to facts in the external world and are objective because of this correspondence. Instead, he argued that science is objective because scientific theory choice needs to be supported by reasons. This goes for philosophical theory choice, assertions made in the humanities and social sciences, and much more than the physics whose objectivity Kuhn was thought to have undermined. In matters of taste and romance, one might justify one's choice by primitive arbitrary preference; although even here poor choices may be criticized. At the most subjective end of the spectrum, when asked why one ordered a soft-boiled egg instead of sunny side up, no reason is required beyond a statement of preference. In objective matters, reasons are required to justify beliefs and decisions, and mere preferences do not suffice as reasons. Kuhn argued that in his view science is objective in the sense that scientific judgments ought to be based on good reasons, and the irrational factors that influence the directions science takes do no diminish this objectivity in the least. Kuhn also explains that the objectivity of science consists in the fact that within scientific practice, one should appeal to *objective criteria* to support one's views, even if, from a historical point of view, we can identify non-objective factors that influence the course of theory choice. The objective criteria we are to use are those that will be acceptable to other recognized experts who conduct research in the areas relevant to the theory under consideration; and Kuhn mentions standard epistemic values such as accuracy and consistency.<sup>1</sup>

Accuracy and objectivity need not be descriptive. As Putnam concluded: "What I am saying is that it is time we stopped equating *objectivity* with *description*."<sup>2</sup> Max Kölbel has suggested an important feature of objectivity that is independent of description and representation is *reliability*:<sup>3</sup>

In pooling our cognitive resources, objectivity is a helpful assumption. If we know that a question is objective then we know that if another thinker correctly answers the question then it will also be correct for us to answer the question in this way. We can make use

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1. (Kuhn T. S., 1977), 338.

2. (Putnam, 2002), 33.

3. This is not to be confused with "reliabilist" theories of externalist justification. By the *reliability* of some research, is meant that others in the field take the research to have been undertaken in a professional manner, without prejudice or methods that lead to distortions. See (Koskinen, 2020), 1193.

of others' answers, thus saving ourselves the efforts they made in arriving at their answer— assuming, of course, that their efforts were well-directed, that they used good methods and made no mistakes in doing so. Conversely, the assumption of objectivity puts constraints on the methods regarded as appropriate for forming beliefs: the correct methods must be such that anyone employing them correctly will arrive at the same answer, i.e. that arriving at divergent answers is a symptom of some mistake which will prompt a search for the location of the mistake so that it can be avoided. If, despite a divergence of answers, no mistake in the application of the method can be found, then this motivates a revision of the method, or perhaps motivates us to re-think the status of the subject matter as objective.<sup>1</sup>

Kölbel did not use the term “reliability”, although the basic idea is evident in the above passage. An understanding of objectivity centered on proper reliance has been carefully elaborated by Inkeri Koskinen. Here, I will focus on just one of her publications in which her “risk account” of objectivity is ably defended.<sup>2</sup> The question with which I am concerned is whether this account provides resources to defend or reject the claim that Islamicized social sciences can be objective. The answer is that to the extent that we admit a plurality of scientific attitudes and VEPPs that may legitimately determine scientific judgments, the objectivity of such judgments will be relative.

Among the theories of objectivity surveyed by Koskinen, some focus on *convergence* as the key to objectivity. A hypothesis can be defended as *objective* if numerous different avenues of research will all lead to acceptance of the hypothesis. This will not always be the case for the Islamicized sciences. It is assumed that research that is at odds with Islamic values will not lead to the acceptance of some hypotheses whose confirmation depends on assumptions, methods, and descriptions of data that are entangled with Islamic values. Convergence objectivity might be restricted: if numerous different avenues of research consistent with Islamic values will lead to acceptance of a hypothesis, the hypothesis may be said to have Islamicized convergence objectivity.

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1. (Kölbel, 2011), 23.

2. (Koskinen, 2020).

