# An Analytical-Critical Reading of the Confrontation of Religion and Human Sciences in Contemporary Iran

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## Abstract:

Serious considerations of the relationship between religion and human sciences, and the formulation of human sciences as adapted to the cultural context of Islamic Iran, should be traced back to the intellectual context prior to the Islamic Revolution (1979) and in the thoughts of intellectuals such as ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Muṭahharī, ʿAlī Sharīʿatī, and others. In the Seminary of Qom, efforts have been made in 1960s and 1970s to confront the ideas in modern Western philosophy and human sciences from the perspective of the Islamic culture and philosophy. In the post-revolutionary strands, however, there is no consensus on the possibility and necessity as well as methodology of indigenization (or Islamization) of human sciences. Even those who advocate the Islamization of sciences do not agree over the grounds, the method, and the strategy. The relationship between religion and human sciences can be studied at three levels: **1. The epistemological level**: considering human sciences as epistemic fields—this can be referred to as an epistemological-propositional conception of human sciences. **2. The institutional level**: The institutional level is concerned with sociological studies of the institution of science as a major and crucial institution of a society. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), as a key intellectual in human sciences, refers to sociology as a "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning" (Durkheim 1964, 45). This level can be referred to as the academic conception of human sciences. **3. The discursive level**: how human sciences have been experienced and understood by intellectual, cultural, social, religious and even political currents, what actions and reactions it has provoked, and how effective it has been in the field of policy-making and development plans. This level can be referred to as the discursive conception of human science. The main issues in contemporary Iran have been epistemic and conceptual, whereas institutionalization and discourse were not equally appreciated. In recent years, there have been attempts, particularly by the Council for Transformation in Human Sciences, to tie the epistemic level to both institutional and discursive levels. This article provides an analytical-critical review of this experience and concludes with suggestions for improving the experience.

**Keywords:** Religion, human sciences, contemporary Iran, Council for Transformation in Human Sciences, the epistemic level, the institutional level, the discursive level.

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## Introduction

In its October 13, 2009 meeting, following a proposal by of its Humanities Improvement Commission on September 29, 2009, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution in Iran approved the establishment of a special council for enhancing and improving human sciences.

While the directive was announced in 2009, serious considerations of the relation between religion and humanities might be traced back to the Islamic cultural atmosphere in Iran before Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 in the work of scholars such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, ʿAlī Sharīʿatī and others. In 1960s and 1970s, there have been random attempts in the Seminary of Qom to tackle modern western philosophy and humanities from an Islamic philosophical viewpoint. Outside the Islamic seminaries, there were colleges and institutes such as Imam Sadiq University, Shahid Motahari University, Razavi Islamic Sciences University, Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thoughts, and Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. All these centers are committed to the possibility and necessity of Islamizing (or indigenizing) humanities, endeavoring to reach this goal to the greatest possible extent. Dar al-Hadith Institute in Qom pursues a program for deriving philosophical and theological doctrines from the Quran and hadiths in a more serious way, as compared to above institutes.

## The Notions of religion and humanities

## Religion

The word "*dīn*" (religion) in Arabic has a wide range of meanings, such as judgment, customs and habits, religion, solidarity, and the like, and in its Quranic uses, it denotes a range of notions such as judgment, calculation, law, obedience and servitude, submission,

practice, monotheism, worship of God, and the like (Qurashī 1371 Sh, 380). Religious scholars, historians, and philosophers of religion have talked about the difficulty of providing a single definition of religion, as William Alston, the contemporary philosopher of religion, talks about six uses of "religion":

1. Religion as a belief in an eternal God; that is, the belief that divine wisdom and will rule the world and that God has moral relations with man.

2. Religion as the belief that everything is a manifestation of an Almighty who goes beyond our knowledge.

3. Religion as an attempt to show the whole reality of goodness in all human dimensions.

4. Religion as moralities that are transcended and encouraged by emotions.

5. Religion as a passion based on a faith in a consistency between us and the world.

6. An individual's religion as a manifestation of his or her ultimate notion of the world and his or her overall insight of things (Alston 1376 Sh, 19-20).

A number of contemporary religious intellectuals in Iran, including Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, have a conception of religion which might be subsumed under the key notion of "school of thought" or "ideology."

