

Critical Realism of Sadrian Philosophy

HAMID PARSANIA

Baqir al-'Ulum University, Iran

Parsania20@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: Husserl's epistemological method, Dilthey's intellectual approach, positivist conception of knowledge, Marx and Hegel's dialectic, William James' pragmatist philosophy, Popper's logic of scientific discovery, and Bhaskar's critical method each entail their particular methodologies in the realm of social science. Similarly, the philosophical realism of the Muslim World, referring to and crediting the three sources of knowledge as sensation, intellect, and revelation, would certainly require a methodology of its own in this field, which in turn generates its commensurate body of knowledge. What we can say in summary about the characteristics of this knowledge is:

While accepting and admitting empirical aspects of social science, it does not limit this science to testable notions and predication.

While maintaining the ontological individuality of social science, it maintains its critical approach, not on the basis of conventional understanding – which is of a historical and merely cultural nature – but based on the two sources of “practical intellect” and “revelation”.

The aforementioned characteristics are individuations of a type of knowledge, which could be considered to be Islamic social knowledge since it benefits from Islamic revelations and its attributed methodology.

KEYWORDS: knowledge, cognition, methodology, positivism, phenomenology, ethnography, critical realism, hermeneutic, theoretical and practical intellect, revelation, intuition.

1. Individuations of Knowledge and Cognition

There are various levels of knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and cognition (*'ilm*), and any given part of awareness reposing in one of the levels of knowledge would be one particularisation of knowledge and cognition. For example, imagining a certain shape like a triangle; a natural feature like a mountain or the sea or a human phenomenon like society, laws or the economy and also attestation of theorems such as a whole being greater than the sum of its parts or the leaves of trees being green are all parts of awareness and knowledge, with each part being distinct from the others by virtue of the characteristics it possesses. Each body of knowledge and cognition is appointed through its characteristics, and is therefore called a particularisation of knowledge.

2. Effective Factors

Various factors are involved in the appearance of particularisations of knowledge and cognition, including the description of the knower who has the knowledge. Every human being's knowledge is different from that of others, as knowledge is possessed by and bound to the knower. Human knowledge is different from animals, angels and God Almighty's. Accordingly, the known fact as the subject of knowledge, the aim that the knowledge pursues, the method employed by the knowledge, the type of attestation accompanying the knowledge, the knower's sense and feeling of the known fact and many other factors – some individual, some social, and some out of the individual or social contexts, affect the particularisation of knowledge.

3. Being of the Knower

Knowledge is affected most by the quality of the knower's being. The knowledge's being cannot be independent of the knower's. In philosophical discussions, this issue is referred to as the unity of the knower and the knowledge (*ittihad al-'alim wa al-'ilm*) or the intellect and the possessor of intellect (*ittihad al-'aql wa al-'aqil*). The material and natural existence of an entity cannot be related to knowledge and cognition, or, more precisely, knowledge and cognition cannot be manifested in such an entity. On the other hand, if the knower is of imaginal detachment, a specific level of knowledge – which is sensual or imaginative and illusive – emerges. Intellectual

knowledge possessing the characteristic of scientific knowledge, which is described as total, necessary, and general, is accompanied by knower's rational detachment. This part of the particularisation of knowledge, which is related to essential aspects of the knowledge and the knower, are discussed in ontology of knowledge.

4. The Subject of Knowledge (Mawdu' al-'Ilm)

No knowledge is independent of subjects. The subject of the knowledge is the known fact. Knowledge is a fact that always provides for its subject. This permanent association between knowledge and subject is also referred to as "concerned aspect". This relationship indicates that knowledge and cognition are dependent entities. Some entities, like "life", are independent; i.e. they are not related to other entities; some others are dependent; i.e. they are related to other entities, which, in the case of knowledge, would be "the known".

Discovering and narrating the subject is the essence of knowledge. Knowledge without a known and cognition without a cognised are not possible and the known and cognised, which are subjects of knowledge and cognition, have a significant effect on the particularisation of knowledge. Knowing a triangle is different from knowing a square; and knowing a line is different from knowing a dot. Accordingly, knowing oneself is different from knowing others. These differences provide the knowledge with particularisations which are derived from the subject.

