



MAX WEBER'S METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF VALUES IN HIS PROJECT OF OBJECTIVITY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

¹Ali Shamsi

¹PhD student in Philosophy of Science, Faculty of Law, Theology, and Political Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Corresponding Author: Ali Shamsi

ABSTRACT

The problem of values in the methodology of social sciences has always been one of the most challenging subjects because of its relevance to human actions and various cultures. Weber tries to make the path to achieving objectivity in the social sciences smooth and reliable for the social scientist by accepting values before the research and using elements such as value relations and the principle of selection. However, this has led to critical discussions by commentators. This research has attempted to correctly interpret and examine Weber's approach, which is to achieve a social science with the criterion of objectivity. We have also tried to show that the project of objectivity for Weber in the social sciences does not follow a smooth path at all. Thus, we will also witness criticisms from commentators, but all this does not diminish the importance of Weber's methodology and his intellectual effort as one of the pioneers of the philosophy of social sciences to solve the problems surrounding values and to achieve objectivity in the social sciences.

Keywords: Values in the social sciences, Value-relations, Principle of selection, Max Weber, Sociology of knowledge, Objectivity in the social sciences, Philosophy of science, Philosophy of social sciences

INTRODUCTION

Social sciences are supposedly value-laden:

One important and challenging issue in Weber's methodology is whether the social sciences can objectively deal with the empirical realities of human beings, which include the value judgments and subjective interpretations of human actors themselves. Weber's answer to this question is an affirmative one. As some commentators believe, Weber was here in one respect

far ahead of other thinkers. He paid constant attention to the scientists' directed subjective values in the orientation and framing of research subjects. Weber believed that the scientist's subjective orientation can be separated from the scientific work, which proceeds based on objective observation of facts. (Gimble 2016, 77) Social sciences are supposedly value-laden. As Weber argues, social scientist first accept that the event or action in question took place under a specific value and then try to examine that event step by step and investigate it scientifically. In other words, when the social scientist embarks upon scientific activity, he is no longer allowed to follow a specific value or bias. Lassman believes that the idea of analyzing values in Weber's methodology is completely associated with Weber's understanding of political behavior. Because the goal of such personal clarity, from a value perspective, can create a sense of responsibility. Indeed, a social science that identifies the inner structure of values can be the foundation for rational political actions. The reason why Weber emphasizes the internal independence of values is mainly because he wants to free values from the constraints of scientific and quasi-scientific justifications. Weber requires at the beginning of the methodology a systematic recognition of the assumptions and values that are involved in the requirements of the value-relatedness of social science, but as Weber argues, this basic assumption that scientific knowledge is value-based cannot be represented solely by scientific concepts. This means that this scientific assumption can only be interpreted in Weber's terminology by reference to ultimate values that we reject or accept according to our ultimate positions towards life. Therefore, the role of the social scientist can be selection-oriented. He tries to organize and arrange the data specifically based on the positions he chooses, which ultimately achieves his purpose and goal (objectivity in social science). (Lassman 1980, 101). However, values also have a special role in social science methodology especially in Weber's methodology. The effect of values on the work of social scientists, in the later steps of the Weberian methodological process, leads to questions such as whether it is possible to have social science free of any values. Likewise, how the idea of value freedom for social science methodology will be possible if it is possible at all?

Concept of value in Weber's methodology

The idea of value freedom raises an important issue in modern social science. For example, the scientific nature of social science, the political commitment of the social scientist, and the function of social science in society and its historical roots have long remained obscure. Seemingly, no one person was solely responsible for the emergence of this idea in the social sciences. However, Max Weber wrote the most extensive material on this subject and became the main exponent of this idea during his lifetime. Although value freedom has now become an established pillar of social science, Weber initially conceived of it in opposition to the social sciences of his time and as a kind of critical tool for analyzing society. Interestingly, Weber never really paid any attention to defining value-freedom as such. Rather, value freedom for Weber meant a set of ideas that defined the relationship between science and values. As some commentators have argued, definitions such as value freedom, which are derived from Weber's methodology, have been developed later by commentators on his texts. We can summarize Weber's final formulation of value freedom: the belief that values play a role in defining the problem for study, but these values need not and should not influence the scientific process. Moreover, science can have direct scientific applications. However, a scientist, as a scientist, should not interfere with personal beliefs in scientific research. Therefore, science institutionally should be independent of social and political commitments. (Charlin 1974, 337).

Values play a special role in the social sciences and the traces of different values can be observed in various human cultures. One of the important elements of any culture is its constructive values. Accordingly, cultural approaches are complementary to rational selection approaches for social scientists. Thus, rational selection-based analyses most often assume that individuals are always searching for and seeking to establish precedents for their interests. Here cultural approaches can play a pioneering role. First, they raise the question of what exactly we mean when we discuss interests. Or we can ask for whom the interests are relevant? Or in what

cultural or social context are the interests considered interests? These are questions that the social scientist must refer to the cultural valuations of that society to answer. (Donatella and Keating 2016, 205). It is noteworthy that accepting a set of cultural assumptions does not mean that the social scientist considers a particular culture valuable or that it is preferable to other cultures. Rather, it means that we humans are cultural beings. Indeed, all of us humans believe in different and diverse values and attitudes that are influenced by the culture in which we live. We can even say that the relationship between the culture and humans is reciprocal and culture also feeds on the beliefs and convictions of humans. This give-and-take is always ongoing historically and each side sometimes gets fat from the other. However, what is important for the social scientist is that ultimately these phenomena are valuable to humans and have cultural significance. They are formed based on the importance and interest of the actors and are thus stable. In other words, cultural and social phenomena can only be understood under the category of meaning or values. This is expressed as a transcendental premise of cultural, social science, or a purely logical, formal fact. Thus we can decide what is essential about an object and what is not essential to it. More precisely, a historical, cultural object is characterized ultimately by reference to values. (Goddard 1973, 13)