In his *Insān va īmān (Man and faith)*, Muṭahharī defines a school of thought as a general theory, a comprehensive, coordinated, and consistent plan mainly aimed at human perfection and provision of public happiness in which the outlines, methods, dos and don'ts, goals and means, needs, pains, and cures, responsibilities and duties are specified and serve as sources of duties and responsibilities for everyone (Muṭahharī 1381 Sh, 55).

In this article, we follow the tradition of religious studies as well as religion and science studies, and by religion we mean religious knowledge, rather than the "reality of religion," focusing on readings of Islam offered by contemporary Shiite Islamic intellectuals who are largely influenced by the theological-philosophical views of neo-Sadraeans, such as ʿAllāma Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Murtaḍā Muṭahharī.

## Human Sciences

In his *Les theories des sciences humaines,* Julien Freund admits some of the difficulties in providing a comprehensive definition of human sciences, and then concludes that by "human sciences" we refer to research focused on all sorts of human activities; that is, activities involving human interactions with one another, their interactions with objects, as well as effects, institutes, and relations arising from these (Freund 1386 Sh, 3).

The field of humanities has been variously referred to as "moral sciences" (the study of human moralities and tempers), "cultural sciences," "spiritual sciences" (the study of the human spirit), "normative sciences," and "sciences of describing the thoughts." The use of *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences) in German began from a translation of John Stewart Mill's *Moral science*. In 1883, Dilthey referred to it as "empirical science of mental phenomena" or "science of the spiritual world." The notion of *Geist* in *Geisteswissenschaften* indicates its central role in the German tradition, particularly in that the spirit is realized in the life of a people and a culture, which is a mainly Hegelian notion. In the Marxist tradition, *Gesellschaftswissenschaften* (social sciences) replaces human sciences, which organizes the system of science, along with *Naturwissenschaften und technische Wissenschaften* (natural and

technical sciences). In English, however, the term was first used in 1792 in A. Stewart's work *Elements of the philosophy of mind*. In the first English book on the matter, *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction* (1969), H. A. Hodges talks about there being no consensus over an English equivalent for the term, suggesting that the best candidate here is "human studies." As to the conceptions of human sciences by contemporary Muslim intellectuals, such as Muṭahharī, we might say that although they do not independently discuss the notion of human sciences, from their discussions of the views of Marx, Fred, Nietzsche, Auguste Comte, and the like we might infer that they have been mainly focused on critiques of the views in Western human sciences (and their interdisciplinary versions such as psychology, sociology, history, political sciences, law, modern philosophy, etc.).

Since the establishment of the University of Tehran in Iran, following the model of French universities, disciplines such as foreign languages, archeology, history, geography, psychology and educational sciences, linguistics, and sociology have been organized within a college of literature and human sciences, and disciplines such as political and economic sciences were organized in a college of law and political and economic sciences. However, after the establishment of the College of Economics (1963) and College of Social Sciences (1972), these disciplines became independent. Over time, the model of American colleges and departments began to replace the French model (Ashouri 2011).

In the history of Western human sciences, a discussion of the philosophical foundations of human sciences was first introduced after the publication of Dilthey's *Introduction to the human sciences* in 1883. A historical overview of discussions of the philosophy of human sciences in the West shows that until the present day there

have been at least three paradigms (in a chronological order) concerning the foundations of human sciences:

1. The positivistic paradigm of people such as Auguste Comte which, inspired by the success of empirical methodologies in natural sciences, believes in the methodological unity of natural and human sciences, and in which the element of "explanation" plays a major role.

2. The hermeneutic paradigm, which was formed in response to positivism, and in which the elements of 'meaning' and 'understanding' play a pivotal role. Dilthey has made the greatest contribution in this paradigm and has come to be known as the "philosopher of human sciences" since his philosophical works are largely devoted to epistemological accounts of human sciences in general and 'history' in particular. In his *Introduction to the human sciences*, he identifies his goal as the establishment of the autonomy of human sciences in the face of the imposed dominance of the standpoint of natural sciences on philosophical thinking. Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur belong to this paradigm.

3. The critical paradigm, including a range of views from Marxism and Frankfurt school to feminist approaches. In this paradigm, human sciences mainly function to provide emancipation through an identification of dominance structures, since people are situated in particular cultural and social contexts in the formation of which they had little, if any, role, and the context dominates people through its epistemic and ideological system (Shojaei 1394 Sh, 78).

