



# The Concept and Method of Humanities in the Thoughts of Iranian Thinkers with Emphasis on the Views of Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study aims to examine the concept and methodology of the humanities in the thoughts of Iranian thinkers, focusing on the opinions and ideas of Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush". With the expansion of natural sciences from the 15th century and the stagnation of the humanities in the 18th and 19th centuries, debates emerged among scholars regarding whether the humanities follow the rules of natural sciences or have their own distinct principles. Some thinkers believed that if the humanities adhered to the methodologies of natural sciences, they would be similar to them; others believed that the humanities have their own specific methods. The latter group strove to establish the foundations for legitimizing the humanities. In Iran society, influenced both by philosophical and methodological debates in academic circles and by the ideological and intellectual climate following the intellectual situation of Iran society, various interpretations of the humanities emerged. Among the Iranian thinkers who theorized about the humanities, influenced by these conditions, are Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush.

**Method:** To this aim was used an analytical-descriptive method and data collection in this study is documentary library research.

**Results:** The results indicated that in Iran after the 1979 revolution, Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush, on one hand, were influenced by the intellectual and methodological debates of scientism and hermeneutics in international academic circles and, on the other hand, by the intellectual situation of Iran society, engaged with the subject of the humanities. Reza Davari Ardakani regards the humanities as a product of the crisis of Western modernity, while Abdulkarim Soroush considers humanity method to be the same as that of natural sciences and understands it based on this method.

**Conclusions:** the common point for both thinkers is that they regard the humanities as certain branches of human knowledge that are indispensable and mandatory for the development and organization of contemporary human life

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## Introduction

Humanity is one of the controversial concepts in academic circles. Since the 15th century, with the expansion of natural sciences and the subsequent dominance of scientism and positivism in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the stagnation of the humanities, debates arose among scholars regarding what the humanities are and whether the humanities, in terms of methodology, follow the rules of natural sciences or have their own distinct principles. Some believed that if the humanities adhere to the rules and values of natural sciences, they are similar to and a branch of natural sciences; others denied this and argued that the humanities, like natural sciences, have their own specific rules. The latter group attempted to establish the foundations for objectivity in the humanities and to organize and legitimize specific rules for the humanities, similar to those of natural sciences.

Thus, the growth of natural sciences and the stagnation of the humanities caused a gap and distance between the two fields, raising questions in the minds of researchers. Some proponents of scientism and positivism did not make a distinction between the humanities and natural sciences in response to the issue of their differences. This group viewed society as part of nature (Little: 2009, 17). In contrast to this approach, some believed that because human actions are purposeful and humans are intentional agents, it is not possible to analyze the humanities and human thought based on natural sciences.

In Iranian society, especially after the 1979 revolution, various interpretations emerged among scholars and on the other hand, shaped by the intellectual disputes in Iran post-revolution, the concept of the humanities gained attention. Consequently, numerous debates and questions arose among Iranian thinkers, such as whether a concept such as the humanities actually exists, whether this knowledge can be produced, whether it is a Western science that is not adaptable, or whether it can be adapted, and ultimately, whether it has the capability of being Islamic.

Based on the previous discussion, two of the most important thinkers who have engaged with the topic of the humanities in Iranian society are Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush. These two thinkers are influenced both by Western philosophical and methodological debates and by the intellectual discussions in Iranian society post-revolution regarding the concept of the humanities. Reza Davari Ardakani is recognized among Iranian thinkers as a follower of Heidegger's ideas. Following Heidegger's methodology in defense of philosophy, he critiques the science and rationality of the modern world, considering modernity to be the result of human science and rationality during the modern era and rejecting many concepts of the new world, including the humanities, as products of rationality, science, and subjectivity in the modern world. He examines the humanities within the framework of Western studies and critiques of modernity. In his view, the humanities are the outcome of the crisis of Western modernity and the historical conditions that have emerged in the West (Davari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 14). However, despite his critique of the humanities, he sees them as essential for organizing society. Abdulkarim Soroush, influenced by Popper's ideas and based on a methodology of science and scientism, has also engaged with the topic of the humanities.

He considers the methodology of the humanities to be the same as that of the natural sciences and essentially draws on his own understanding of the philosophy of science and the history of sciences to distinguish philosophy, science, and religion, demonstrating that philosophy and religion do not replace the humanities. He sees the humanities as part of the empirical sciences and does not consider empirical science to be morality or philosophy. In his view, if the humanities have a defining characteristic, it is that these sciences are empirical anthropology (Soroush, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 19).

### **Research Question.**

The question that arises in this research is: How have Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush understood the humanities based on their philosophical viewpoint and methodology and what concept of humanities have they expressed?

### **Research Method.**

The method used to investigate this research is analytical-descriptive, relying on library resources and with an inferential approach. In this method, while examining the concept of humanities in the thought of Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush, the formation of the humanities, the explanation of the concept of humanities, and the encounter with the concept of humanities in the thinking of these two thinkers will be examined.