Weber is often seen by some commentators as a proponent of the fact-value dichotomy. As a close study of his works suggests, some commentators believe that he has never made a logical distinction between facts and values. They assumed that changes in our fundamental understandings of social reality are always accompanied by changes in our normative orientations. However, these statements do not justify calling Weber a pragmatist in the social sciences. Weber held that concepts since they are merely instruments for our needs, are changed by the values that make them special. Weber insisted that we all believe in the transcendental validity of ultimate values, in which our existential meaning is rooted, and that we estimate these values objectively. Hence he found that we cannot bind ourselves to principles in whose validity we do not believe. A simple wish or emotional preference is not a compulsion, and it is contrary to their existential nature to consider them as compulsions. The category of values for Weber is not like subjective whims. Indeed, they are associated with the cognitive perspectives of the individual, that is, his *Weltanschauung*. (Portis 1980, 415 and 416).

The concept of values in Weber's methodology is subjective. All concepts of social science are for him a kind of story or fiction and no set of narrative concepts can be a universal reality. So Weber insists on the role of value relations in his methodology. Value relationships are a factor in making the value propositions the social scientist deals with more precisely and systematically. In this sense, Weber believes that if we are to achieve a purposeful foundation in the social sciences and if we are to have a systematic and precise social science, like other exact sciences, then our interpretation should be verifiable even for the Chinese. (This is a famous example that Weber referred to in his essay on Objectivity.) A universal social science is an important goal that Weber always emphasized in his essay on Objectivity. (Lassmann 1980, 102).

The important question that arises regarding values in Weber's methodology is whether science without assumptions is possible for a social scientist. The undeniable in social sciences is the existence and involvement of values. Even if social scientists do not want or are constantly careful not to include values in this science, they still have no way out of values. The idea of value-freedom social sciences is merely an unattainable utopia. However, this does not mean that a scientist should be indifferent to academic research methods. (Social sciences have their tools and methods, such as field surveys, collecting questionnaires, or statistics). Thus, a scientist should always keep in mind the criterion of objectivity in research and not be indifferent to it. An important point in Weber's methodology is that no matter how much scientists try to distance themselves from values, they cannot conduct their research in a moral vacuum. This view of Weber indicates that a scientist should constantly be thinking about the data and assumptions that have settled in the lower layers of his mind. Indeed, he should be

aware of them and act vigilantly. Weber's defense of value neutrality is important for methodology in the social sciences only as a regulative idea (as a suggestion). Its importance becomes apparent when scientists should be careful about the normative assumptions they bring into the research activity, and the data they bring in under the influence of some factors. However, all this does not mean that they can free themselves from their values and research interests. In a word, Weber was an advocate of what is today known as methodological individualism (Bart 1397, 105).

The question of value neutrality raised other challenging issues. Do value judgments necessarily interfere with the empirical study of the social world? A group of philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition believed that value judgments interfered with the empirical study of the social world. Hence, even if objectivity could be achieved as a desirable outcome, the social sciences could never achieve the objectivity of the natural sciences. Another issue was the question of practical efficacy. The question was whether we could make judgments about ultimate values if we could empirically study the world of social phenomena. (Bert 2018, 80-81) As Weber argues, a prominent social scientist should always distinguish between empirical facts and personal valuations and not confuse the two. The desired and important knowledge for Weber is knowledge of what is. We can deal with the type of causality and historical and social reasons for a phenomenon in this type of knowledge. As stated, it is an undeniable fact in social sciences that we cannot abandon all values in research and Weber consciously realized this point and has a special emphasis on his methodology. It is noteworthy that Weber, in addition to accepting the role of values and emphasizing their influence in interpreting social science phenomena, does not leave them in his methodology. Indeed, he tries to assign another place to values and excludes them from the practical data collection stage of research. When the scientist is engaged in a careful and accurate study of social phenomena, values should not interfere with the work of the scientist at this stage. Thus, Weber tries in his methodology to reduce the destructive role of values, which are phenomena about humans, in favor of achieving or moving towards an exact science (with the characteristic of objectivity) (Reiters 2022, 176). This has led to objections to Weber's methodology; for example, accepting values leads us to relativism in Weber's methodology. However, not all critics and commentators who object to this part of Weber's methodology can control the role of values in sociology. They think that if sociology is supposed to be a science like other sciences, it should not adhere to any particular value at any stage; but they do not present a solution. This issue has always been one of the greatest concerns for Weber, who is best known as a great sociologist, and he has tried to find a suitable solution intelligently. Weber has largely brought clarity to the chaos of interpretations of social science phenomena and has had a successful performance. Weber has tried in his methodology to show that since scientific research first begins its work by dwelling in a circle of values and subsequently tries to provide a correct and accurate interpretation of a social phenomenon, it seems to be clear to sociologists in what range they can choose values. As Weber argues, correct scientific research in social science can show the social scientist what values are in conflict with each other or what values are not in conflict with each other. Moreover, it can inform us of its consequences. However, an important point is that the act of selection is not for scientific research, but rather this act (the principle of selection) is on the part of the social scientist. Weber could distinguish these two subtle boundaries in his methodology in the section on values because he believes that a scientist decides to choose a specific value in accordance with his worldview. As Weber sees, a social scientist should not seek to obtain fixed and certain truths in sociology and cultural sciences. This is a belief that Weber reclaims in his famous work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Here Weber has fixed his research based on the value he had in mind and therefore has tried to be able to provide a correct interpretation of the phenomenon of capitalism. Therefore, we should not seek a fixed truth, since there are people who believe in different values in society, each of whose values can be considered as different interpretations in social sciences. (Hughes 2007, 273-275).