With the above introduction, it will be obvious that it is only in the positivistic paradigm that 'indigenous' human sciences cannot be defended, but within the other two paradigms, which are historically subsequent to positivism, human sciences bear significant relationships to particular cultural contexts, and hence, their universality makes no sense.

Having said that, there is no consensus over the possibility and necessity of Islamizing (or indigenizing) humanities. Even advocates of Islamization do not agree over all the principles, methods and approaches. Advocates, mostly religious and academic scholars (including Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli, Ayatollah Mesbah, the circle in the Iranian Academy, Research Institute of Hawzeh and University, professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, professor Mahdi Golshani, professor Khosrow Bagheri, professor Hossein Kachooyan, professor Ebrahim Fayaz), try to get rid of the current crisis facing humanities by directing their critiques at extant Islamic sciences (including Quranic exegeses, hadith, Islamic philosophy and mysticism), or rely on a number of theories that have emerged in modern western philosophy of religion and neo-theology (or the new kalām), or, finally, employ ideas mostly discussed in the post-modern era (or situation), consisting largely in critiques of the universality of Western philosophy and science. It should be noted, however, that there is not a specific set of principles and methods over which they all agree (Abtahi 1395 Sh).

For critics, on the other hand, "Islamization of human descriptive sciences and knowledge" is neither possible nor plausible. Since there is no flaw in modern descriptive human sciences and knowledge, they argue, no replacement is required. But the problem lies in scientism—the doctrine that thoughts are borderless, even those concerning humanities. Thinking is trans-historical and cannot be defined except by thinking itself. On this account, a theory cannot be rendered incorrect just in virtue of its having been developed in the West (Malekian 1378 Sh, 230-33).

Critics of modern humanities might be classified as follows:

a) Traditionalists who maintain that the deficiencies and flaws of humanities are rooted in their modern essence, which cannot be

resolved. It is thus inevitable to cast them aside and seek to revive traditional doctrines.

b) Those maintaining that these problems and difficulties are mostly due to the secular nature of humanities. Hence, it is impossible to solve these problems as long as they preserve their secular character, although it is unhelpful and implausible to revive traditional sciences. There is, therefore, no way but to destroy modern secular sciences. Indeed, topics, methods and goals of secular sciences should be revised along with advancing efficient and plausible religious sciences that fit our social needs.
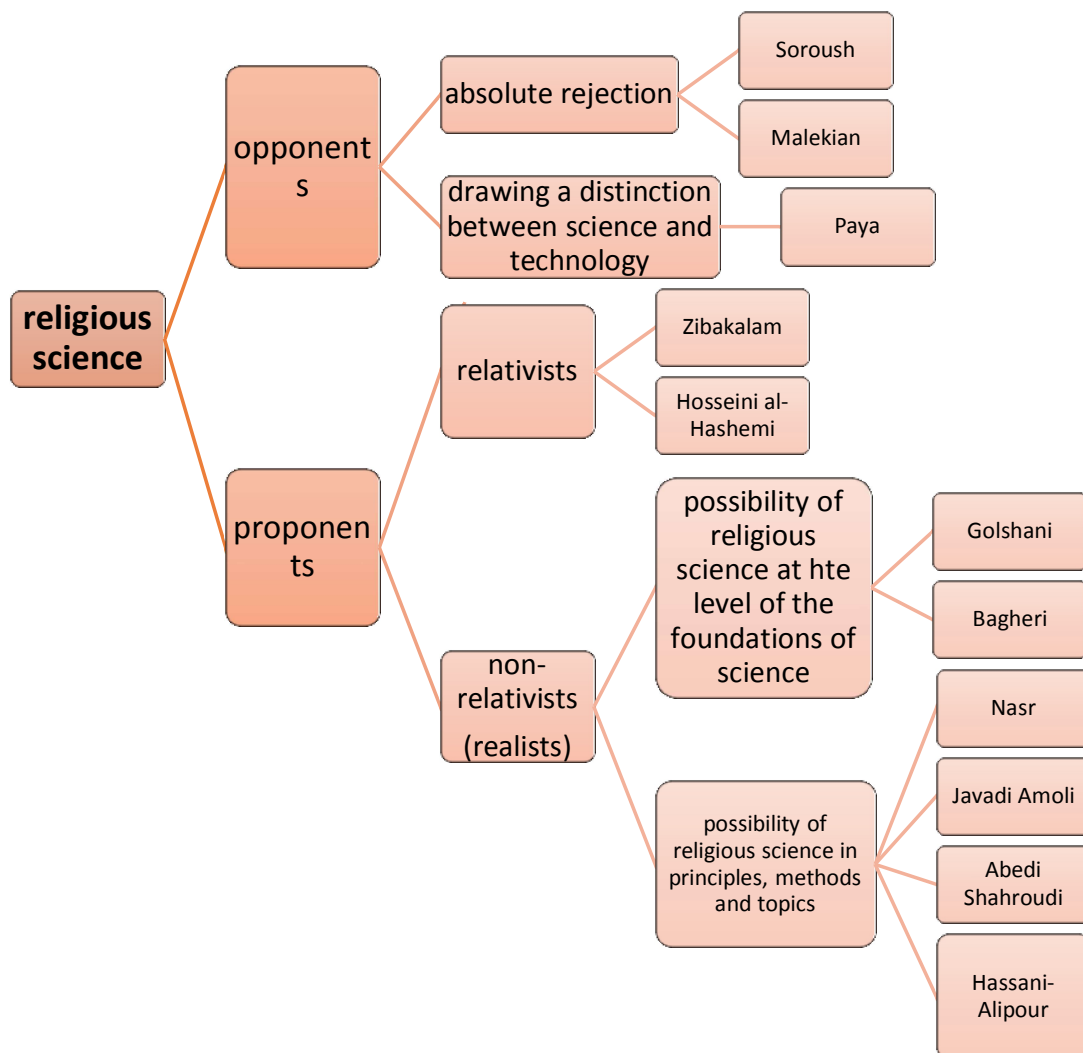
c) Those who try to resolve and meet problems facing human sciences and the societies, while retaining their secular nature. They believe that we can have sciences compatible with the dominant culture and beliefs of religious societies by changing worldviews, values, and paradigms governing these sciences, or by changing their geographical context, or altering their contexts of discovery; for example, through taking our inspiration from religious texts, or even by changing the scholar who practices these sciences.