### **Research Background.**

In terms of the background and literature of the research on the concept of humanities in the thought of two thinkers, no specific article, book or work has been compiled, and in this regard, the present research is new. However, Dr. Reza Davari himself has compiled a book entitled *Humanities and Development Planning*, which consists of a collection of articles that have irregularly expressed topics about the humanities. Abdulkarim Soroush, since he has been referring to science to, He defends the concept of science and humanities and has compiled a book titled *What is Science, what is Philosophy*, in which the book specifically describes the subject of philosophy and methodological discussions. In his other book, titled, "*Tafarruj Şun‘ or Watching the creation*", he discussed the humanities, in which he elaborated on the humanities and its methodology. A thesis entitled "*The Impact of Continental and Analytical Philosophy on New Thinkers in the Islamic Republic Period*" has been compiled

by Aref barkhordari at the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran, in which discussions about the humanities in the thought of Abdulkarim Soroush and Reza Davari Ardakani were expressed.

### **Research Objective.**

The purpose of compiling these topics is to investigate the concept of humanities in the thought of Iranian thinkers with an emphasis on Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush, based on their methodology and how to explain this discussion and their encounter with such a concept.

### **Results.**

The findings of the present study show that Reza Davari Ardakani examines and criticizes the humanities in the form of his Western studies project. In fact, in his view, crises have formed in modernity that the humanities have been formed to regulate and resolve these crises, however, he considers the humanities to be inevitable for organizing life. Abdulkarim Soroush defends the humanities. He considers the method of humanities to be the same as that of natural sciences and tries to show the humanities as distinct from philosophy, theology, and ethics by using the philosophy of science. In his view, the humanities are science in the specific sense of the word, and the characteristic of the humanities is that the humanities are empirical anthropology, and for this reason, they are similar to the natural sciences in method.

### **Theoretical Discussions**

Carl Löwith believed that Voltaire (1649-1778) was the first to replace divine providence with human will in the improvement of living conditions and human relationships through human self-sufficiency and reason (Riescher, 2016). Centered on humanity, humans became the focus of the discourse of the sciences, leading to the emergence and promotion of the discourse of the humanities, which had humans as both the subject and object (Fazeli and Fotouhi, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 162).

Regarding the emergence and establishment of the humanities, it can be said that the humanities appeared and then became established successively in Western societies. From the beginning, the humanities became prevalent in the form of discourse in Europe, as during the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, the natural sciences such as physics, chemistry,

medicine, biology, etc., saw advancements. Gradually, from this period onward, humanity became the central focus, leading to self-exploration, and during this time, the discourse of the humanities promoted and strengthened ideas from Descartes, Kant, Hume, Hegel, and others. Subsequently, the humanities were institutionalized with the establishment of an educational institution in Paris in 1795, where the foundations of law, management, economics, history, and geography were laid (Moradi, <https://www.phalsafe.com/node/917>). Furthermore, the humanities were solidified as a field of knowledge and understanding in various disciplines by thinkers such as Durkheim, Taylor, Wilhelm Wundt, and eventually Wilhelm Dilthey (Fazeli and Fotouhi, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 162).

If we wish to discuss the process of the formation of the humanities in more detail, it must be acknowledged that since the fifteenth century, with Bacon's empiricism followed by the discussions of Descartes, Kant, Auguste Comte, and John Stuart Mill, the natural sciences expanded. The expansion of the natural sciences was so pleasing that it led everyone to think that science is synonymous with natural science and that the criterion for scientific validity is based on the natural sciences.

With this situation, Kant bent the knee before Newtonian science and rejected metaphysics. Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill founded sociology based on natural science, proceeding in the manner of the natural sciences and employing an inductive method to arrive at mathematical laws for predictions concerning individuals and groups, thereby creating empirical sociology (Little, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 17). Following this, in the 18th and 19th centuries, scholars of science and then positivists adhered to the methods of the natural sciences, leading to the growth of natural sciences (Little, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 374).

The increasing growth of natural sciences created a rift and distance from the humanities. The growth of natural sciences and the stagnation of the humanities raised questions in the minds of researchers. Since scientism and positivism were the dominant approaches in the 18th and 19th centuries, in response to the issue of the difference between the humanities and natural sciences, some positivists did not make a distinction between the two. This group considered society as part of nature and, instead of regarding humans as purposeful and active beings, viewed them as physical entities... (ibid: 17).

In contrast to this approach, some thinkers believed that because human action is purposeful, it cannot be studied in the same manner as natural sciences; thus, thought cannot be analyzed based on natural science. They argued that social phenomena inherently possess meaning and

are contingent upon the meanings of their actors and that the explanation of social phenomena is only possible through the discovery of their interpretive meanings (Little, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 390). They acknowledged that the natural sciences and the humanities have different characteristics, and that the issue of the humanities pertains to the spirit of humanity. The foremost thinker of this perspective is Dilthey. He considers the humanities distinct from natural sciences in terms of their foundations. According to him, the humanities, as a concept distinct from the natural sciences, are rooted in the depths and totality of human consciousness (Dilthey, 1989: 58). He refers to the disciplines that focus on the socio-historical reality of human beings as the humanities (Dilthey, 1989: 56).

Dilthey was influenced by Kant, Hegel, Schleier Macher and others in his discussions. Dilthey's critique of historical reason was influenced by Kant; he drew on Hegel's theories regarding historicity and objective spirit. Another philosopher who impacted Dilthey's thought was Schleiermacher. He believed that understanding is possible through a shared human consciousness, which influenced Dilthey's theory (Vaezi, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 97).

