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## The Inefficiency of the Sociology of Knowledge In the Middle East

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### Abstract

Given the similar social structures in the Middle East and elsewhere the sort of knowledge or social knowledge in this area is very unique. The intensified active political field is a matter of constant discussion. The Separation between the mainstream sociology in the Middle East and the other parts of the world in the field has always been questioned. The sociology of knowledge has been a framework in reviewing the developments in the Middle East in recent years. So, Re-reading of the sociology of knowledge can be an instrument in enlightening this area. In The sociology of knowledge, the determination of knowledge is the basic principle. This definition also includes the paranormal; religious and ideological beliefs of people. The basic idea can be the reason of the differences between this area and the other parts of the world. The main root of conflict is either the matter of mutual trust or absence of that in the Middle East and the presence or absence of certain facts. Thus, the proposition that the concept of ideology as cultural and social relations in a social network can also be formed in a particular location is a serious conflict. The main ride here disputes the theory that the nodes are brighter. The route will be over in three steps. The hypothesis of this paper is formed by these main three steps. By analyzing the issue of the sociology of knowledge which is the social determination of knowledge, we are seeking for the contrast of that with the utmost main knowledge in the Middle East (the religion and the religion with any possible interpretation).in following we are about to show that in the theoretical duals which the sociology of knowledge is defined by that is not valid in the social knowledge in middle east. Finally, the central cause of this theory which is the real/idea and its opposite and dialectical relations that evolutes in different tendencies and historical eras have basically no place in the main principles of knowledge in Middle East. The reality and the idea in the Islamic philosophy as the primary source of though in Middle East have got their own special register and they never have had any opposite and dialectical relations with one another.

**Keywords:** Sociology of knowledge, Determination of knowledge, Epistemic framework, Middle East

## Introduction

The Middle East intellectual zone is a location for competition and even conflict among various ideas that are associated with postfixes such as Indigenous, Western and fundamentalism. Among these, every mainstream has many subdirectories, each of them either true or false, introduce themselves as valid values custodian. To justify the necessity to defend these values ideology has been produced and finally being got into the practical realm of politics, and being made influence on the arena of a country, region or the world. In fact, it seems conflicts are rooted in a kind of knowledge or cognition that every stream is trying to resort to each one of its main branches, introduce that as valid cognition. According to this, check conflicting cognition may be considered as one of the main tasks of sociology in this field.

Basically, sociological approach of cognition in sociology is claiming that and in fact the theoretical possibility of this approach provides a realm to examine how the various cognitions create in societies. This is perhaps one of the reasons for using this approach in the thesis and researches. The point is that in the Middle East zone one of the main sources of knowledge (perhaps the most fundamental) in the both kinds of routine and wisely, is Islamic thoughts. This is clearly indicated in intellectual subdirectories that they want to attribute themselves to Islam in every possible way. We had even seen a lot of theoretical efforts that has justified concepts such as democracy and human rights in the Islamic approach.

The question is that how much ability of theoretical explanation has the cognition sociology as a modern approach in sociology (at least in Iran has a rational luck) in examination of Middle East intellectual streams.

Therefore, in this paper first we attempt to examine the main approaches to the

sociology of knowledge and represent its limits of epistemology and Ontology. Then we examine these limits in Islamic thought. Comparison of these two can help us to answer the mentioned question.

## Ontological and epistemological margins of the Islamic philosophy

In the first part of the article, we mentioned ontological and epistemological sociology of cognition. Let's ride in this section to show these margins in Islamic idea.

In Islamic unity ontology, the topics and issues proposed in the philosophy of science, religion, ethics and metaphysics are discussed. In the field of social sciences, the fundamental question is whether the actual social world exists independently of the cognition of theorist, outside the mind? Therefore, the main topic of ontology is examining the nature of social reality and its constituent and components.

Ontological principles of Islamic philosophy can be expressed as follows:

The first principle of Islamic ontology in general is the principle of fact or the originality of real. This means that there is a real world consists of international phenomena, independent of our cognition of it, outside the mind. Natural and social facts and truths are not only the concepts and imaginations of the human mind, but also exist regardless of human perceptions and imaginations of the reality called self-governor. But the self-governor is further than the physical and material world (Tabatabaei, 1993, pp.160-165). [Self-governors] in empirical propositions, the material realities of the Islamic worldview, unlike conventional material realism, essence and existence (reality) is not equal to the material and physical world, but the metaphysics are also real and actual.