d) The final approach advocates the scientific and religious discourse as a way of constructing humanities. Its practical solution combines those of the previous approaches. This approach devises multiple stages for the creation of the religious science, including the change in paradigms, altering the modern science, reviving traditional sciences with new methods, and so on (Kafi 1379 Sh, 42-43).

Ostensibly, except for scholars such as Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli, who have treated the issue in terms of original Islamic sciences and culture, other accounts, both proponents and opponents, have in one way or another relied on Western roots. They draw on contributions of positivists, neo-positivists, and analytic philosophers to science and religion, or they adopt ideas of critics of modern science and

philosophy, including Thomas Kuhn, Heidegger, Foucault and Rorty, or traditionalists such as René Guénon, or even recent studies of anthropology, cultural studies, and postmodernism.

Theorizing about humanities and accounts of Islamization, application and indigenization of human sciences in Iran are far from being theoretically precise and consistent. Indeed, the discourse on humanities in Iran has been focused on figures and prominent scholars, rather than constituting streams of thoughts and writings. These scholars (both proponents and opponents) include Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, Morteza Motahhari, Ali Shariati, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mahdi Golshani, Khosrow Bagheri, Hossein Kachooyan, Ebrahim Fayaz, Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Zia al-Din Sardar, Reza Davari Ardakani, Alireza Pirouzmand, Hamidreza Hassani, Hossein Bostan, Mahdi Alipour, Emad Afroogh, Saeed Zibakalam, Hamid Parsania, Mohammad Mahdi Mirbagheri, Muhammad Amin Qanei Rad, Mostafa Malekian, Nematollah Fazeli, Maqsoud Ferasatkhah, among others. Some recent studies have classified the strands of such views (Hassani 1390 Sh).

religious science
- opponents
  - absolute rejection
    - Soroush
    - Malekian
  - drawing a distinction between science and technology
    - Paya
- proponents
  - relativists
    - Zibakalam
    - Hosseini al-Hashemi
  - non-relativists (realists)
    - possibility of religious science at hte level of the foundations of science
      - Golshani
      - Bagheri
    - possibility of religious science in principles, methods and topics
      - Nasr
      - Javadi Amoli
      - Abedi Shahroudi
      - Hassani-Alipour

In recent years, there have been efforts to explain philosophical principles and methodologies of humanities. The establishment of the Philosophy of Humanities Department in the Research Institute of Hawzeh and University in Qom, as well as the publication of *Faṣlnāmi-yi Takhaṣṣuṣī-yi Ravish-shināsī-yi ʿUlūm-i Insānī* (Specialized Quarterly of the Methodology of Human Sciences) by this department, and the establishment of the Philosophy of Humanities Department in the Supreme Assembly of Islamic Wisdom (Majmaʿ-i ʿĀlī-yi Ḥikmat-i Islāmī) in Qom are among such enterprises.