According to Dilthey, the totality of natural sciences is based on solid foundations, while the foundations of the humanities are weak. This issue raised a question in Dilthey's mind: Just as certain, objective, and reliable understanding and awareness are possible in the natural sciences, 'How is that feasible in the humanities?' Dilthey considers hermeneutics to be a suitable method for the humanities and based on this foundation, he examined the humanities in two intellectual periods. In the first period, he acknowledged that the concept of science is divided into two categories: Natural sciences and humanities (Dilthey 1989: 58). He views the foundation and structure of the humanities as different from those of the natural sciences. According to him, the humanities have their own subject, method, and goal. He names the disciplines of history, economics, politics, law, government, religion, literature, poetry, architecture, music, worldviews, philosophical systems, and psychology as the humanities (Dilthey 2002: 101 and 324). Dilthey refers to the disciplines that study the socio-historical reality of humans as the humanities (Dilthey 1989: 56). For him, the subject of the humanities consists of units that are not inferred but rather exist and are assumed, units that can be understood from within (ibid: 58).

Dilthey articulated the distinctions of the humanities from the natural sciences as follows:

- The dominant flow in the natural world is mechanical, whereas human behavior is based on will and choice (ibid: 57-58);

- The subject matter of the humanities is an internal matter related to spirit and psychological states, while the subject matter of the natural sciences is external (external objects) (ibid: 60-88; Dilthey, 2002: 92, 141 and 160);
- The appropriate method for the humanities is self-reflection or introspection (though this view was later revised to consider the understanding and interpretation of inner states), while the appropriate method for the natural sciences is empirical or explanatory (Dilthey, 1989: 143-144);
- The world of human spirit is productive and creative, and is dependent on values and goals, whereas the natural world is silent and devoid of values and goals (Dilthey, 2002: 175).

Dilthey then discusses the subject of the humanities, namely the question of whether knowledge of socio-historical reality (the human world) as a whole is possible, and if so, how this reality can be known and by what method. Dilthey's response to this question involves two approaches: psychological and based on the science of interpretation. In the first approach, he views the method of the humanities as self-reflection or introspection. According to him, inner experience is more certain than external experience (Dilthey, 1989: 136, 140, 143-144). In examining this subject, Dilthey chose a descriptive-analytical method, as he believed that spiritual life reveals itself to us in a different way and is based on immediate knowledge (Dilthey, 1977: 53). He argues that descriptive psychology arises from lived experiences surrounding mental life, aiming to understand and describe life in its entirety. According to Dilthey, this type of psychology describes a network that emerges from the depths of life itself. For this reason, it is capable of providing the inherent regularities of spiritual life based on a descriptive approach (ibid: 35).

Dilthey considers the advantages of descriptive psychology to lie in the fact that the psychic network is represented directly and vividly as lived reality. The lived experience of this foundational network constitutes the basis for understanding all social, historical, and spiritual realities (Maleki and Davari, 2019(A) AD/1398 SH: 232).

Dilthey views the understanding of the psychic network as a factor in human relationships and states that the humanities would be a collection of elements without meaningful connections among them without psychology and the understanding of the psychic nexus. He asserts: "Cultural systems, economy, law, religion, art, science, and external organizations of society have emerged from the living network of human spirit in communities such as family, society, church, and government; thus, they can be understood in relation to it." (Dilthey, 1977: 31)

Therefore, Dilthey strives to achieve universal, absolute, and objective laws by believing in the shared life experiences of humanity. He believed that our direct awareness of our inner experiences, which is direct data, forms an objective and universal foundation for interpretive psychology. The role and status of this psychology in the entire humanities is akin to that of mathematics in the empirical sciences (Vaezi, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 117).

The principles of Dilthey's philosophy in the first period of his thinking were based on two principles: Phenomenality and the psychic nexus. Phenomenality means that object (the external world) are presented to me in awareness as realities just like feelings (the inner world) and are subject to the conditions of awareness (Dilthey, 1989: 245-253). The realities related to consciousness, lived experience, or mental states or internal life are those that are directly present to the mind or human awareness. Dilthey explains the principle of the psychic nexus based on the principle of phenomenality. The psychic nexus encompasses all our perceptions, whether external, internal, or realities of consciousness. The psychic nexus is embedded in psychic life (ibid, 1989: 143-144).

Based on the aforementioned concepts, in the first period of his thinking, Dilthey regarded the immediate awareness of every person of their inner experiences as a direct perception and based his work in the humanities on this direct recognition. He faced criticism during his first intellectual phase and entered a second phase. The achievement of the second phase was that the humanities could not be established solely by the method of introspection because the method of introspection does not fundamentally serve as a medium for understanding and comprehension; one must reflect on history in order to attain self-knowledge.

To reconsider his thoughts, Dilthey wrote new works in his second phase, the most important of which is the article "The Emergence of Hermeneutics and the Formation of Historical World in the Humanities." In the article "The Emergence of Hermeneutics," Dilthey believes that understanding oneself is only possible externally, and he sees interpreting the objectifications of life as a condition for trusting that understanding. Therefore, he considers the only suitable way to knowledge to be through history and understanding the objectifications of the spirit.

Dilthey's effort in the second phase is to systematize the method of historical understanding. Dilthey refers to the systematic understanding of the stable and relatively permanent objectifications of life as hermeneutics. The science of hermeneutics enables a universally valid interpretation based on the analysis of understanding and ultimately leads to a solution



for the problem of objectivity. The analysis of understanding and inner experience is considered together, demonstrating the possibilities and limits of universally valid knowledge in the humanities (Dilthey, 1996: 237-238).