The value that Weber believes in and attaches importance to in his methodology is that is

attached to historical individuals (such as the example of Koh-i-Nur, considering Rickert's influence on him in this category of his methodology). This attachment leads to granting the element of selection to the social scientist. It seems that this aspect of selection (principle of selection) on the part of the scientist and historian, in Weber's methodology, leads to a guiding tool for achieving scientific interpretation and ultimately objectivity. (Alasti 2023, 7). However, Weber seeks to implement a program that can guide the scientist to the ideal of social science with the approach of achieving objectivity in the social sciences. Most of the theories that Weber expresses on the values and especially value judgments, are associated with his theories in the article *Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Politics*. There, Weber states that one of the most basic and most important approaches that a social scientist should follow is: a social scientist should be able to distinguish empirical knowledge from value judgments.

Now, this important criterion of Weber, if not understood correctly, can have negative effects on the entire result of the research. As Weber argues, when the social scientist can separate these two categories from each other, he should create in the next stage his commitment to real truth in the spirit of his research with the help of a scientific method. The initial cause of many meaningful human actions has ideal and value foundations and is also considered important and valuable for the actor. Therefore, when the scientist is engaged in scientific activity, he is no longer involved in the research process. All his efforts are focused on giving them a specific limit and categorizing them. They fall under three categories in Weber's methodology. The first category is associated with discussions whose sources are emotional passions. Its relevant example is mainly those cultural forms and values of various communities. The second category is associated with discussions that include moral norms that depend on our conscience and can be relative in a way. Finally, the third category is about discussions that are of particular importance to Weber: that we need to create an analytical order in empirical reality. It is a way through which we can test theoretical data and give them the validity of empirical truth. It is from this perspective that Weber, in his famous article *Objectivity*, expresses his famous and ideal example regarding the social sciences. Thus, a correct scientific argument in the social sciences should be such that even when it is presented to a Chinese-speaking person, it is considered a valid argument and the entire goal and mission of social sciences should be directed towards achieving this ideal. Even it is possible that that Chinese person may not understand our moral judgment, that it may conflict with his ideals, or that he may deny and criticize the ideals and value judgments we intend and consider them to be absurd. Such possibilities are not far-fetched and may happen, but the important thing is that nothing destroys here the scientific values of the scientist's precise and analytical research. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the *Social Sciences and Social Policy*, p. 97). This last aspect is important for Weber and has scientific and semantic value. As Weber argues, social scientists do not choose values for people, as mentioned above, and it is illogical to do so. The result of social science research does not mean for people what they should do. Rather, what should be done and not done is not the task of the social scientist, nor is it the task of his research. Indeed, research in the social sciences, like research in the empirical and natural sciences, can only act as tools that help people choose their own desired goals. (Reiters 2022, 178) Choosing a scientific policy is itself a value choice for Weber. What a scientist chooses to study and the method he chooses to address the subject of study can be a type of value selection in itself, which becomes more important in the next stage. That is, when the selections are made, science, considering the existing values, enters the implementation stages to achieve objectivity. (Cripe 2022, 106 and 107). However, it is better to consider the views of other commentators or critics to better understand what values are in the social sciences. David Goddard's view of values in Max Weber's Methodology, for example, is one of the great interpreters of Weber's theory of objectivity and has an important view.