5. Judgment and Affirmation

Depending on the presence or absence of judgement, knowledge is determined in two forms of apprehension (*tasawwur*) and affirmation (*tasdiq*). Depending on the type of judgement, affirmation is divided into a variety of categories. For example, judgement either includes cognitive certainty or not. Knowledge which does not include cognitive certainty would undoubtedly result in suspicion (*zann*), doubt (*shakk*), or illusion (*wahm*).

Cognitive certainty is like the knowledge in the realm of existence and essence of the knower; yet, it is rooted in the observation of the subject and possibility, and

consideration of the subject of knowledge. In other words, it is not derived from existential aspect of the knower. Cognitive certainty consists of four cognitive confirmations, of which the knower is bound to be aware. Even if there is an affirmation of suspicion, doubt, and illusion, it would be a psychological certainty. In psychological certainty, lack of cognitive certainty still remain binding.

6. Belief and Tendency

Depending on the knower's belief and tendency toward it, and, regardless of quality of judgement formed around the subject and its attribute on the basis of cognitive certainty, psychological certainty, etc. – knowledge may find exclusive specifications.

When man is sure of, or doubts, the verity or untruth of an entity, he either inclines towards it or hates it and avoids it. Inclining towards an entity ends in accepting it and believing in it, while hating and avoiding a thing results in denying it and disbelieving in it. Man can even go so far as to reach disbelief and blasphemy in the entity which he confirms as cognitive certainties, as Pharaoh and his followers did despite all the Divine Evident Proofs that had been revealed to them; according to the holy Qur'an, the Divine evident truth had fully dawned on them, yet they kept denying and disbelieving the truth.

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ

They denied the signs, while they were sure about them. (Sūrah 27:14)

On the other hand, man can believe what is cognitively rejected and incline towards it to the level of faith.

7. Objective of Knowledge

Objective is one of the most effective factors in the realm of knowledge. Objective of knowledge could be discovering the truth and coming to know a fact with certainty, or some other scientific goals. In natural subjects, in most cases the objective is to overcome nature. In human interactions, the objective could be enlightenment or

reaching the truth. It also can be to stimulate other people's feelings and to motivate them, or to persuade people to cooperate on a certain issue. Sometimes, the objective is to defeat an antagonist in the theoretical context. Objectives of knowledge could be either personal or social. Each objective conforms to a certain type of knowledge. Poetry, rhetoric, dialectic, fallacy, and argument are the categories into which knowledge is divided on the basis of objective.

8. Levels of Knowledge

Practical motivations and goals affect the particularisation of knowledge. Similarly, various levels and aspects of cognition may have effects on the formation of knowledge. A priori thoughts affect a posteriori knowledge in various ways.

The way in which various aspects of knowledge influence one another in scientific knowledge is different from how they do so in non-scientific knowledge.

Latitudinal and longitudinal aspects of knowledge may touch and impress one another. Deeper levels and layers of knowledge, which form man's approach toward being, human being, and knowledge, affect deeper levels of knowledge such as social and political reflections, and even the method in which natural phenomena are explained. Some theorists and philosophers consider myths to be the most important factors in the formation of human knowledge and cognition.

9. Method of Knowledge

Every body of knowledge has its own particular method. Natural, human, and metaphysical subjects do not follow the same methods. Sciences with practical objectives have different methods from those aiming to reach the truth and certainty. Some methods are abstract and subjective, while others are sensual and empirical; some are practical and professional, whereas others include asceticism as well as moral and ethical conduct. Every method is followed by a certain type of knowledge; but not every type of knowledge may be achieved through every method. Therefore, method is one of the factors involved in the particularisation of knowledge. Various levels of research require various methods. The methods used in

basic research are different from those used in applied research.

10. Method and Methodology

Method is the path taken to achieve knowledge. Despite its cognitive nature, method is different from methodology. Methodology is a kind of second grade knowledge achieved through considering cognitive methods. Therefore, methodology is the knowledge the subject of which is the method. This, like other types of knowledge, is affected by factors involved in the particularisation of knowledge like the knower, objective, and sensational and cognitive issues of methodology, just as it is affected by its subject. Methodology identifies and suggests a certain method with regards to philosophical, ontological, and epistemological principles and based on, or related to, theories approved in the domain of a science. Methodology may come to such conclusions due to a variety of emotional and modal, or scientific and definitive reasons.