In the article "The Formation of the Historical World," Dilthey views the objectifications of life as the subjects of the humanities. According to Dilthey, objectifications are related to lived experience, through which a person becomes aware of the meaning and content of their life and can interpret the meaning and content of others' lives. Thus, the concept of the humanities is defined by the objectifications of life in the external world. The human spirit can only understand what it has created itself; anything that a person affirms to have produced is the subject of the humanities (Dilthey, 2002: 170-190).

According to Dilthey, we do not import any meaning from the world into life; rather, it is life that gives meaning to the world and opens up possibilities for humans to realize meaning in their historical existence, as humans are historical beings. Therefore, people do not only understand themselves through introspection but also attain self-knowledge in the mirror of history. Hence, the historical world should be considered as a whole, this whole as a generative system, and also as the originator of values and purposes (ibid: 177) and (Maleki and Davari, 2019(B) AD/1398 SH: 233).

In the second phase of his thought, Dilthey considers several concepts to elucidate his theory, which include:

- 1) Lived experience (cf. Palmer, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 119 and Dilthey, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 369 and 318, and Dilthey, 2002: 44);
- 2) Objectification of the spirit (cf. Dilthey, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 258 and ibid: 229);
- 3) Understanding (cf. Palmer, 1969: 127; Rickman, 1979: 184);
- 4) Historicity (cf. Dilthey, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 440);
- 5) Hermeneutic circle (cf. Dilthey, 2003: 174; Maleki and Davari, 2019(B) AD/1398 SH: 240);
- 6) Categories of life (cf. Dilthey, 2002: 219-220-253; Dilthey, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 315-365).

## **1. The Concept and Method of the Humanities in the Thoughts of Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush**

### **1.1. Reza Davari Ardakani: The Humanities as a Product of the Crisis of Modernity**

Reza Davari Ardakani critiques the science and rationality of the modern world, influenced by Heidegger's methodology. He considers modernity as the result of science and human rationality during the modern era and sees many concepts of the new world as products of rationality, science, and the subjectivity of the modern world. He believes that many concepts and components of the new world, such as the humanities, freedom, liberalism, human rights, pluralism, modernity, etc., are all concepts shaped by new rationality.

He critiques this type of rationality and its achievements (though he has somewhat revised his thoughts in recent times). Based on this mindset, Reza Davari Ardakani approaches the humanities from three angles: First, the reasons and contexts for the formation of the humanities; second, the principles, definitions, and critiques of the humanities; and third, its inevitability. Accordingly, he first presents a concept and several definitions that elucidate the contexts and reasons for the emergence of the humanities:

1. The Concept of Development: Development fundamentally concerns the building of the world, improving livelihoods, welfare and security politics, establishing a sound administrative order, as well as advancements in science, technology, health, and education. This is a goal that the modern world has envisioned, pursued, and in this pursuit, has led to the emergence of the humanities and social sciences (Davari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 23);
2. Development is a continuation of the path of modernity;
3. In a modern world that seeks development, crises have arisen, and the humanities and social sciences have emerged in the process of the modernity crisis to systematize the formation of modernity (ibid: 21).

First, he goes to the reasons and grounds for the formation of humanities. According to him, social sciences and humanities have emerged in the history of modernity, covering its inconsistencies. He believes that the humanities articulate the legal rationality of the Western world, which Weber positioned against value rationality. Max Weber considered the era of modernity as a period in which the humanities and social sciences have attempted to disenchant and resolve the crises of the modern world (Davari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 2).

From Reza Davari's perspective, the humanities and social sciences emerged in the West at a time when rapid transformation and growth were accompanied by freedom, when awareness

and freedom took shape and humans reached a point where they could participate and intervene in affairs, allowing them to contemplate issues that led to various conflicts and complexities within modernity. He argues that when modernity took shape, and conflicts and complexities arose within it, the dangers of its future became apparent. The humanities and social sciences—including economics, psychology, ontology, anthropology, sociology, law, and politics—emerged during this period (Davari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 14).

However, he emphasizes two points in this process: One is that we must pay attention to the socio-historical and political conditions of a society in which these sciences have developed, such as the historical background and crises of the modern and Western world where the humanities took shape.

Second, many sciences did not exist beforehand, or we could not create concepts such as physics, chemistry, or humanities beforehand and say that, in this regard, we will produce science. Rather, in a process where certain problems or research issues arise, a thinker conducts research to solve those problems, which is later refined by other thinkers who label it as physics, chemistry, or the humanities (ibid: 12). Thus, science is the result of a research process aimed at addressing the problems of each society, corresponding to its historical and social conditions and background. Consequently, the humanities are also specific to the Western world.

Reza Davari Ardakani then turns to the foundations and definitions of the humanities. He generally considers modern and human science to belong to the modern world and to be based on the principles of modernity (ibid: 23 and 27). Since Reza Davari Ardakani believes that modern sciences have no divine basis, he argues that the humanities likewise lack a divine foundation; if we place these sciences alongside jurisprudence, mysticism, theology, and poetry, which do have a divine basis, we would create an inappropriate combination (ibid: 35). In other words, Reza Davari Ardakani believes that science, in its new sense, whatever it may be, is objective, and scientific judgments must be reached by adhering to methodological rules and principles. In other words, scientific judgments are factual judgments that enter the realm of science through research, whereas in jurisprudence, theology, and literature, we do not have factual judgments; in mysticism and philosophy, the scientific method is not applicable, and objectivity is not relevant (ibid: 35).