David Goddard's opinion on values in Weber's methodology

David Goddard, an important and great interpreter of Weber's theory of objectivity, believes that no science can be free of values or in other words, all scientific activities (since they are

supposedly a human activity) presuppose a framework of value meanings. As Goddard says, this is undeniable, especially in the social sciences. He states: Scientific research in the social sciences is initially supposed to be a scientific, mental project. The researcher, considering the valuations, chooses one that seems important to him from among the flood of theoretical issues that he has at his disposal to examine a phenomenon to begin a scientific work. Thus, a scientific project is never inherently meaningful, but its importance and value always depend on the researcher (according to what he considers to be important) and on the temporal and geographical context of that research. The researcher is supposedly a product or a representative of that research. Goddard believes that this stage is common between the natural sciences and the humanities. As Goddard shows, Max Weber sees the necessary orientation of values as influential on the study of historical objectivity in historical disciplines (such as sociology, economics, history, law, and anthropology in his time). This can be considered as a principle that makes objectivity possible for the scientist in the first place (Goddard 1973, 1). The root of Goddard's words can be traced in Max Weber's work *The Scientist and the Politician*. Weber first discusses in different parts the challenging question of whether science is possible without presuppositions. Weber shows that everything depends on our understanding of this question. He states, in the introduction, that the presuppositions of all scientific research activities are logical and methodological rules that ultimately form the general foundations of our orientations in the world. The nature of the relationship between scientific activities and the presuppositions that determine them are also valuable in terms of the structure of the latest cosmic developments to the extent that science can express and introduce them. Not only because these pieces of knowledge are used technically, but also because they are inherently important and valuable and can be a subject of a profession and mission. Certainly, no one will be able to prove these assumptions and the research process will not proceed without them (Weber 1989, pp. 81 and 82). Here Weber intends to point out the existence of a series of assumptions that are used in science, but these assumptions may be influenced by a series of values that seem to be of primary importance to a scientist. The issue of values for Weber, considering the prevailing methodological system in his study of social phenomena, is an issue that depends on individuals. His special emphasis on the issue of values shows that without their existence, starting and conducting research is not possible. A scientist is somehow committed to pursuing the adopted approach until reaching results and consequences based on the selected values (Paya 2019, 43). However, the discussion of values in the philosophy of social sciences has attracted the opinions of critics who may create ambiguity in the mind of the scientist, as Weber paid a lot of attention to the category of values and the necessity of considering them by the scientist, and simultaneously, his methodology claims to achieve coherent and precise knowledge. All of this has led some commentators to raise relativism in Weber's methodology.

Relativism in the Philosophy of Social Sciences in Association with the Role of Values in Weber's Methodology

The relativist approach to the category of values in Weber's methodology has led to other criticisms by other interpreters of Weber. Its example is Parsons' criticisms of Weber's concept of value-freedom and his concept of value relevance. Some interpreters of the philosophy of social sciences consider Weber to be an absolute relativist. They believe that Weber's position on values reflects relativism for himself in the first place, for the individual in society, and ultimately for the social scientist. Hence, social science cannot tell us (social scientists) whether the value of an action is high or not. Because there is no unique value (value measurement). Weber himself believed that we cannot choose among values based on valid reasons. Indeed, the individual is placed between a relative and a conflicting value system. Thus, one may say that the social scientist cannot properly take an acceptable and correct position. He is placed between relative systems and conflicting systems. The problem does not end there, when a choice is made, the conflict between values does not end. When we look at the choices from a different perspective or under a different approach, we can find that the alternative we now choose is relative. So the social scientist relatively accepts the relevant choice to explain and

interpret the relevant social phenomenon in question, until another interpretation has not yet been found for it. From this perspective, the burden of choice is only on the shoulders of the individual who can expect help from a world that is by definition morally irrational or not expect it at all. As some commentators say, they believe that the lack of standard values in Weber's methodology does not mean that there are no absolutes in Weber's methodological system. As Blum has pointed out: Weber recognizes the belief in the values of science itself as a belief in moral arguments. Just as the values and methods of science are universal these universals can also be used in relative value systems. Therefore, the element of selection is supposedly a moral matter, just as the values and methods of science are universal. Weber implicitly supports this claim in his methodology. Since the individual is morally autonomous, he is obliged to use the choices available in his social environment in his private space (Petras and Curtis 1970-71, 17).

Parsons's critique of Weber's concept of value-freedom

Parsons believes that if we properly understand Weber's meaning of the category of values under his methodological framework, we perceive that the logical conclusion of his main thesis is the conflict of values. Nothing remains of Weber's methodology without the principle of value-freedom of science. Another criticism he makes of Weber's methodology is that Weber does not spend much time on its principles and premises and does not concern himself too much with the objective aspects of its application in actual scientific practice. (Henrik Brun 2007, 11). As Henrik Brun claims, Weber's struggle for the principle of value-freedom was driven by a concern for what could be called a "science of freedom from values". Therefore, it may have seemed somewhat novel at the time. He believes that Weber was certainly not the author of the theory of the logical separation between "is" and "ought", on which is based the demand for value-freedom. Henrik Brun states that Weber's commentators agree that Weber seems to have considered the truth of this theory to be completely amorphous. In general, he did not add any new arguments to the discussion of value-freedom (Henrik Brun 2007, 11). Weber was for Parsons one of the first pioneering sociologists to accept the basic premises of the sociology of knowledge, concluding that the value system of sociology would play an important role in determining the nature of sociological conclusions. Since the sociologist is inevitably confronted with the question of values, it is not, in Weber's methodology, the question of whether he should take a moral stance, but rather the moral stance must be taken in his role as a sociologist (Petras and Curtis 1970-71, p. 15). Parsons argues that, since science in particular and human action in general both operate through the mediation of values, they both share the same relativistic structure (Lassman 1980, 103). However, the difficulty in understanding the category of values leads Weber to articulate his correct view. Indeed, Weber, aware of the category of values as one of the major problems in the social sciences, tries to clarify his view through his critiques of Marx (indirectly, as some commentators say).