This outstanding history has been accompanied by directives from the Supreme Leader of Iran in recent years as to the necessity of improving and upgrading humanities, e.g. in his speech to academicians and Quranic scholars, in which he said: "our current humanities are grounded in principles and origins that are contradictory to Quranic and Islamic principles. Western humanities draw on a different worldview, which is based on a different understanding of the world of creation, mostly relying on materialism. Well, such an attitude is wrong; this principle is wrong. This turns our humanities into a kind of translation, without any Islamic rethinking into it. We simply introduce it to universities and teach them in different sections. This is in spite of the fact that one should find the origins and grounds of humanities in the Quʾran" (Khamenei 1430 AH).

Moreover, he states that "the current, contemporary humanities which are predominant today have a kind of content that is characteristically contradictory to Islamic movement and system; they are based on another worldview; they have other things to say, they have a different aim. When they are promoted, administrators are trained accordingly; they become heads of universities, they

administer our economy, foreign and domestic politics, national security, and so on. Seminaries and Islamic scholars should derive Islamic doctrines in these fields from holy texts, and explain them to others for policies and decision making. In this way, the Islamic government would rely on Islamic scholars and Islamic doctrines. Therefore, the Islamic government supports Islamic seminaries, because it relies on them" (Khamenei 1430 AH).

These clarifications were the grounds on which the Humanities Improvement Commission of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution began to establish its Enhancement Committee. Subsequently, in its meeting, no. 650 dated October 13, 2009, the Supreme Council of Revolution approved the establishment of the Committee for Enhancement and Improvement of Humanities to make a sustained enhancement in humanities and to design, organize, plan, manage, and guide universities and research institutes.

### The Missions of the Committee

According to an enactment by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, this committee has three main missions:

1. Reconciling humanities with the Islamic Republic and the Islamic view of humans;

2. Improving and enhancing education to adjust it to domestic policies and strategies and making it efficient;

3. Coordinating the relevant institutes concerning humanities.

Except for the first mission, which is, as it were, an emphasis on theoretical policies of late 1970s and early 1980s, the other two missions highlight more pragmatic aspects of humanities in resolving domestic problems and issues. Moreover, the third mission implies that, after three decades from the Islamic Revolution, there is plurality and multiplicity in institutes responsible for humanities.

The third article of the above act assigns the committee with wide-ranging duties and authorities, which could not be achieved unless there was a great transformation, partly structural, in domestic policies about science and technology. Perhaps, the important task is to reconcile and explain the missions and duties of the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology (especially as far as humanities are concerned) with missions, duties, aims, and authorities of the committee.

1. Regulation and enactment of befitting priorities, policies and, strategies in all the three elementary, middle, and higher education levels.

2. Strategic, effective supervision of education and research in institutes and departments of human sciences, as well as assessing and enhancing the relevant structures, contents, processes, and codes.

3. Taking appropriate measures for improving education and research at academic levels, and training human resources, particularly faculty members.

4. Passing suitable laws in order to attain the aim of admitting an adequate number of students into universities and colleges, chiefly in high-priority branches of humanities, based on effectiveness, job vacancies, and Islamic principles and the Islamic-Iranian culture.

5. Planning for the reinforcement of the production of knowledge and theorization in humanities.

6. Designing an efficient system to produce and publish suitable textbooks in humanities for the relevant audience.

7. Taking appropriate measures to support basic projects, research, and infrastructural productions, as well as training scholars and establishing active organizations so as to advance

human sciences.

8. Devising the necessary plans of action to coordinate universities and seminaries with respect to humanities.

9. Institutionalizing theorizations, scientific debates, and criticism in humanities and Islamic sciences in both universities and seminaries under the auspices of a committee for supporting debates in order to enable a critical encounter with translated humanities.

10. Providing plans for publishing humanities textbooks on a global scale (The Office of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution 1392 Sh, 10).

Each of these ten articles require a redefinition of duties and authorities, as well as sketches of a full-scale plan for enhancing indigenous knowledge.