In defining the concept of the humanities, Reza Davari Ardakani provides several definitions. He initially considers the humanities to be an ambiguous concept: The humanities are an

ambiguous concept, and sometimes there are substantial judgments made about it without regard to this ambiguity, and perhaps through a careless mixing of the meanings of Humanities and Social Science, not only literature and philosophy, but also interpretation, theology, jurisprudence, and principles are included in the category of humanities (ibid: 193). Reza Davari critiques this from two angles: One is that it mixes old literature and thought with new literature and philosophy, especially science and non-science, leading to confusion. The other is the concealment of the status, dignity, and function of social sciences, and neglecting the differences between these sciences and philosophy, literature, and divine knowledge.

Reza Davari further argues that when we equate jurisprudence, philosophy, and sociology, we fall into the mistake of misjudging their status and forget that sociology, economics, and other social sciences and humanities are the sciences of modern societies. Non-modern societies had ethics, mysticism, literature, wisdom, and philosophy. The reason these societies did not have sociology, economics, psychology, and history is that they did not need these sciences; these societies were organized around religion and tradition (ibid: 195).

Davari then defines the humanities by stating: "The humanities are indeed instrumental in the development of science and contemporary society, and the world, in its path toward development—whose ultimate goal is to benefit more from consumable goods and material wealth—will not achieve this development without these sciences." In philosophy, theology, mysticism, jurisprudence, principles, and interpretation, we have great researchers and experts, but the humanities and social sciences must be learned from elsewhere (ibid: 196).

In another definition, Davari views the humanities and social sciences as the result of the crises, conflicts, and complexities of modernity and as a means to organize them. He includes economics, psychology, ethnology, anthropology, demography, law, politics, and more, asserting that the core of all these sciences is human-centered, capable of transforming and organizing the world through will and knowledge (ibid: 14).

Ultimately, Davari considers the humanities to be unavoidable and believes regarding the need for the humanities: "There are two types of needs: Psychological need and true-historical need. Our need for the humanities has been a psychological one. Perhaps we need the humanities because they exist in the West, and whatever exists in the West should also be present here. However, the humanities in the West help solve problems; but 'Do we also want to use them to address our issues?' This is a good aspiration, provided that we do not aim to

create science before reaching the problem, and it should also be acknowledged that imitative and manipulated science does not resolve any needs."

Continuing, in order to utilize the humanities and answer the question of 'What our issues are?' Davari states: "Undoubtedly, the main issues of our society and politics are development issues. It is certain that everyone desires development. Growth in today's world, especially in the context of developing countries, occurs through planning, and such planning cannot happen without economics, sociology, psychology, statistics, and history. These sciences as they are and with their non-religious foundations are the guides for development, and their principles cannot be separated from their foundations." (ibid: 268-269)

Reza Davari Ardakani considers Iranian society to be in need of the humanities and believes that we require the humanities for organizing and structuring our way of life, education, economy, agriculture, and consumption (ibid: 273).

Davari further states regarding the necessity of paying attention to the humanities, arguing that modernization and development are impossible without the humanities: "We must reform our administration, schools, universities, markets, hospitals, courts, and sports, and think of solutions to prevent addiction and other social ills. These tasks cannot be accomplished without referring to social and human sciences. This means that the formulation and implementation of development programs in the modern world depend on progress in social sciences." (ibid: 4) The Western humanities cannot be disregarded in a context where the whole world has modernized (ibid: 25).

Ultimately, Reza Davari Ardakani addresses several issues: First, that social sciences and humanities belong to the modern world and are Western in nature. Second, all peoples of the world have, in some way, experienced the process of modernization and have become acquainted with human and social sciences; therefore, the process of this familiarity was not based on research, and for this reason, it is met with a kind of conflict. Third, the Western humanities cannot be disregarded in a context where the entire world is engaged in modernization. Fourth, the current world is a unified one, and all are subject to the law of expansion and technological development.

## **1.2. Abdulkarim Soroush, Scientific Nature of Humanities**

Abdulkarim Soroush was influenced by Islamic insights, Popper's philosophy of science, and the logical and epistemological precision of analytical philosophy. He used logical reasoning, falsifiability, and testability as scientific criteria, applied the methodologies of the natural sciences to the humanities, and drew on the gradual development of science in Popper's thinking to formulate opinions regarding various concepts, including science and the humanities.

Based on his methodology—namely, science and scientism—he examined the discussion around the humanities. He considers the methods of social and human sciences to be the same as those of the natural sciences and, in fact, uses philosophy of science to show that philosophy and religion do not replace the humanities. Influenced by this methodology, he considers human sciences as part of experimental sciences and considers experimental science neither ethics, nor philosophy, nor theology.

Abdulkarim Soroush explores the humanities in his book "Tafarruj Şun‘ or Watching the creation" He defended science in general, including both basic sciences and humanities. His defense of modern sciences and humanities occurred during a period when he was a member of the Cultural Revolution Headquarters and was confronting modernity, anti-Western sentiment, and the rejection of all things associated with the West (Barkhordari, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 845).