Weber and Difficulty of understanding the role of values in sociology

One of the major problems that Weber sees in social sciences in explaining a social phenomenon is that many of the goals and values human beings have aimed at and orient towards achieving are without any mediation. Naturally, this level of difficulty in explanation will be even greater for the scientist who is further distanced from his values in examining the ones he has in front of him. (Weber 2022, 35) Indeed, as stated, values are supposedly an undeniable and inseparable part of the research materials and data of social scientists, and Weber, in his methodology, has tried to resolve them peacefully for the scientist in favor of achieving objectivity in social science. Thus, we should keep in mind that values may enter and interfere with the process of research in different ways. An example is the intervention of values in the researcher's work in Marx's theses. Weber refers to them in the article *Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Politics*. This intervention causes the researcher to conduct research not only to achieve existential knowledge (in the sense that there is knowledge about what is) but also for a purpose (intentionally). (Brett 2018, 105) The cultural significance of

phenomena is very important for Weber. Weber places special emphasis on the cultural significance of phenomena for the historian. He believes that they express common meanings and values in history. Therefore, there may be a semantic difference for historical categories such as market economy, Christianity, the Industrial Revolution, and Protestant reforms. Social science needs different forms of access to reality and a different form of knowing based on value ideas and cultural values, which help to outline important events for us. Science for Weber's methodology is always an interpretive process that weaves its way through the cultural environment of the past and seeks explanatory roots and causal links in history. As mentioned, interpretation is supposedly the mission of the social scientist. Social science makes every effort through interpretation to be able to correctly interpret the events of social and cultural sciences. The stronger our interpretation, the closer we are to objectivity in the social sciences.

What we observe as reality, as Weber argues, is always filtered through a pre-existing conceptual model that guides the scientist in recognizing empirical reality. Weber juxtaposes the endless chaos of reality with the finiteness of the human mind. Hence, he emphasizes in his methodology that the social scientist can only understand parts of the complex, endless processes of life and its social events in their endless variety. (McCarthy 2017, 134) The social scientist tries to adapt the theory to a part of social reality (which is infinitely large and complex). Different understandings may be formed and developed at different times according to the approach and choice of social scientists in the historical context. This is why Weber, as stated, believes that social sciences are eternally youthful because they are constantly dynamic. So the nature of the selection and different forms of data causes the social scientist to have a special opinion and attention to a particular part of the research at any time. Hence, new horizons of reality can be subject to understanding.

Separation of value relationships from value judgments: (as a response to the claimed relativism of Weber's methodology)

As Ten Broek says, the knowledge in social and cultural sciences is greatly under the influence of culture, in which the roots of value are observable. Max Weber rightly paid special attention in his methodology to the category of culture, which can be supposedly equal to values. Weber's methodological program is to separate value relationships from value judgments to ultimately be able to find objective relations between values in the empirical cognitions (Ashtiani 2014, 231). Therefore, the issue of value relationships and their construction in Weber's methodology is a sensitive and key issue for social scientists in explaining social phenomena. Weber, by constructing the theory of value relationships in his methodology, seeks a solution to the problems that values create for scientists in the process of research. A phenomenon is of interest to the social sciences because it is defined by reference to a meaning that is associated with certain values. Thus, a description that attributes a value-related concept to that object identifies some object as a social phenomenon. Or a given item is a cultural phenomenon when it is defined by reference to such a value-related meaning. Weber claims that the importance that can be attributed to a phenomenon because of its value relationship is the exclusive basis of theoretical interest in the cultural sciences. In other words, an item is a qualified object for a cultural phenomenon when it is subject to a description that defines it by reference to such a meaning. (Oaks 1988, 26) The construction of value relationships is carried out by a researcher in his interests and this construction is one of the necessary factors for research to expand strong value relationships. The construction of value relationships in the research process causes the growth and improvement of research. The more value relationships we can achieve, the stronger can be our interpretation of social science phenomena. The construction of value relationships, how a social phenomenon is formulated for further research, and even the model of questions around it are all subjective. We should not consider the values in question as a product of the social scientist's thinking. Rather, they are not his characteristics, but they are different interpretations of the values of his society. Indeed, many of the discussed and debated values are under the influence of the social and cultural context in which a researcher is studying and investigating. Therefore, cultural and social values form

part of the value relationships that are essential for the social scientist to interpret social science phenomena, which seems to lead to a suitable way out of the problem of relativism in Weberian methodology.