The first step taken by the committee was to recognize high-priority fields of study which need to improve. The following fields have been recognized as priorities:

- Social science
- Philosophy
- Philosophy of religion
- Politics
- Education sciences
- Media and journalism
- Psychology
- Management
- History
- Economics
- Family and Women's studies
- Law and jurisprudence
- Consulting psychology

In the second step, the committee formed groups of academicians for every single field of study in humanities. Then, after consultations with the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology, it assigned these groups with the tasks of providing curriculums.

Principles and Strategies of the Committee

The Committee committed itself, from the very beginning, to the following policies:

- Focus on administrative and executive aspects of policy-making, planning, guiding, and cooperation
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology within the framework of the enactment by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution
- Transformation of humanities as a serious process within short-term, middle-term, and long-term plans
- Transformation of branches of humanities according to the priorities
- Transformation of each branch of humanities in the hands of the scholars and professors working in the branch
- Taking the transformation of any branch separately into account
- Drawing on experiences of foreign Muslim scholars from departments all over the world
- Refraining from a wholesale rejection of all achievements by the Western humanities
- Extending the transformation to the pragmatic efficiency of humanities, rather than resting content with conceptual, substantial transformations
- Transformation of elementary and middle school educations
- Avoiding superficiality, hastiness, and political sloganeering

• Focus on the true, exact meaning of transformation, especially as to Islamization (The Office of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution 1392 Sh, 10)

As a result of more than 170 meetings of the Committee for Transformation and the activities by its principal and subsidiary working-groups and its secretariat (which, in the current structure, has three deputies: faculty members, working-groups, and textbooks and interactions with seminaries), nearly 80 curriculums were devised for different branches of humanities for undergraduate and graduate courses. It is noteworthy that a number of these fields of study are founded for the first time in Iran, including the Islamic-Iranian Model of Progress, Ph.D. in Anthropology, Ph.D. in Islamic Arts, masters in Islamic Economy, to mention a few.

As specified by the head of Committee for Enhancement, it has assigned the working-groups with the task of revising and assessing the curriculums in humanities in terms of the following four factors, with a particular emphasize on the first:

1. Islamization
2. Indigenization
3. Being up to date
4. Operationalization[1]

A comparison of the circumstances in which the Professional Committee for Enhancing and Improving Humanities (2009) began its work with the experience of the first Cultural Revolution (1970s and

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1. In Educational Planning Conference, held in the Ministry of Sciences, Professor Haddad Adel suggested that "transformation of humanities is divided into four sections: content and plans, faculty members, indigenization, efficiency and being up to date." He added "I am certain that enhancement in humanities culminates in civilization-making and should be done consistently, with confidence and away from commotions, and cooperation with the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology; and it is as administrative and executive as it is basic and substantial." (*Haddad-Ade*l 2020).

1980s) provides us with a clearer picture of the work of the committee. The condition of Islamic studies in seminaries, on the one hand, and humanities in universities and educational and research institutes, on the other, are by no means comparable to their conditions three decades before both quantitatively and qualitatively. Furthermore, the planning for the enhancement of humanities was not restricted to Islamization; in fact, it involved factors of efficiency, being up to date, and richness of content. More importantly, it was carried out by scholars of the most influential centers and universities. In fact, the big scale policies were performed by the respective outstanding scholars from respective fields of study.

The short-term strategy of the Committee, as is noted on its website, is mainly to improve curriculums and course outlines so far. The next step is to provide textbooks in line with those curriculums, and then to train adequate professionals for future plans.

## Critiques and Replies

The Committee for Enhancing Humanities has attracted a number of critiques and replies from academicians, experts from seminaries, and Iranian intellectuals. Advocates draw on the necessity of providing an efficient, indigenous, up to date humanities; they maintain that the mainstream humanities is grounded in translated works from European and American models committed to positivistic views, and that, despite a few critiques, it has been able to develop a kind of humanities that fits the Iranian-Islamic culture in universities. Moreover, although the main aims of the Committee were to revise, review, and update the curriculums, it should also embark on other tasks, particularly strategic policy-making.

Another noteworthy point is the direct cooperation of more than 300 faculty members and indirect involvement of approximately 1000 faculty members and professors of seminaries in the tasks of the Committee's

working groups to revise and review the curriculums, as well as close, basic communication with the Ministry of Sciences, the Supreme Council of Development, the Supreme Council of Planning, and the Seminary of Qom.