11. Basics of Methodology

It can be inferred from the above that various descriptive, historical, analytic, empirical, profound and other methods in the realm of social or natural sciences cannot be selected and considered to be right or wrong in methodology without taking into consideration their epistemic backgrounds. To make an epistemic judgement, the methodologist has to employ philosophical and scientific ideas, while observing subject, objective, and the level of the research for which the method is used. Philosophical principles affect the methods used in producing or applying theories in the same way as they affect the formation of theories in social sciences and humanities. For this reason, theories and methods befitting such principles are taken into consideration in some philosophical approaches and epistemological codes.

12. Philosophical Structures

Sociology, phenomenology and ethno-methodology are theories formed at the margins of Husserl's phenomenology, while respecting their own methodological and epistemic methods. The school of "symbolic reciprocal action" is affected by the

pragmatist philosophy of William James. Max Weber's sociology and intellectual methodology make use of Dilthey's philosophical approach to human issues and positivistic perspective on science and knowledge. Frankfurt's critical circle, along with Marx's dialectic materialism, give credit to Hegel's dialectic philosophy and Feuerbach's materialism. Kent and Durkheim's methods in forming sociological theories are rooted in their positivistic approach toward scientific knowledge. These is evidence that clearly shows the conclusive impact of the philosophical and epistemic structures of theories and methods of sociology.

13. Positivist Epistemology

In modern science, sociology was born as a scientific body of knowledge after the 19th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the positivistic approach gradually faced numerous challenges; nevertheless, it remained the predominant approach to scientific knowledge. For the same reason, a primitive and unrefined version of the positivistic methodology was the predominant methodology in social science in the 19th century and in a more refined form dominated the 20th century. With all their differences in philosophical structure, various sociological theories could neither release their epistemic methods from the dominance of positivistic method, nor could they challenge the dominance of this method over the official scientific environments. However, parallel to the challenges raised for the positivist definition of science in the philosophy of science, two methods were formulated in social science to combat the positivist method: the first was an ethnographical method rooted in a phenomenological approach to science, and the second was a critical approach to science which emerged in the Frankfurt Circle.

14. Positivist Methodology

As mentioned above, a primitive and unrefined form of the positivist approach had an overwhelming dominance over epistemic bodies of knowledge, especially social science, in the 19th century. At that time, this method had gone beyond epistemic concerns, had the purpose of enlightenment, and was about to introduce a scientific school or the ethics of science. In the 20th century, considering its epistemic

limitations within the framework of Parson's structural functionalism and other theories that were trying to follow principles of modern science, and avoid discussions on ethics and values, this method seized on sociology to serve as an efficient tool in the form of a technocratic and conservative science for the benefit of the ruling social structure.

15. Ethnographic Methodology

Having an intellectual and interpretive approach to social science, the ethnographic methodology was developed to combat the positivist method; however, it was unable to free sociology from the limitations imposed on it. In fact, this method imposed more limitations on sociology. The positivist method had deprived sociology of ethical and value-based judgements; nevertheless, it did explain social phenomena through provable or un-provable methods. Considering its monadic approach, ethnographic methodology excluded explanation from sociology, and limited the role of this science to understanding and describing social phenomena.

16. Critical Methodology

In the first half of the 20th century, the critical school of the Frankfurt Circle epistemologically confronted the Vienna Circle which followed the logical positivist approach. The critical approach considered positivist science to be too conservative in terms of application and too weak in terms of knowledge to be able to cover cultural issues and answer ethical questions. This perspective intended to go beyond the boundaries of instrumental rationality and introduce so-called essential wisdom, which could cover cultural issues and answer man's ethical questions. Although the critical approach had a considerable impact on intellectual circles and social movements, classical works of social science in the 20th century refused to discuss this perspective and methods related to it as an official theory or scientific method. This is rooted in the critical approach of this school to the positivistic definition of science as well as its failure to introduce an affirmative method, particularly in the realm of applied research.