Although both the physical and metaphysical dimensions of universe are emphasized, but the scope and breadth of metaphysics is furthermore the physical world, it is considered that. (Alam al-Hoda; 2009, p. 14)

The Islamic ontological approach is essentialist too. Essentialism means considering intrinsic originality for the phenomena, both natural and social. Phenomena imply the characteristics and properties that have determinate and fixed nature (though there is no consensus among Islamic philosophers) and are describable. Accordingly, the world consists of separate components and distinct entities such as people, objects, processes, events, and material and immaterial structures, have substance, and they are the Meta season and meta place. Existence system is also an intrinsic and unconventional system. So, there is intrinsic and real relationship between objects, phenomena, elements and the constituent elements of the universe (Motahari, 1991, p. 97).

In the Islamic world view, the universe, both natural and social universe, are regulated by the law of causality that represents the predominating a causal system of the cosmos (For more details see: Tabatabaei, 1993, pp. 260-261) .

The God is the first cause of the world, deals hierarchical with the affairs of the world through material and immaterial causal intermediaries. (Alam al-Hoda, 2009, pp. 86-88).

Second, the universe is a quasi-organism has correlation, continuity and quasi-organic relationship between the components, which is explainable via necessity of deductive. The world is an interconnected, integrated and irresolvable system, which the loss and destruction of some of the creatures and the components of the universe will destroy other parts of the world. So that survival and

destruction of some species of elements and creatures are required for survival and destruction of all other components. (Motahari, 1991, p. 141) .

Third, there is fixed and immutable laws and rules governing on the universe, both social and natural, cannot be changed on the passage of time. Such as the natural evolution rules and social development laws, which remain constant despite of the evolution of natural phenomena and human social lives. Therefore, social phenomena are as regulated and synchronized as natural phenomena that can be expressed as general generalizations, rules and regularities. The existence of the rules is explained based on the "fixed relates to variable" philosophy (Motahari, 1991, p. 84)

The Fourth and most important principle of the Islamic ontology that is inference from the former principle, is the principle of Monotheism and unity in the cosmos. Monotheism is the first doctrine of Islam. Therefore, many of the verses and hadiths are observing the principle of monotheism. Monotheism comprises of some other ontological principles in the Islamic worldview. First, this is the true essence and absolute existence of a Holy God that all creatures and substances come from him. The entire universe is Creatures and depends on the existence and the volition of the Necessary Being Almighty and Wise and Alim (Tabatabaei and Motahari, 1971, p. 8).

Therefore, Holy God is the first cause and there will not be anything and nothing will happen without his volition, and whenever he wants, certainly it will happen. Upon this causality monotheistic system governs all over the world, the existence of God is the cause of all universes. So, the universe implies the existence of its creator. Moreover, based on the theory of the personal uni-

ty in transcendent wisdom, there is advent relationship between God and the universe (Javadi Amoli, 1997, p. 48).

Epistemology in Islamic philosophy has its own characteristics that are being mentioned here. We mentioned earlier and in another form that epistemology or "theory of knowledge/understanding" is a very wide field of philosophy that studies knowledge (absolute knowledge) and justifying the belief, or is dealing with "justified belief".

The Epistemology of religious beliefs, is a series of epistemological issues that are raised specifically about religion and examines religious beliefs using accepted procedures in contemporary epistemology (rational justification of religious belief). According to Plantinga: epistemological debates about religion can be expected to address the question of whether we could know the religious belief or not.

Theory of cognition and Islamic epistemology believes the possibility of cognition. So, a man can be sure to achieve the fact of objects and phenomena. Think and meditate on the verses of the holy Quran reveals that this book cites the possibility of cognition as the most important and the most reliable source of knowledge. Because therewith expressing that God taught all the truth of human, invited him to thinking and meditate and reflect on the cosmos and contemplation in the universe. Hence, one of the most fundamental assumptions and principles of epistemology is reality understanding genuinely and truth recognition. Human existence is coupled with the knowledge and the occurrence is one of the assumptions for every balanced man; because the principle and source of cognition is existence and essence relationship (Mohammadzadeh, 2008, p. 52)

In Islamic epistemology, especially Transcendent Wisdom, based on monotheis-

tic ontology, knowledge is unique truth that has different levels, not crossover facts as existence. Hence, the same relationship that established between different levels of existence, from potential to actual is exist between different levels and steps of understanding and recognition in order to a unique matter (Mohammadzadeh, 2008, pp. 40-51).

Epistemic approach involves several epistemological assumptions and principals. First, the Islamic epistemology is holistic and unity oriented. Because all the natural and social phenomena and objects that owned by our understandings, are manifestations and advents of a unique truth. It means the unity of the world, both natural and social, as subjects and dependents of knowledge are also needing the unity of cognition and knowledge (Alam al-Hoda, 2009, pp. 275-382).