On the other hand, critics and opponents see the tasks and duties of the Committee as just another political and ideological interference of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution in the internal workings of universities. They maintain that the enhancement of humanities should not be restricted to the elected working-groups; instead, it should be multilaterally carried out in universities by its academicians. Furthermore, science and research policy-making are legally assigned to the Ministry of Sciences and its branches, which undermines the role of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution.

Another criticism comes from the viewpoint of epistemology and philosophy of science. In this perspective, theorization in science cannot and should not be administered. Given global changes in educational planning and academic studies, they believe it is obvious that policy-making for science should aim at providing welfare as well as good political, social, and cultural context for academic independence, to value and dignify the scholars and graduate students; and the government should play a supportive, rather than an intervening, role.

One of the toughest critiques of the committee's enactments was the letter of 160 professors of political sciences in 2014 to the president about the curriculum devised for political sciences. The letter stated that "while we faculty members and lecturers of politics acknowledge the need for revising and reviewing the curriculum for political sciences, we nevertheless believe that the recent revision and enhancement of the curriculum has been done without any participation of, or consultations with, faculties and other authorities and it suffers from serious flaws, deficiencies, and gaps, to the extent that it undermines political sciences as

a field of study. Thus, we request its postponement for at least one year. In this way, it might benefit from the participation of departments of political sciences and other related scientific authorities in the revision and review of the curriculum. Your urgent measures would be invaluable." (Ensafnews 1393 Sh).

In response, the representative of the working-group on political sciences replied as follows: "the curriculum for political sciences had not changed for 30 years and it was a translation of Western political sciences. We had nothing much to offer. When the working-group started, we sent emails to all departments of political sciences in every single university, including all state, Azad and Payam Noor universities to let them know about it, and asked for their help and support. Even after that, we sent notifications about every proceeding to these departments, asking for their comments. We received a number of useful comments which we took into account, and all this is documented." It added, "at the same time, Allameh Tabataba'i University along with the Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies made independent efforts to provide an updated curriculum. They benefited from comments by 300 faculty members of political sciences, and at the end, they shared the results with us, and we took them into account. … What we did was a thorough, widespread work which is well documented. We even went so far as to provide the Committee with all documents, replies, and reports, as well as the names." (Irna 1393 Sh).

**Summary and Conclusion**
An overview of the *epistemic level* of modern human sciences in contemporary Iran reveals that the introduction to human sciences at an epistemic level was accomplished mainly through translations of

the texts of philosophy and humanities, and translation has been the major template, if not the template, of reflection in human sciences.

Critical reflections formed in the West under hermeneutic and critical paradigms were almost absent in epistemic encounters with human sciences in Iran, where a scientific view of human sciences—in the empirical and positivistic sense—was dominant, and the cultural context or structure of modern science was overlooked. Nevertheless, we should note a rather influential movement in the course of which indigenous anti-Western intellectual ideas about culture and human sciences emerged in 1960s as well as comparative philosophy and inter-cultural dialogues in mid-1970s. Regardless of various definitions, terminologies, and uses of the term 'indigenization,' 25 of which have been listed (Z̲ākir Ṣāliḥī 1389 Sh, 23), indigenization might be seen as a kind of reaction by non-European cultures and civilizations to the universality of Western philosophy, human and social sciences, art, and literature in order to provide an epistemological model and structure based on indigenous foundations, contexts, and cultural, religious, historical, political, economic, and concrete contexts (or ecologies of non-Western cultural life). This movement has been, and is, present in philosophy and human and social sciences both before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The main achievement of this intellectual movement has been negative and critical, and at best, it established a kind of "self-awareness" of the nature of human sciences and their fundamental divergence from the Iranian religious-cultural tradition.