17. Miscellaneous Methodologies

In recent decades, many works on the methodology of social science have been written in or translated into Persian. Most of these works, such as *Methods in Social Science*¹ by Maurice Duvergé, present relatively comprehensive reports of applied methods formed at the margin of positivist approach to the science. Others develop an appropriate methodology clearly influenced by a more specific philosophical or epistemological structure.

Karl Popper's *Logic of Scientific Discovery*² adopts a social science methodology in the footnotes of his refutatory perspective. Investigations and Imaginations³ (Kandukavha va Pendashteha) follows the same methodology in a more applied manner in the field of social science, searching for Iranian examples within the framework of an independent work. Peter Winch's *Social Idea*⁴ restructures the philosophy and methodology of social sciences at a structural level on the basis of Wittgenstein's *Lingual Philosophy*;⁵ Andrew Sawyer's *Philosophy of Social Science*⁶ explains the methodology of social science following Roy Bhaskar's approach in *Critical Realism*.⁷

18. Hermeneutic Approach to Knowledge

The method of critical realism is rooted mainly in the critical approach of the Frankfurt Circle. This method accepts the intellectual conception and differentiation of natural and human subjects, as well as the intellectuality and interpretability of human subjects and extends this perspective to natural subjects, taking into account the researcher's framework of thoughts. It employs Wittgenstein's *lingual philosophy* to show the role of language as a cultural and social phenomenon in the realm of thought. Critical realism has a hermeneutic approach to knowledge maintaining that it is reciprocal to human and social subjects. In other words, the subject of knowledge is reviewed from the researcher's intellectual perspective, while using its own system of meanings and presenting its own interpretation of the world. However, this approach insists on some principles of realism like the existence of the world independent of knowledge and the role of

experience – as well as its effectiveness – in notification and explanation.

19. The Objectives of Critical Realism

Using the aforementioned epistemic principles and contexts, critical realism follows the direction of the critical circle in criticizing the positivist approach. It tries to free science from the limitations which confront it in a different way to ethnographic methods. To do so, it must first define the epistemic circle of science, which was defined independent of other epistemic fields in positivist approach, in relation to people's behavioural and sentimental aspects.

It must then revive science's critical direction, which had previously been in decline due to the predominance of the positivist approach, and give scientific credit to ethical and values-based predications, which are termed ideology, myth, religion, etc. in modern science.

20. Principles of Realism

In order to fulfil the aforementioned objectives, and, to use the aforementioned fundamentals and argumentation, critical realism introduces the following principles, some of which are ontological, others epistemological, and others methodological:

1. The world exists independent of knowledge.
2. Man's knowledge of the world is theoretic.
3. Trueness and falseness are excluded from scientific knowledge
4. Empirical investigation is an efficient means of information.
5. Successful explanation of an act cannot be accidental.
6. Natural and social requirements will necessarily take place.
7. Scientific forces and practical methods are present at natural and social subjects.
8. Existence of accidents and structures is differentiated in the world.

9. Social phenomena are conceptual.
10. Explanation of social phenomena is rooted in the researcher's structure of thoughts.
11. Producing science is a social act.
12. Social relationships and conditions affect the content of cognition.
13. Language and means of communication have a profound, but not all-exclusive, effect on knowledge.
14. It is necessary to evaluate social subjects critically in order to understand and explain them.
15. Denial of the process of accumulating knowledge while maintaining a link through general evolutions.⁸

21. Evaluation of the Principles

The above principles suffer from internal incompatibility. Some of them are either completely invalid or difficult to apply. This means that even though they can be applied to certain cases and domains, they cannot be applied universally. The internal incompatibility of these principles is main source of these principles being invalid.

The world existing independent of knowledge, empirical investigations being efficient, successful explanation of an act not being accidental, natural and social requirements necessarily taking place, existence of casual forces and social methods, and presence of incident and structures are valid and clear principles. Excluding truth and falsehood from scientific knowledge is completely invalid and other principles may be considered to be correct provided that they are neither applied universally nor referred to as absolute realities.

22. Incompatibility of the Principles

Independence of the world from knowledge, which can be referred to as the

principle of reality, means that realities are not limited to the imaginations and subjective conceptions of human beings. Regardless of man's understanding of his love for himself, there is a reality which is referred to as "actuality" or "thing-in-itself", and the human faculty of understanding opts to understand this reality. Critical realism remains "realism" and is differentiated from "idealism" on the basis of this principle.