Despite that these values are part of value relationships and are supposedly obvious, Weber does not refer to any valid source for them and seems to reject any source for them. Weber, especially in his early articles in the series *Methodologies of the Social Sciences*, explicitly points out that his conceptualization of value relationships is not to be confused with the assumption of general concepts. He goes on to argue that the construction of value relationships requires the adoption of an attitude towards the individual existence of a social phenomenon. It can be said that the role and importance of value relationships is in the social question namely in the analysis of values themselves. The analysis of value perspectives, according to Weber, serves to force the individual to give himself an account of the ultimate meaning of his behavior. (Lassmann 1980, 101). Oakes, as one of the commentators who has criticized Weber's problem of value relationship, also believes that the problem of value relationship is a necessary consequence of Weber's understanding of the relationship between cultural meaning and subjective meaning. Since the subjective meaning of any action or object is infinitely complex, the interpretation of its cultural meaning is not determined by the actual basis of the subjective meaning as the basis of that interpretation. Therefore, subjective meaning opens up the possibility of alternative but incompatible interpretations of cultural meaning that are empirically equally valid. Since alternative cultural meanings are based on alternative value relationships, the question underlying this decision is how to justify the choice among alternative values. Weber's preliminary outline of the aims and limits of the article on objectivity is notable for the vague and self-deprecating quality of its language. The reader should not expect a systematic methodological position. Weber does not propose to do methodological work for its own sake. He rejects any attempt to solve major methodological problems and modestly confines himself to stating a few methodological points and clarifying some established theses. In short, his aim is not to develop new ideas or to present original arguments, but to explain the significance of the methodological questions. Thus, we should not expect Weber to offer a solution to the problem of value. When solutions to methodological problems are at stake or when the issue concerns the grounds on which Weber's methodological positions are based, his usual expediency is to refer the reader to Heinrich Rickert (Oaks 1988, 39 and 40). Weber, in his article *The Meaning of Moral Neutrality in Sociology and Economics*, believes that the problems of the social and cultural sciences, since they are associated with human actions, should be examined through the value relationships in the phenomena selected by the social scientist. This is while the problems of natural sciences should always be resolved in a non-value-based manner. Weber states in that article that value relationships are a subject of special philosophical interest of the researcher that determines the choice of a topic in the phenomena of the social and cultural sciences. (Weber, 2010 "The Meaning of Moral Neutrality in Sociology and Economics" 47)

Social scientists, according to Weber, should always select some values for examining accurately social phenomena. Separating values, away from value judgments leads to taking a step closer to objectivity. An important point is that personal value judgments¹, without being

¹ Weber argues that when we speak of freedom from value judgments, freedom does not mean that the social scientist wants to ignore value relationships. As explained earlier, conditional interests in values (or value relationships) cover only a small part of a complex social and cultural reality, which play a significant role for the scientist in explaining a phenomenon accurately. We cannot discover, for example, what is meaningful for research by a research without presuppositions. We can consider presuppositions as the meanings of the research subjects. A research in social science begins in the circle of values and the scientist determines to what extent he can undertake the selection of values. In short, a value or a research presupposition may initially determine the purpose of the research for the scientist. It is noteworthy that a scientific research cannot perform the act of selection. Because, the responsibility for this act lies, according to Weber, solely with the scientist or researcher who makes the selection and acts on it. This part of Weber's methodology has caused the philosophers of the Frankfurt School to consider this approach of Weber as instrumental rationality. The scientist

explicitly accepted, can have many effects on sociological discussions. Therefore, the task of a social scientist is to pay special attention to the role of negative effects (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy", p. 92).

Weber understood this important point well in his methodology that the important task of a social scientist in dealing with values is to find value relationships in research. A social scientist, instead of applying value judgments or personal judgments in his research, should find useful value relationships that help explain a social science phenomenon. If a social scientist can find good and useful value relationships, he can do serious scientific work in the cultural and social sciences. The more we find accurate and more relationships, the closer we are to understanding the objectivity of a social phenomenon. Suppose a researcher intends to conduct a sociological study of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. What factor or factors caused it to occur? The researcher will find several factors and solid reasons for it. Thus, the researcher chooses one of the factors according to the principle of selection. He selects one according to the values available to him and tries to find many strong value relationships for it. Finding as many value relationships as possible in his research process on this subject will enable him to present a more correct and accurate interpretation of why the Iranian Revolution of 1979 took place to the audience. Consequently, this explanation of social sciences from Weber's point of view becomes a method that guarantees objectivity. The scientist tries, by resorting to the principle of selection, to smooth the path of his research by replacing another value among other values. The principle of selection for the scientist is a tool for sifting through the infinity of values, in proportion to the value that he thinks in his mind as a main factor, which can be useful or helpful in his research process.

Now that the recognition of value judgments and the role of values in social sciences, following Weber's methodology, has become clear to the scientist, the scientist, in the stage of his methodology that he has advanced, should benefit from the correct use of an element called the principle of selection in his methodology to achieve objectivity. The path that Weber has developed to achieve objectivity in his methodology, passes through a very winding road that contains the most challenges and difficulties of the values. The scientist, to achieve the objectivity intended by Weber, is forced to walk and accept the path of values. Because values for Weber are an integral part of sociological research. Hence, he constantly tries throughout his methodology to screen and examine the stronger and true values of a phenomenon about other values, by employing elements such as the principle of selection (to make the research process clearer and more transparent).