In summary, there are two main Islamic epistemologies, can be found in every (i.e., both) attitude of Islamic philosophy:

First, Islamic epistemology believes in the unity of knowledge and cognition none decomposition. Such that analyze the fact and ripped off enough into different components is not enough to understand the whole universe. Splitting universe into such areas, the social world and human life is also a whole unit which shall be understood in all aspects. In other word, social things should be studied entirety and totality. Because, studying various constituent parts of a society system or whole units independently prevents us from perception of the whole.

Second, holism in Islamic epistemology, unlike demonstrability epistemology, has not involve and entails ignoring distinctions of various sciences, both natural and human, and in their unique procedure, but it means that different sciences have unity at the same multiplicity. In other words, science is a

doubtable matter, has different stages and levels. Hence, a holistic epistemology or Islamic doubtable monism, pluralism of knowledge is not being rejected as the pluralism of truth intuition. As each witness and subject of recognition in order to its existential level has a different perception of one truth (Javadi Amoli, 1997, vol 2: pp. 139-140).

Thirdly and finally, in the Islamic epistemology, as knowledge is not limited and exclusive to sensory osmosis, conceptual knowledge is not the only type of knowledge as well as rationalists argue. Because contrary to the belief of rationalism, wisdom, have not innate conceptions and imaginations without other forces.

Wisdom tackles production of scientific knowledge in two ways: First, wisdom produces scientific knowledge by immediate and direct exposure to the intellectual realities; second, the wisdom produces a part of scientific knowledge through the senses and imagination (ParsaNia, 2008, p. 24).

One of the topics, which are main dual in modern sociology, is debate of the person and his brokers and originality of each of them. To clarify this discussion in Islamic thought, the following points are being mentioned.

In the Islamic worldview and ontology, none of the individual and society nor agent and structure is original, but both have existential originality. Because on the one hand, the society is not a credit composite, not a synthetic compound or real composite rather than natural composites, but also is a real mix from natural composites. So, the society has been consisted and combined of spirit, thought, wisdom, volition and will instead of human corporality. Since people in society find a new collective identity that has spirit, consciousness, conscience, volition and will beyond the people's, by the interaction, the

community and society find originality. Hence, a collective life and a real society will form that has objective existence (Motahari, 1991, pp. 24-30).

But the originality of society is not the same as reject originality of individual or agent. Because considering originality only for society comprises and demands structural determinism, denial of freedom and inherent authorization that has been emphasized in the Qur'an. Also, God puts in his substance and nature that he cannot convert before he goes to society. Hence, although human nature and innate tendencies in society enforce and develop or weaken or distort in the effects of social conditions and influences, but it won't be replaced by anything else. Then, since individuals and agents, as constitutive elements of society are not integrated into society's existence and society won't have a unique existence, it is an evidence of individual originality. (Motahari, 1997, pp. 158-159).

### Discussion & Conclusion

Here by evaluating the ontological and epistemological foundations of a sociological approach we try on one hand to indicate the unsolved problems of approach in the discussion of recognition and determination and on the other hand to clarify the amount of heterogeny between this approach and Islamic thought that is the main source of available philosophies in the Middle East. One of the main aspects of this heterogeny is in ontological and epistemological dual discussion of sociology of knowledge, which is typical for many theoretical approaches, the legacy of modernity.

The important point that is one of the purposes of writing this article should be indicated. The aim of mentioned discussion is not that modern approaches of sociology

such as sociology of knowledge essentially can't be used in survey on Islamic countries issues. But also, we are trying to declare that using them in sociological investigations in Islamic countries, especially the Middle East countries would be useless without fundamental reviewing in assumptions of many of these approaches. Topics Project "Mohamad Tavakoli" and the changes he made in approach to the sociology of knowledge is in the same direction.

### *The unity or duality*

From the main issue of knowledge sociology is the rehabilitate sociology by spreading the perception and perspective horizon that chose to analyze; so that it could think and analyze beyond the dualities such as discipline /change, individual /society and action /structure. These contrasts were intertwined near classical sociologists and one sort of permanent and integral connection between them was visible and important. But those complexities gradually become confrontation by simplification. The sociology of knowledge in the post-ascertainment tried to overcome these philosophical problems. The indicators of this trend mainly are known by Burger and Lukeman are noted. It seems that in recent approaches has been attempted to substitute new "problems" with previous ones, instead of solving the issues. Therefore, as noted in new cognition sociology new issues such as "social organization involved in knowledge", "new social situation of knowledge" and "culture" and "new theories of power and gender" arise instead of institutional, class and economical classical theories and focus on topics such as "informal knowledge" and "knowledge of routine life". For example, Berger and leukemia express: It is not necessary to discuss about semantic complexities due to the routine and

philosophical application of these terms. It is sufficient for our purpose to define the "reality" as qualification related to our volition independence phenomena, and the "identified" as ensure the reality of phenomena that has specific properties (Berger, 2008, p. 7).