The third principle, which excludes trueness and falseness from scientific knowledge, is incompatible with the first principle, which indicates that reality is independent of knowledge. That is because true knowledge is one which narrates reality and is in accordance with actuality; if we exclude trueness and falseness from science and scientific predications, the principle of reality, and even all 15 principles, cannot be verified in terms of conforming to reality, and can therefore have no cognitive value.

23. Minimalism and Denial of Discovery

Considering the cognitive value and ability to reflect (*janbah hikayatiyyah*), capacity to uncover, and consequently trueness and falseness of predications to be insignificant is the result of improperly applying the 10th, 11th, and 12th principles universally because these principles reduce the inner content of knowledge to social aspects of human life, and, specifically to the domain of language, which is a contractual and conventional product. Reducing the inner content of knowledge life's social aspect stabilises the relationship between man's emotional aspects and social tendencies and knowledge, and, consequently, frees the epistemic core of science from the seclusion imposed by the positivist approach and even provides cognition with a critical capacity; however, it voids all the above mentioned principles including the first one, on which the identity of critical realism depends.

24. Social Grounds of Knowledge

Denying the universal applicability of the 11th and 12th principles does not absolutely mean to deny the relationship between social acts and cognition being generated, and to deny the effects of social conditions and relationships on content of human

knowledge, because:

1. Once scientific knowledge passes from actual fact (*nafs al-amr*) to the mind and knowledge of the knower and from there to domain of culture, it cannot enter the realm of culture without a social or cultural act.
2. Scientific facts entering people's minds is not independent of social grounds and factors; however the impact of such factors is limited to preparatory causes (*'ilal i' dadiyyah*).

Social conditions and relationships provide an angle for people through which they can receive scientific facts from divine origins and conduct scientific verification of such facts through educational grounds or social opportunities and requirements that they bring about. This angle determines the limits of cognition in relation to the applications and social impacts of concepts and meanings; yet, it cannot have any effect on the inner content of knowledge in terms of epistemic value and aspects pertaining to the capacity to uncover. Trueness and falseness of a body of knowledge is not determined through inclination, sensations, or the individual or social interests of the people who incline toward it.

25. Language, Concepts, and Structure of Knowledge

Human beings' language, communications, and social interactions are associated with the part of knowledge and awareness which is formed in the realm of culture and social agreements. This part of knowledge goes through communications, interactions, and social organisations and so their actuality cannot be separated from social values and agreements. Scientific knowledge in the realm of culture and in the domain of such subjects has a dual identity. Although social occurrence and appearance of knowledge is not possible without the use of language and symbols formed in the domain of social values, thought cannot be reduced to this level of social values. Concepts, which social organisations indicate in forms of texts, languages and expressive methods, and structure, which thought employs regardless of grammatical rules, are related to the inner content of the knowledge. This content is organised, or scientifically judged, on the basis of reality and actuality that the

knowledge uncovers.

26. The Meaning of Knowledge Being Theoretic

Man's knowledge of the world and his interpretation of social and natural phenomena within the framework of the meaning of the research are theoretic. This would be correct in contradiction to realism as it is rooted in materialism and empiricism, which consider scientific knowledge to be a subset of empirical findings by inductive method, or consider scientific predications to be provable or disprovable in an empirical way. Human knowledge, with partial empirical findings as one part, is full of concepts and predications which cannot be achieved through senses, or at least cannot be proved, disproved or invalidated through senses. Nevertheless, knowledge being theoretic could mean that scientific knowledge of the world can only be achieved through concepts and predications that the human mind forms as language and culture within a framework of social relationships and interactions to meet man's historical needs. This approach challenges the truth of the reflectivity and conformity of the mentioned predications and concepts in relation to realities and their trueness or falseness, which results in the relativity of understanding and reality, and affects the cognitive aspect of the principles indicative of reality, and consequently results in the denial of realism.