During that time, Soroush sought to show those opposed to the humanities that, on one hand, we should not be tempted by totalitarianism in science, and on the other hand, to prove that although science is investigation and collection based on presuppositions (in the context of discovery), in the context of justification, it is intersubjective and objective, and therefore reliable and trustworthy, regardless of whether it is Eastern, Western, Islamic, or non-Islamic. The audience for Soroush's statements in that environment included both individuals like Fardid and his followers (including Davari and others), who considered the humanities to be a form of Westernization, and traditionalists who viewed Islamic sciences as a substitute for the humanities. Abdulkarim Soroush discusses the subject, methods, credibility, issues, and problems of the humanities, actively engaging in a scientific-philosophical defense of fields such as sociology, educational sciences, political science, economics, psychology, and similar disciplines.

Soroush first examines the reasons for skepticism towards the humanities and then defends them by providing reasons for their empirical nature, concluding that the humanities are, in

the specific sense, sciences and encompass those aspects of human affairs, behaviors, and actions that experience allows (Soroush, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 19). Regarding the reasons for skepticism towards the humanities in Iranian society, he believes the first reason is that the humanities, due to their scientific and empirical nature, present humans within a society and categorize their behaviors into frameworks that sometimes deviate from the rudimentary and conventional understandings of that society. Another reason is that the human defined by the humanities is not the one we previously recognized and expected; rather, these sciences depict and interpret the human as they are.

Soroush identifies another reason related to deeper cultural roots, asserting that although we do not have knowledge resembling modern humanities in our society, we do have philosophy (ibid: 7). However, in the humanities, there is no mention of a philosophical human, and while philosophical anthropology is addressed in Eastern philosophy, such matters are absent in modern humanities (ibid: 7).

He considers the growth of mysticism alongside the growth of philosophy in the East as another reason. According to him, the humanities aim to present human identity and character in a easily digestible manner, but mystical anthropology consciously or unconsciously resists this and believes that these sciences seek to express what exceptional figures like Rumi could not fully articulate, suggesting that the human is an ocean of complexity that one cannot fully reach the end of despite deep exploration. For this reason, Abdulkarim Soroush argues that the mystic and mysticism are also absent in the humanities.

Abdulkarim Soroush identifies religious knowledge within society as another reason. He believes that according to Islamic beliefs, the Shari'a, and the teachings received from leaders and scholars regarding humanity reveal aspects of human character that the humanities do not discuss (ibid: 9).

The anthropology of the people of Iran, influenced by their culture and religion, is, in Soroush's view, another reason for skepticism towards modern humanities. He argues that in a religion-influenced anthropology, individuals who can reveal themselves in this world are akin to prophets and possess a form of knowledge known as revelation; however, in empirical humanities, there is no discussion of prophecy and revelation (ibid: 10).

Abdul Karim Soroush sees another reason for doubting human sciences in the fact that human sciences deal with ordinary people, who have more or less similar emotions and understanding, not exceptional and rare people. According to Abdul Karim Soroush, human

sciences have no choice but to study repeatable and similar phenomena, and if it does not do this, it will not become science and it will not be able to legislate and discover laws (ibid., 12).

Abdul Karim Soroush then defines human sciences and its limitations. He considers humanities as a name that was given to a field of human studies today, the same studies and fields that are currently in universities and are called humanities in the custom of academic societies. He considers several restrictions for humanities: firstly, theoretical and productive humanities are desired, not humanities that consume theories such as banking and management, etc. Secondly, nowadays they talk about the humanities in which philosophy and theology are also included, but philosophy and theology are not part of the humanities, and several scientific disciplines, including sociology, educational sciences, political sciences, economics and psychology, are part of the humanities. The third issue is that humanities are credit sciences and law, ethics, language and literature are also excluded from humanities (ibid., 17).

Abdulkarim Soroush's other discussion regarding the humanities is that he considers them a part of the empirical sciences. In his view, if there is one characteristic of the humanities, it is that these sciences represent empirical anthropology, not anthropology in the broader sense of the term, and this applies exactly to the natural sciences as well. Natural sciences are about the study of nature, but not philosophical or mystical nature studies; they are empirical studies of nature. Therefore, the humanities are sciences in the stricter sense of the term, meaning they are empirical human sciences. The humanities claim to cover those aspects of human affairs, behaviors, and actions that experience allows (ibid: 19).

In this part, it is necessary to have a brief critique on the thought of Abdul Karim Soroush, who, based on his methodology, which is scientism, examines human sciences and considers the method of human sciences to be the same as the method of natural sciences. First of all, the humanities are a science that includes the values, needs, and rights of human beings. The world of human spirit is productive and creative, and is dependent on values and goals, whereas the natural world is silent and devoid of values and goals. If we consider human beings as physical bodies that lack free will, values, needs, and goals, based on the method of natural sciences, it is questionable. In other words, if we consider the humanities based on the method of natural sciences as law-oriented and causalistic and ignore the free will, validity, and goals of human beings in order to reach scientific laws based on them, it is not a suitable



method for the humanities. Why instead of examining and understanding the meaning of human behavior, ignore the meaning of their behavior based on the causation and the framework of the natural sciences? In other words, the natural sciences are different from the humanities in terms of method, substance, and matter. The subject of the humanities is the meaningful behavior and actions of human beings, and man is also an intentional and purposeful being, and in order to understand the purpose and intention of human beings, the method of interpretation and semantic analysis must be used, while the subject of natural sciences is physical objects and bodies whose method is measurement. Therefore, how can the laws of natural and empirical sciences be applied to the humanities?