One of the most important questions that Weber's methodology raises for the scientist is: what exactly does this freedom from value judgments mean when we talk about it? Weber's methodology emphasizes that when a social scientist is engaged in research and investigation of the phenomenon under study, he should be away from value judgments. Here, a social scientist should always keep in mind that the subjects of social analysis should be free from any value judgments. However, Weber's sociology is a sociology that also involves value issues in the scientist's understanding of social phenomena. His important idea in his value methodology is that reality in itself does not contain values. Indeed, there is no value hidden in reality and the very scientist adds value to the research. Thus, Weber, in his article on objectivity, tries to distinguish between existential knowledge (which is knowledge of what is) and normative knowledge (which is knowledge of what should be) and tries to advise scientists to be aware of this distinction. That is why he rejects the view that empirical knowledge is capable of providing a criterion for value judgment. Weber sees the task of empirical science to be able to create objective truth and not to establish prescriptive norms through which a

tries through instrumental rationality to organize, examine, and apply the needed means to achieve the goal well. All his efforts are focused on ensuring that the means can be helpful in achieving the goal. Therefore, the followers of Weber's theory of instrumental rationality believe that the best knowledge is the knowledge that can help us overcome the world and simultaneously has the ability to predict. (Alasti 2013, 97).

researcher can extract instructions for practical actions (Alasti 2013, 96).

Value judgments in Weber's methodology

What is the meaning and concept of value judgments according to Weber? What effects do they have?

This section is focused on the article *Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Policy*, which can be said to be the central and key article of this research. Weber in his famous article *Objectivity* (1904), in his attempt to explain this important element (value judgments), tries to clarify all aspects of this challenging concept in the social sciences in his methodology.

Weber in the article *Objectivity* seeks to explain the why and what of value judgments, and asks that when a social scientist talks about value judgments, what does this category mean to him? An important question that arises here is: on what basis and by what criteria can a scientist judge value judgments? Weber sees all the efforts of a scientist to know what validity and confirmation have the value judgments of a politician or a writer who bases his political advice on it and may also prescribe it to others. If we accept that the criterion of objectivity is an accurate, comprehensive, and reliable criterion for scientificity, then we must ask on what basis that writer can maintain the scientificity of his argument. Weber, whose objectivity has become an ever-present concern for the social scientist, tries to show that the scientist should not look for a formulated solution while taking this path (the process of achieving objectivity in social science phenomena). The mission of a social scientist for Weber is to understand concepts and construct concepts to formulate propositions correctly for the accurate interpretation of social phenomena. In other words, a social scientist, at the minimum level of intelligence and talent, should have the ability to understand the cultural and social concepts of the phenomena he deals with. Therefore, constructing concepts, such as constructing ideal types, which Weber always considered as advice to scientists in his methodology, is supposedly a creative interpretative matter for a professional and accurate scientist. As Weber shows, value judgments may have their effects on the scientific research of the scientist. First: they may shape the choice of subjects that the scientist chooses to study. Second: the judgments about the individuals, associations, and events that the social scientist is studying may be influential on his work. Thus, as long as the scientist provides reasons for his judgments, he may occasionally describe certain subjects as being, for example, deceitful, power-hungry, brave, or just. While social scientists are, for Weber, understandably and visibly under the influence of value commitments. They should expectedly speak about these commitments clearly and openly.

Since social scientists in all social phenomena guide and shape the yeast of social science research by making specific value judgments, the important point in this section is that scientists are obliged to present their judgments openly to others. Another point to which the social scientist should adhere is that he should distinguish such assessments from his empirical judgments (Bird 2020, 95). Weber sees it as a mistake to assume that we can obtain justifiable value judgments simply by judging what is. Therefore, the arrow of Weber's criticism was aimed at those who thought they could defend moral views by identifying short-term or even long-term trends. Moral positions are under the influence of both judgments of fact and value judgments. Weber urged social scientists to distinguish between these two types of judgments, partly because he expected them to conduct their research with complete transparency. Weber assumed that social scientists are inherently under the influence of value commitments and concerns, both in their research subjects and their questions. Thus, Weber found it laughable that researchers try to be impartial by trying to represent both sides of a particular political debate. Their role, he argued, was not simply to passively represent different partisan views. Rather, their responsibility was to conduct rigorous analysis in which they sought to identify the assumptions and possible consequences of different views. This led scientists to analyze the internal inconsistencies of a study (Brid 2020, 96).

The tasks of sciences such as social and human sciences, which deal with social and human studies and are also focused on culture, are to examine and study the institutions and events that are current in human cultures in different cultural societies. The mission of such sciences is to be free from any pragmatic considerations and value judgments. A series of disciplines such as political history encouraged a series of ought and ought-not, they prescribed and recommended to individuals as techniques. As Weber shows, the whole goal and aspiration of such disciplines has been to immediately achieve value judgments. Therefore, he believes that they lack and are somehow sterile of the element of objectivity (as a form of scientific propositions) (Weber, 2019, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy, p. 88).

Therefore, Weber, in his article on objectivity, believes that these are techniques and are far from true science. Such disciplines are like clinical disciplines in medical sciences. Accepting all value judgments for a social scientist cannot have an epistemological aspect. Although he is well aware that social sciences are tied to many human values and value judgments, he tries to use all his power in his methodology to limit the impact and role of value judgments. Because he is well aware that the impact and role of value judgments cannot be eliminated from the social sciences. We should not exclude value judgments from the scope of scientific discussions in general, under the pretext that they are dependent on certain ideals or values (such as groups, societies, or individuals) or that they have subjective origins (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy," p. 89).