27. Denying Process of Accumulation

Denying the process of accumulating knowledge is another sound basis upon which to challenge the positivistic perspective, because positivism considers the cognitive circle of science to be one of the testable predications which is expanding gradually, while scientific predications and structures are organized within the framework of theoretic conceptual structures which are not defined in testable methods, and, for the same reason, modification of theoretic structures involves a change in scientific knowledge. Denying accumulation of knowledge could mean that structural predications change under the effect of social phenomena in domain of culture, and in this vein, the scientific society does not necessarily follow the independent scientific laws and criteria. This is correct, provided it does not lead to the denial of

independent cognitive resources, criteria, and methods, which provide for their ontological aspects, and evaluate their trueness or falseness through such aspects.

28. Unawareness of Existence in Critical Realism

Critical realism relates all the cognitive specifications to social aspects and considers social conditions and relationships to be engaged in the generation of scientific content, and this is why it disregards the existential specifications and aspects of cognition, related to metaphysical discussions. Knowledge and cognition, as explained in Islamic philosophy, are different from existence and being, and existential specifications, which are related to degrees of being, are different from essential specifications, which are related to beings. There are differences between existence and their effects on specifications of knowledge and cognition. Natural issues and human issues, including personal and social ones, are beings, and their effects on the domains of knowledge and science are categorized as preparatory factors. The cognitive and structural aspect of cognition is related to the manner of its existence. Overlooking existence leaves the discovery aspect of presentation, as well as the trueness and falseness of the knowledge without any explanation. It also defines the theory independent of human knowledge and the process of cognition in a way that leads to relativity of understanding and even of reality.

29. The Realistic Method of Sadrian Philosophy

Despite all the flaws in the philosophical and cognitive principles of critical realism, it pays close attention to the problems of modern science and pursues considerable goals pertaining to it. Explaining the relationship between modern science or empirical knowledge and other levels of knowledge, and giving the faculty of criticism back to science are amongst such goals.

Organised as a result of the constant philosophical and scientific effort of the Muslim world, considering their philosophical and epistemological capabilities, the philosophical principles and realistic method of Sadrian philosophy maintains the cognitive aspects as well as the state of trueness or falseness of knowledge and cognition. It also explains the structural relationship between empirical knowledge

and other degrees of knowledge, as well as methods of evaluating non-empirical degrees of knowledge. It consequently recounts the differences between scientific and non-scientific structures of empirical knowledge and grants humanities a licence to criticise.

30. Philosophical Principles of the Realistic Method

The realistic method of Sadrian philosophy, as explained and developed by the late scholar Tabataba'i in his *Principles of Philosophy and Realistic Method*, is not undisciplined positivist realism, and does not define knowledge as a simple reflection of the natural and material world in human sensational and imaginal means. This method is based on certain ontological and epistemological principles. The ontological structures of this method are based on principles such as the following:

Reality itself is the border between philosophy and sophistry, or between realism and idealism. This principle is necessarily true and clear and is known as a primary self-evident principle which cannot be denied.

Other ontological principles such as the law of noncontradiction i.e. two contradictory things cannot both be true and cannot both be false (*al-naqidan la yajtami'an wa la yartafi'an*) and the principle of causality are as valid as the principle of reality.

31. Epistemological Principles

The realistic method of Sadrian philosophy makes use of the following principles:

1. The cognitive aspect, ability to uncover, ability to reflect and presentation of ontological predications mentioned above are clear and evident like their main content; thus, the aforementioned predications are true and anything that contradicts them is false.
2. The path of human knowledge is not limited to clear and evident predications, and includes the path of knowledge and clear theoretical science as well. The path of theoretical knowledge is called reasoning.

3. Reasoning may include various inductive, deductive, and comparative methods. Each method leads to the generation of a particular type of knowledge, some of which are certain and scientific, whereas others are unscientific or uncertain.
4. Each path to knowledge makes use of certain epistemic principles, means of cognition, motivations, objectives and tendencies, as well as personal and social factors. It is also subject to specific losses, some of which are related to epistemic grounds, and some to personal and social factors.

32. Sources of Knowledge

Epistemic resources in transcendental philosophy⁹ are sensation, imagination, illusion, conceptual intellect and observation. Each of these resources provides for a suitable level of reality and generates a body of knowledge commensurate with the same level.