Notwithstanding this, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and owing to epistemic reasons and causes, mainstream human sciences continued to be based on translation, this time with a remarkable and sometimes astonishing number of translations of works in philosophy and human sciences. The striking quantitative

growth of fields, books, and graduate courses led to an institutional inflation of human sciences in the absence of fundamental and strategic reflections concerning the relationships of human sciences with religious traditions and cultural demands of the contemporary Iranian world, which culminated in a complicated image of human sciences in contemporary Iran. Mainly through selective translations—at best, through good translations, and at worst, through misleading translations—human sciences led to misunderstandings about our cultural intellectual traditions, on the one hand, and about the nature and goals of the modern world, on the other. Faced with a flood of translations of human sciences, religious thought often grew apologetic and theological, and regardless of strands such as Academy of Human Sciences in Qom, which deny human sciences altogether and provide a vague picture of their alternatives, there are other intellectual movements such as neo-Sadraeans (represented by Muṭahharī, Mesbah Yazdi, and Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli), in educational-research institutes such as Imam Khomeini Institute, Imam Sadiq University, and Research Institute of Hawzeh and University, undertaking the epistemic development of human sciences. To a great extent, these movements rest content with providing critical "commentaries" on "texts" of Western human sciences, and their productions are mainly focused on philosophy and metaphysical foundations of humanities, doing little by way of conceptualization of human lived experiences and the contemporary human society in its historical and cultural context.

The *institutional level* is concerned with sociological studies of the institution of science as a major, crucial institution of a society. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), as a key Western scholar of human sciences, refers to sociology as a "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning" (Durkheim 1964, 45). The institution of science in

contemporary Iran is active through universities and research institutes as well as scientific associations concerning human sciences and other disciplines. Educational policies (curriculum planning) as well as research policies (journals, dissertations, etc.) play a crucial role in interactions of the institution of science with other institutions in the society. The institutional approach can be traced to the establishment of the Council of Scientific Research in 1975 approved by a council of ministers and then to developments such as the establishment of the Organization for Scientific-Industrial Research in 1980, Office of Scientific and Industrial Studies and Research of the prime minister in 1983, the law approving the ministry of sciences, culture, and innovation in 2003, the change in the role of the National Research Institute for Policy in 2004, the change in the role of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution in the field of science in 2005, and the establishment of the scientific-technological deputy of the president in 2006 (Sūzanchī 1398 Sh, 14).

A study of the institutional experience of human sciences at the two levels of structure and educational issues reveals that, despite an unprecedented quantitative growth of the number of humanities students, and consequently, the quantitative growth of the fields— particularly graduate studies, dissertations, books, journals, and scientific associations (Strategic Campaign of Executing the Comprehensive Scientific Plan of Iran 1396 Sh)—there was a serious challenge before higher educations in human sciences at an institutional level. If the management and policymaking administration of human sciences does not take seriously the quantitative inflation of students, journals, and graduate courses in human sciences, the quantitative growth will not only threaten the quality of human sciences, but, from a partly pessimistic view, will

spread the problems to religious, intellectual, cultural, and even economic, political, and social life-worlds as well.

The devotion of about 700 titles—over half—of scientific-research journals in Iran to human sciences (the Ministry of Science 2020) is just a crisis in the institution of human sciences, whereas one cannot arguably claim that six—only six—religious or national problems of contemporary Iran have been solved or even formulated by this remarkable body of work. We can borrow from a contemporary sociologist of science to describe the situation as the "discord" between the institution of human sciences and religious, economic, social, political, and cultural institutions (Qāni'īrād 1382 Sh). In the journals of human sciences, one can see articles dealing with international works published from 2014 forward, but it is not really known whether such an up-to-date body of works deals with concrete issues in the religious culture and the Iranian society?

At the *discursive level*, although proponents and opponents of the convergence between religion and human sciences cite the views of the French postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) concerning the power-knowledge relation, it seems that both sides provide a selective reading of his works. Foucault's view of discourse points to synchronic aspects of Western power and resistance toward the West and its associated Western sciences:

> Discourse are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but

also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault 1978, 100-1).

Those critical of religious developments in human sciences provide a flawed account of Foucault's view to claim that "religious human sciences" are constructs of power, offering an ideological reading of Foucault's power-knowledge discourse. On this account, religious human sciences are reduced to ideologies of oppressing the critics and rivals in human sciences, where critics pick up on their rivals' motivations, instead of establishing discursive dialogues with their opponents. Proponents of religious human sciences have made the methodological error of deploying Foucault's theories for negative purposes—critique of Western human sciences based on the argument that these sciences are affected by Western power and dominance— believing that, from a moral standpoint, these sciences should be overthrown altogether. What they neglect is Foucault's remark that there is no pre-discourse to organize the world in our favor, and the power-knowledge theory extends to the discourse of the proponents as well:

> The subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of [the] fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of which it is made up that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. (Foucault 1991, 27–28)

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