Regarding the difference between the humanities and natural sciences, Dr. Emad Afrough believes that the humanities are concerned with the values, needs, and rights of human beings, but the means to achieve the goals are the responsibility of the exact sciences (natural sciences), so the instrumental role of the exact sciences should not be imposed on the humanities (Emad Afrough <https://www.irna.ir/news/9664754/1>).

Therefore, in contrast to the approach of Abdolkarim Soroush, who considers the humanities as a part of the natural and empirical sciences, it should be acknowledged that the issue of the humanities is within human beings and human consciousness and cannot be studied like the natural sciences, according to Taylor, human beings are active and purposeful beings, and because human action is purposeful, it cannot be studied like the natural sciences, so it is not possible to study thought on the basis of naturalistic science. According to Taylor, Social phenomena are inherently meaningful and based on the meanings of their actors, and the explanation of social phenomena is only possible through the interpretive discovery of their meaning (Little, 2009, 390). Or, according to Dilthey, the subject of the humanities is the human soul, and the humanities, as a concept different from the natural sciences, are rooted in the depths and totality of human self-consciousness, so the humanities are distinct from the natural sciences (Dilthey 1989, 58).

Another problem with Abdul Karim Soroush's view in investigation the humanities within the framework of experimental sciences is that he examines the humanities without considering the conditions of its formation and without considering the society in which it was formed. He generally believes that human sciences should be created based on experimental rules and used, this method is actually a kind of copying and without considering native science.

If we look at the process of forming science in societies, science usually arises to solve

problems. In other words, in the historical and social conditions of a society and because of the problems that are formed in that society, some researchers and thinkers find solutions through research, which are called science, that is, science is the result of the research process, so there is no science beforehand, and sciences are created in historical-social conditions and in the research process, and later they take the name of science.

In this regard, in the previous pages, Reza Davari Ardakani has been quoted as saying that he has considered several issues regarding science and humanities. First, we must pay attention to the socio-historical and political conditions of a society in which the sciences were formed, for example, the historical background of the West in which the humanities were formed. Second, many sciences did not exist before that we could say that we should produce science in this direction 'Rather, in a process some sciences have been created and the name of science has been given to them, and thirdly, in the process in which some problems or the subject of research have arisen, a thinker conducted research to solve those problems, which was later completed by other thinkers and the name of science, ... Physics, chemistry or humanities have been applied to it (Davari. 2010, 12).

Therefore, the humanities are the result of the historical and social conditions of the western world and the result of the research of some thinkers to solve the problems of that society. Without considering the historical and social conditions of a society and without wanting to localize science, human sciences cannot be investigated and used based on the laws of natural sciences.

In the following, after investigation the criticisms of Abdolkarim Soroush's thought, which examined the humanities in the framework of natural sciences, the issue of understanding the humanities and social sciences, the definition of these sciences, their method, and their differences with other branches of knowledge in his thought will be discussed. According to him, "The humanities are sciences that categorize collective and individual, voluntary and involuntary, and conscious and unconscious human behaviors into frameworks that are subject to experience." (ibid: 24). The attribute of experience-ability ensures the scientific and objective nature of these disciplines, keeping them separate from fields such as philosophy, mysticism, and ethics. Abdolkarim Soroush defines the humanities through their goals and views their objective as providing empirically testable predictions about human behaviors.

For a thorough examination of the humanities, Abdolkarim Soroush differentiates between two concepts or two positions regarding science: One being the position of hunting and

gathering, and the other the position of judgment (ibid: 50). He considers the issues that the humanities depend on regarding the scholar's personal perspective, or those that are scientific and removed from the individual's worldview, to be errors resulting from the lack of differentiation between the position of hunting and the position of judgment. He attributes the main cause of this error to positivists, who have introduced empirical science in the sense of experience-producing science, whereas empirical science should be understood as science governed by experience. Abdulkarim Soroush believes that if we make this distinction, we can achieve both objectives; in his view, both aspects are acceptable. On one hand, humanities are influenced by ideology, worldview, and the cultural environment of the scholar (in the position of gathering and hunting), and on the other hand, they are objective and empirical (in the position of judgment). He posits that the character of the scholar influences the nature of this inquiry not only in the humanities but also in the natural sciences. Thus, in his view, even in natural sciences, the issue remains similar, as science takes on the coloration of the scholar's personality. As mentioned, being scientific or not is related to the position of judgment, and both the humanities and the natural and empirical sciences are similar in the gathering position as well as in the judgment position, meaning both are influenced by the scholar's culture and tested against general experience (ibid: 54).

Abdulkarim Soroush views science as akin to a social construct that has an intersubjective nature; therefore, he opposes the holistic nature of the humanities. He also disagrees with the idea of not recognizing the world of other humans (ibid: 58).

He considers the important issue in science to be the "Net of Capture" and the appropriateness of that net with which we seek to ensnare the various aspects of human spirit and behavior. After this experience, we can then judge whether what we have obtained and the empirical order we have imposed on them is correct or not. He believes that if someone thinks they can create a net that captures and encompasses the entire personality and all dimensions and aspects of an individual or a human phenomenon, such a net does not exist.