Sensational, imaginal, and illusive types of knowledge are chronologically prior to other types of knowledge; but intellectual knowledge is a necessary requirement for scientific knowledge. That is to say that as long as sensational, imaginal, and illusive knowledge are not associated with intellectual knowledge scientific knowledge cannot be generated. Intellect generates a part of knowledge through direct confrontation with intellectual realities, and other parts with the help of sensations and imagination. Intellectual knowledge's need to generate sensational, inductive, and empirical knowledge is indicative of theoretic aspects of human knowledge of nature and natural apparent manifestations of human and social life.

33. The Role of Intellect as a Source of Knowledge

As a source of knowledge prior to sensation and imagination, intellect breaks down the limitations involving the positivist meaning of cognition, because the mind's ability to ponder without assistance frees scientific concepts and predications from being required to be testable; because, part of knowledge, relying on this source of knowledge, is being able to arrive at necessarily true concepts and predications like

the impossibility of contradictories both being true or the principle of causality, which not only are not testable, but also organise theoretic structures of testable predications. Some intellectual predications are primary self-evident ones, and others, like many geometrical theorems, are theoretical predications arrived at via analogy. Concepts and meanings employed in primary ontological principles or even in related theoretical discussion, which form the theoretic structures of natural or social empirical sciences, like concept, existence, non-existence, causality, necessity, and laws related to such concepts are neither sensational nor empirical and cannot be proved or denied through sensations.

34. Intellect and Empirical Science

If the intellect is not recognised as an independent source of knowledge or if its ontological value and credit is neglected and the trueness or falseness of intellectual predications is doubted, ontological and epistemic values of sensational and empirical sciences would be the subject of doubt. It is because these types of cognitions, due to their theoretic structure, refer to a domain of knowledge that cannot be evaluated through sensation and imagination. Sadrian realism, unlike Kantian and Neo-Kantian perspectives, while respecting the validity and authority of intellect, does not let empirical sciences be reduced theoretically to subjective factors or social interactions and relationships; instead it gives them the chance to be practically evaluated.

The scientific selection of structural predications, which are mostly metaphysical predications, close the door on various fields of cognition seeing reality to be relative.

35. Sadrian Realism's Critical Approach

As a source of knowledge depending on its epistemic subject, intellect is divided into theoretical intellect and practical intellect. Practical intellect makes judgements about existences which appear due to human awareness and will. Thus, human and social phenomena are judged by practical intellect. Practical intellect is a source of knowledge whose judgements about ethics and values is based on human and social

subjects. Practical intellect with its evident and theoretical predications prepares the ground for social and human sciences not only to explain their subjects, but also to judge and evaluate them. Unlike metaphysical judgements, critical judgements in the field of social science cannot be made on the basis of sensational and empirical criteria. For the same reason, social science loses its critical aspects if limited by positivist methods. Sadrian realism, maintaining the position of practical knowledge, relates the critical approach to the field of social science in such a way that it is safeguarded against the pathology of the critical school.

36. The Role of Practical Intellect in the Critical Approach

While maintaining its epistemic identity, practical intellect introduces human concepts and meanings befitting the objectives it judges with the help of theoretical intellect. Such concepts – which Tabataba'i refers to as “social values” – draw the ideal behavioural pattern for human life. This ideal model provides a basis for critical approach to social realities, because social realities are in most cases rooted in values that human beings introduce based on their tendencies, interactions, and social relationships. Practical intellect does not allow the knower to remain limited to the dimensions of existing reality or “common comprehension”.

37. Revelation and Intuition

In the Muslim philosophers' realist methodology, intuition is deemed to be a source of knowledge. Sensation, imagination, illusion, and intellect are sources of knowledge which establish their relationship with reality through the horizon of concept. Intuition is another source of knowledge which is directly linked to levels and individuations of existence.

In presential knowledge, the reality is directly exposed to the knower. Presential knowledge, depending on degrees of reality and existence, undergoes a variety of divisions. Revelation is a specific type of presential knowledge which shows the path of man's blessedness in cognitive, doctrinal, ethical, and behavioural domains by reflecting Divine legislative will.