Research is said to have procedural objectivity when one researcher can be replaced by another without any alteration of the results. In cases of research that involve the interpretation of social phenomena, this will be difficult to achieve, since the discernment of meanings often depends upon highly personalized assumptions and sensitivities. Where there is procedural objectivity, however, the results will be acceptable for Islamicized science, as well, since it is defined as replaceability of researchers, which will include Muslim researchers operating with Islamic values. There may also be a more restricted Islamicized procedural objectivity, when researchers holding Islamic values can be exchanged, but not necessarily all others.

The Islamicizing researcher, in addition to other researchers who propose alternative sets of values, commitments, and presuppositions to inform and direct the sciences, as with scientific pluralism, pose a threat to the objectivity of standard secular social sciences. For if the values and commitments make a difference to the research, and then one researcher cannot be exchanged for another. There is a kind of symmetry of irreplaceability, which implies a lack of universal convergence objectivity.

One solution to this problem might be to relativize objectivity. The results of research may be objective relative to a set of values, commitments, etc., such that there will be convergence on the evaluation of the research within the community of researchers who share VEPPs. Others who share the VEPPs but who are not experts will also find the science done in the framework of a favored VEPP to be dependable, provided that appropriate epistemic standards are not sacrificed in the name of a philosophical stance, such as naturalism, or feminism, or a religious outlook. Koskinen writes:

When we who use any of the applicable senses of objectivity call *X* objective, we endorse it. We say that we rely on *X*, and that others should do so too. But the word ‘objective’ is reserved for a specific type of reliance: it is based on the belief that important epistemic risks arising from our imperfections as epistemic agents have been effectively averted.<sup>1</sup>

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1. (Koskinen, 2020), 1196.

One way for epistemic risks to be averted, for those with religious beliefs, is to make sure that what is claimed is consistent with the relevant religious beliefs and VEPPs. Research that is conducted with materialistic premises will be considered to be unreliable for those who are convinced that these premises are false. Although Muslim might recommend Islamicized science to all as science we are willing to rely on, it is clear that at least some of the premises on which Islamicized research is based, such as the immortality of the soul, will be dismissed as nonsense by some with conflicting positions. The conflicts, however, will not stop those with conflicting philosophies from promoting their own forms of science, provided common criteria are met. The promotion is not restricted to the in-group. The materialist might tout the successful applications of a theory imbued with materialist presuppositions in hope that the non-materialists might be won over, or if not that, then at least might be more sympathetic to materialist science. This will pose a challenge to the proponents of Islamicized science. Can they *translate* the results of materialist science into an Islamicized idiom without losing explanatory or other epistemic values they recognize as the product of a competing way of doing science? The hope of meeting this kind of challenge and discovering the superiority of an epistemic stance over rivals is the basis of Alasdair MacIntyre's extended rejection of the charge that his views imply a form of relativism in which all epistemic systems must be considered equal.<sup>1</sup>

Koskinen's risk account of objectivity is helpful because it explains why objectivity is contextual. All of us, whether materialists, feminists, or adherents of a religious cause, are fallible epistemic agents. Our imperfections detract from the reliability of our scientific affirmations, especially in areas, such as the social sciences, in which the role of VEPPs is especially prominent. When care is taken to avert the risks of error or distortion, we take the results to be higher on the scale of objectivity. Koskinen's account allows us to view objectivity as measured on a continuous scale rather than considering *objective* to be the binary complement to *subjective*. Not only does Koskinen's account enable us to

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1. The charge of relativism was leveled against MacIntyre after the publication of the first edition of *After Virtue* (1981); and he responded to it in the postscript to the second edition and the prologue to the third: (MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed., 2007). But the response is most fully elaborated in (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 1988).

recognize degrees of objectivity, it also enables us to categorize different types of objectivity associated with the various types of distortion and error to be averted. As Koskinen observes: “[E]very new insight about the ways in which we are imperfect as epistemic agents can bring forth new senses of objectivity.”<sup>1</sup>

Koskinen points out those VEPPs are especially significant in policy relevant research, which is most often undertaken in the social sciences. Different sets of values will lead to differing assessments of the kinds of errors and distortions it is most important to avoid. Other forms of research will be less sensitive to VEPPs. Disagreements about objectivity might occur when the biases to be averted are those of individual researchers or those endemic to a field, such as dismissals of reports couched in religious language by materialist researchers who are concerned with the “plain facts” about what happened. These kinds of disagreements about objectivity are especially relevant to Islamic Studies and evaluations of the plausibility of historical narratives.