Lastly, Abdulkarim Soroush states that in order to Islamize the humanities, the space of the mind and conscience must become Islamic and scientific. Since the fundamental principle in producing the humanities lies in creating this fertile ground in the land of the consciousness of thinkers and scholars in the humanities, the consciousness and mind must be made Islamic and scientific. Thereafter, whatever emerges from that vessel will be Islamic knowledge, and the way to Islamize the humanities in this land is precisely this (ibid: 60).

## **2. A Comparison of the Concept and Method of the Humanities in the Thoughts of Abdulkarim Soroush and Reza Davari Ardakani**

In conclusion, if we want to make a brief comparison between the theories of both thinkers regarding the humanities, we can express their viewpoints from four angles.

1. **Methodology:** Reza Davari Ardakani, influenced by Heidegger's methodology, examines knowledge and rationality in the modern world. He considers modernity to be the result of human knowledge and rationality during the modern era and believes that many concepts in the modern world, including the humanities, are results of this. Therefore, he analyzes and critiques the humanities within the framework of Western studies and Heideggerian methodology. In contrast, Abdulkarim Soroush is influenced by Popper's philosophy of science and the logical and epistemological nuances of analytical philosophy. Based on his methodology, which he terms science and scientific orientation, he considers the method of the humanities to be the same as that of the natural sciences and, as a result, views the humanities as part of the empirical sciences.
2. **The Origin of the Humanities:** Reza Davari Ardakani views the humanities as belonging to the modern world. According to him, when modernity took shape, the conflicts and complexities within modernity emerged, and the dangers of its future became apparent. The humanities and social sciences—including economics, psychology, ontology, anthropology, sociology, law, politics, etc.—emerged to address the crises of modernity. On the other hand, Abdulkarim Soroush considers science and the humanities to be akin to a social construct that has an intersubjective nature; because he sees the humanities as intersubjective, he believes they are derived from the consciousness and mental space of thinkers. Furthermore, he asserts that the humanities and natural sciences are similar both in the gathering and judgment phases, meaning they are both influenced by the worldview and cultural environment of the scholar, and both are tested and obtained by general experience.
3. **The Concept of the Humanities:** In his most comprehensive definition, Reza Davari Ardakani considers the humanities and social sciences to be the result of the crises, conflicts, and complexities of modernity, aiming to organize and order them. He

includes economics, psychology, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, law, politics, etc., and asserts that the central focus of all these sciences is human beings, who can transform and organize the world with their will and knowledge. Abdulkarim Soroush, on the other hand, regards the humanities as a body of conventional knowledge, and he considers disciplines such as sociology, educational sciences, political sciences, economics, and psychology to be part of this knowledge. He later defines the humanities as empirical sciences and believes that the humanities, in a specific sense, are sciences that encompass the aspects and behaviors of human beings that experience allows. In his view, the humanities are sciences that frame collective and individual behaviors—voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious—into the mold of experienceable orders.

4. Ultimately, the common point for both thinkers is that they regard the humanities as certain branches of human knowledge that are indispensable and mandatory for the development and organization of contemporary human life.

### **Conclusion**

The humanities, as an academic discipline, are an obvious subject. In recent centuries, with the rise of naturalism, the credibility of the humanities has been called into question. The fact that some thinkers deem the reality of the humanities as unacceptable because they developed under the historical and social conditions of the Western world, or because they are scientifically doubtful, is a debatable point. However, it is evident that with the rise of scientific thinking in the fifteenth century and the dissemination of the ideas of Newton, Descartes, Kant, Auguste Comte, and others, the natural sciences took control of the world through experience and the discovery of their own laws. The dominance of the natural sciences and the beneficial results they provided for the world led to widespread attention toward them and skepticism about the humanities. Doubt and criticism of the humanities peaked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the emergence of positivists and logical empiricists. In any case, the successes of the natural sciences called into question the credibility of the humanities. In this conflict, some thinkers such as Dilthey have sought to establish a solid foundation for humanities in the position of humanities scholars.

In Iran, influenced both by global intellectual disputes and by the intellectual climate following the revolution, the humanities garnered attention from thinkers. Questions arose regarding whether a concept called the humanities exists, whether the humanities can be

generated, whether this knowledge is Western and inapplicable in other contexts, and ultimately, whether this field can be made Islamic. These topics were among the discussions among Iranian thinkers regarding the humanities. Reza Davari Ardakani and Abdulkarim Soroush were among the scholars who engaged with the humanities. Abdulkarim Soroush, influenced by scientific epistemology, considered the humanities to be a science, equating the methods of the humanities with those of the natural sciences. Furthermore, in the intellectual debates in Iran society, he defended the concept of the humanities as well as their scientific nature. Davari Ardakani, influenced by Heidegger's methodology and phenomenology, also raised some issues about the humanities. On the one hand, influenced by the global environment and in the framework of his Westernization project, he considered and criticized the humanities as a concept derived from the political and historical conditions of the Western world and the result of the crisis of modernity, and on the other hand, influenced by the intellectual conflicts of Iranian society and also in opposition to the scientologists and Abdulkarim Soroush, he considered the humanities as an ambiguous concept in the West as a whole and considered it to belong to the Western world and modernity And he criticized it, although in recent times he considers it inevitable.

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