38. *The Interaction of Intellect with Sensation and Revelation*

Sensation, imagination, intellect, and revelation are sources of knowledge on different levels and their scientific and epistemic achievements cannot operate on the same level. Sensation exposes various subjects and fields to the intellect; on the one hand the intellect uses its theoretical principles to convert sensational data into scientific predications, and, on the other hand, being aware of its epistemic domains, it becomes aware of the existence of revelation and intuitive knowledge, in the same way as it is aware of the presence of sensational knowledge. Indeed, it argues in favour of the realms of existence uncovered through revelation and intuitive cognition. Revelation – considering its greater horizon, and, while associating with intellect – breaks down the parts of knowledge, which cannot be perceived by intellect into concepts, and exposes them to the intellect. Thus, intellect, interacting with sensation, finds its way to the finer points (*juz'i*) of existence and in the same way becomes aware of deeper and more extensive realms of existence through interacting with revelation.

39. *Method Appropriate to the Sources of Knowledge*

Method, depending on the sources of knowledge, does certain biddings. If the source of knowledge is sensation alone, the knowledge is inevitably positivist and inductive. This way, the method can never achieve scientific knowledge with ontological value.

In cases involving sensation and common comprehension, cultural and historical theories and propositions are formed without any ontological value. In such cases, the methodologists have no recourse but to admit the reality and the truth, even though they may not explicitly deny it.

In fields where intellect is the only source of knowledge, appropriate methods are comparative methods. In subjects relying on intellect and sensation as sources of knowledge, sensational and empirical methods using intellectual philosophical principles appear. In cases using only intuition and revelation, the appropriate epistemic methods – purification, initiatic realisation, exercise of self-discipline etc – should be applied.

40. Various Roles of Intellect and Revelation

If intellect and revelation are in conformity with each other, in accordance with theoretical and practical subjects, certain methods such as the principles of jurisprudence are formed.

The intellect, working hand in hand with revelation, and, depending on the case and subject, may play various roles. In some cases, intellect operates as a scale, while in others it operates as a key or lamp. Revelation also has various epistemic applications in working with intellect and in accordance with the aforementioned subjects. Where the intellect plays operates as a key or scale, revelation guides towards what Reason will decide (*hukm irshadi*) but where the intellect operates as a lamp, revelation issues a commandment which must be obeyed (*hukm mawlawi*). Even in cases where the intellect makes judgements with help of sensation, it does not tend to deny revelation. In relation to common comprehension and through a critical approach, its function is to approve and disapprove. That is to say, it approves what is accepted by convention (*'urf*), and disapproves some other things.

41. Islamic Methodology and Social Science

Husserl's epistemological method, Dilthey's intellectual approach, positivist conception of knowledge, Marx's and Hegel's dialectic, William James' pragmatist philosophy, Popper's scientific discovery logics, and Bhaskar's critical method propose various methodologies in the realm of social science. Similarly, the philosophical realism of the Muslim World, with reference to, and, crediting the three sources of knowledge as sense, intellect, and revelation, certainly proposes its own methodology in this realm, which in turn generates its proportionate knowledge. What we can say in summary about the characteristics of this knowledge is:

1. While accepting and admitting empirical aspects of social science, it does not limit this science to testable meanings and predication.
2. While maintaining the ontological individuality of social science, it maintains its critical approach not on the basis of conventional

understanding – which is of a historical and merely cultural essence – but based on the two sources of “practical intellect” and “revelation”.

The aforementioned characteristics are individuations of a type of knowledge, which due to their reliance on Islamic revelations and its appropriate methodology could be considered to be Islamic social knowledge.

Notes

1. Morris Duvergé, *Methods in Social Science*, trans. by Khusraw Asadi (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1973).
2. Karl Raymond Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (New York: Basic Books, 1959).
3. Faramarz Rafi'pur, *Kandukavha va Pendasbteha (Investigations and Thoughts)*, (Tehran: Publication Company, 1975).
4. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, second edition (London: Routledge, 1990).
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logical-Philosophical Treatise*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1922).
6. Andrew Sawyer, *Method in Social Science – A Realistic Approach*, trans. into Persian by Emad Afrugh (Tehran: Humanities and Cultural Studies Research Centre, 2006).
7. Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, second edition, (London: Hassocks (Sussex), Harvester, 1978).
8. Andrew Sawyer, 6-7.
9. Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *al-Hikma al-Muta'alia fi al-Asfar al-Arba'a al-'Aqliyya*, volume 8, (Tehran: Sadra Foundation of Philosophy, 2002).