I agree with Koskinen that: “it is good to have an evaluative notion [of objectivity] that focuses on the epistemic risks arising from our imperfections as epistemic agents.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Koskinen has demonstrated that the risk account of objectivity is able to explain some of the most important features often attributed to objectivity. However, the risk account of objectivity makes evaluations of objectivity relative to evaluations of risk, and evaluations of risk will be different for different groups of investigators. The result is a form of relativism about objectivity, but not one that needs to take all risk assessments as equally accurate. Risk assessments cannot be made arbitrarily. If we are to defend the objectivity of the Islamic social sciences by appeal to Koskinen’s risk account of objectivity, we should be prepared to admit that where it can be shown that the theories of the Islamic social sciences are objective, this does not amount to showing that they are true or even verisimilar. To claim that the theories of the Islamic social sciences are objective is only to say that we, the members of the Islamic community of social scientists, those who accept the VEPPs presumed by the research under consideration, have

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1. (Koskinen, 2020), 1200.

2. (Koskinen, 2020), 1201.

good reasons to rely of it. Secular and Muslim social scientists may well have good reason to reject one another's objectivity claims. Each may find the theories of the other to be unreliable because based on at least partially unacceptable VEPPs. On the other hand, agreement with VEPPs is no guarantee of objectivity. Shoddy research will be unreliable no matter how much we agree with the VEPPs of the researcher.

#### 4. 'Allāmah Misbah's Scientific Pluralism

I have argued that reflections of the program of the Islamicization of the social sciences as conceived by 'Allāmah Misbah is best understood as a form of *scientific pluralism*, with some qualifications. The form of scientific pluralism advocated by 'Allāmah Misbah is one according to which Islamic values and other presuppositions are to be permitted in the development of islamicized social sciences. The view is *pluralist* in that it recognizes that there are other value orientations that might inform versions of the social sciences. A sort of healthy competition is envisaged among secularist, Marxist, feminist, Islamic, and other value orientations for the social sciences. Of course, 'Allāmah would reject any sort of relativism according to which these different forms of value orientation are to be considered equal. The Islamic social sciences would be expected to outperform all rivals, even if universal recognition of their superiority would have to wait until the end of time.

Scientific pluralism, however, even in the qualified form that could be attributed to 'Allāmah Misbah, will have to face the challenge of how a science that cannot be expected to win universal recognition before the end of the world could be considered objective. I have argued that this challenge is one that philosophers of science have faced at least since being confronted by the work of Thomas Kuhn. I then argued that Kuhn himself, as well as a number of subsequent authors, have defended the objectivity of science in ways that can also be applied to defend the objectivity of the Islamicized social sciences.

I introduced the work of Inkeri Koskinen on a risk-minimizing account of objectivity as particularly well suited to address the challenge of objectivity for the Islamic social sciences. Although I am convinced of the value of this work, it must be admitted that the view of objectivity proposed can only answer the challenge of formulating objective sciences without claims to being value-free if it is admitted that the objectivity of

the results of research carried out with a particular orientation in the sciences will be relative to the orientation. The task for those who would carry out the project of the Islamicization of the social sciences, however, is not necessarily self-confirming. In order for the Islamic social sciences to be (relatively) objective, it will have to be shown how they can produce results that other Muslim researchers (at least) will find credible enough to rely upon in such a manner as to minimize their epistemic risks.

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