But if we look at the text of their comments, we will find such an inevitable linkage of various dualities.

With references to the epistemological and ontological limits of Islamic thoughts we tried to show the amount of contrast between the two areas.

We tried as much as possible to show the dualities and contradictions that emerged from that in two main axes of this approach videlicet recognition problem and definition problem, exactly and in details.

West philosophy is based on duality and individuality, these two characteristics are against the Islamic worldview and therefore no one can integrate these intellectual attitudes and imagine some commonalities between them. Unlike Islamic worldview, which has a form of monotheistic system, duality and individuality are components of well-known axioms of Western thought. As "Chodhari" stated basis of individuality is the logic of duality. In this logic there is always a battle between man and God, earth and sky, subject and object, the world and the hereafter and finally material world and the supernatural world. Hence, duality means all of phenomena are divided into two categories: mundane and ethereal; and ethereal things introduce as incomprehensible. (Iman, 2012, p. 301).

Mentioned example is one of the cases showing the inconsistency are acute. Although there are more interpretations decrease the contradiction between these two separate cognitional realms. But it seems



that inconsistency in unity and duality is still remains strongly in two cognitional realms.

Generally based on monotheistic cosmology, the universe is a unified whole that God is both its source and its destination. So, there are overall communication and coordination among the constituent parts of the world that is moving towards a unique destination. In other words, as the origin of the universe is God, its purpose is the Almighty Omnipotent too. Therefore, despite the fact that human being divides the universe into two categories, good and evil, according to his habit and kind of his perception of conditions, duality not dominate in existence, themselves.

### ***Heterogeneous ontological and epistemological aspects***

As noted above, there are two contents nominally summarize intellectual tradition of knowledge sociology and form the problematic terms of this realm, can be expressed as predicate (proposition) form as follows:

First proposition: 'Knowledge is determined socially'. It has dominated from the first on sociology. It means that all human thought and knowledge arise from real life - the real social conditions shared for special individuals. (McCarthy, 2009, p. 37).

Second proposition: 'Knowledge makes [a] social system' claims that knowledge is not merely a consequence of a social order, but also, they are the main forces in the development and delivery of a social system (McCarthy, 2009, p. 38).

With references to the ontological and epistemological limits of Islamic thought, we could see the heterogeneous extent of these mentioned propositions in pointing limits. Especially the heterogeneity demonstrates itself with what can be called the "sacred knowledge" in the Islamic thought.

'The relationship between "holy" and "unholy" is more complicated than simplistic separation and based on naivety and with all of its attractions, cannot be a basis of Islamic epistemology. The common boundaries of nature between material and sense, physics and metaphysics and the holy and unholy, and dividing the universe into two mentioned realms arises from Greek dualistic worldview and is incompatible with monotheistic worldview' (Hamed Abu Zayd, 2004, p. 30).

While the modern epistemology the duty of sacred things is determined in another form:

The more important issue than the meaning of cognition is a possibility of cognition. There are different perspectives and approaches to the possibility of knowledge. Some deny the possibility of real knowledge for human, basically. Epistemologist can be divided into two categories as Rationalists and Empiricists. The rationalists emphasize on human intellect and contemplation force as the sole source and utility of cognition that is capable of understanding the facts, merely. Conversely, Empiricists or Sentimentalists for the human intellect consider just a little role and function, and treat the only origin of cognition as the material world and the physical world, and the only real objective tool (Moshirzadeh, 2006, pp. 10-11).

But the heterogeneity is not just end to sacred things. In Islamic thought section, it is mentioned in detail. We list another example that shows the extent of heterogeneity. Motahari expressed the ontological and epistemological limits of Islamic thoughts as follows:

First, human is an essence both pre-social and social that his identity is formed in relationship with other people and the world.

Secondly, human beings are not condemned to society and social forces. So based on its inherent authority and freedom, he is able to form this structure and disobey it. Thirdly, in the arena of human life, structures, and social relationships mutually affect and are affected, where reach to the equilibrium point (Motahari, 1971, vol 2: pp. 9-11).

It seems that until no basic review performs in the sociological approach of knowledge; finally, its utilization in the Middle East zone will face with many theoretical challenges.

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