One of Weber's attempts in the article *objectivity* is to show clearly what value judgments mean. Weber, influenced by Rickert, believed that value judgments are before values. Rickert argues in his theory of the value relation that historical objects with values can still retain their objective validity if they are based on a series of clear conceptual distinctions and have correct formulations. Rickert then makes two assumptions: that certain values in each human culture are universally accepted as valid in that culture. An unbiased historian, according to Rickert, must agree on what these values are, just as natural science must accept the valid laws of nature unconditionally and universally. (Max Weber, Stanford Encyclopedia)

Value judgments for Weber have a dialectical character. In other words, they cannot do more than make formal logical judgments about historically known value judgments and ideas. The social scientist's encounter with value judgments occurs critically. Weber believes that this feature can be constructive and useful for the social scientist to advance his activities. They can help the scientist in becoming aware of the ultimate criteria of value (meaning those criteria that are not yet clear to that person). Hence, one of the useful things in this respect is to clarify the ultimate criteria that are expressed in value judgments. Whether a person remains faithful to his judgments after clarifying the ultimate criteria, according to Weber, depends on the individual. Weber in the next step tries to show how value judgments relate to empirical science. The important point is that no empirical research can provide a basis on which we can determine what is valuable or what should be done. Where a goal is assumed, empirical knowledge can certainly show what means will help the actor to achieve that goal, and vice versa. However, empirical knowledge cannot prove that value and goal are universally valid in themselves. Both the empirical knowledge of the actor and his intention to adhere to the relevant values and choices will become clear to him when neither considers itself justified in violating the other. (Jaspers 2021, 78).

Weber places special emphasis on being able to identify the pitfalls of introducing value judgments into the social sciences. He believes that telling an individual what to do or what not to do cannot be part of the tasks and mission of empirical sciences. Weber explains that the task of an empirical science can be to tell an individual what he can do. The social scientist must accept the fact that value judgments, without being definitively and explicitly accepted, can have a great impact on social science discussions. This causes, as Weber believes, disturbances in the scientific research process. He considers the inclusion and involvement of value judgments in the work of a social scientist to be a natural and undeniable process that is

strongly influenced by human nature. However, he tries to show that there is a difference between consciously and unconsciously recognizing and dealing with them. Therefore, a scientist who consciously understands value judgments and tries to correctly recognize and separate them is very different from a scientist who introduces them into his research process without knowing or understanding them. The lack of proper understanding of them, as stated earlier, causes disturbances in the scientist's research process (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy, p. 92).

Weber, in his article on Objectivity, tries to distinguish between value judgments and empirical knowledge, which implies that there is knowledge in the social sciences that the scientist supposedly achieves during the process of his research. The distinction between value judgments and empirical knowledge from Weber's perspective implies knowledge in the empirical sciences. As Weber argues, when a social scientist distinguishes between value judgments and empirical knowledge in their fundamental principles, he accepts consciously a type of presupposition. This important presupposition for him is a type of knowledge that has validity and is unconditional in the social sciences. This presupposition leads the scientist to this approach that he, in the social sciences, is always looking for the meanings of facts that are considered objectively valid. This makes the scientist unconsciously distance himself from other marginal discussions. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy", p. 104). As mentioned, Weber claims that the issue of objectivity in itself is important and knowledge-enhancing in sociology. Therefore, when he wrote about these issues in his articles in the Archive Magazine, he placed the most emphasis on the fact that social sciences should spend all their efforts on studies that are close to the issue of objectivity and achieving it. As for objectivity in social science phenomena, Weber's collection of articles on the distinction between value judgments and empirical knowledge clarifies that the issue of objectivity in social sciences is not purely theoretical. Rather, he tries to pave the way for it in the social sciences and to implement it practically in the analysis of social science phenomena. Weber as a professional sociologist has well understood that social and cultural sciences, throughout their evolutionary history, have always been involved in and affected by value issues. So he advises the social scientist to seek value relationships instead of applying value judgments in the study of social science phenomena. The question that may arise for the scientist is what ideals our value judgments depend on and how are they strengthened? He should also ask about the role of the personality of individuals in value judgments.

Weber considers the internal elements (personality), which are supposedly among the ultimate and highest value judgments, important and valuable for the social scientist in terms of objectivity. These internal elements are among the important factors in shaping personality. They are strongly under the influence of a series of values, beliefs, and cultures. These parameters may influence views and value judgments over time, even without becoming aware of them by the person. Weber points out here an interesting point, which is worth considering. These judgments can be valid and valuable for us if they are derived from great and transcendent values and are challenged in the trial-and-error stage of the scientist's research process. As he believes, they should have passed the tests. Thus, this group of values can be worthy of support. Personality is in Weber's methodology a key and determining element in the approval and acceptance of values. An individual's personality is closely associated with his attachment to values. It is not wrong to say that Weber's methodology measures the status and greatness of a person based on a series of values. Personality gives credibility to values and gains credibility from them. Therefore, its relationship with values can be considered as a mutual relationship. If persons do not believe in a value or do not support the value in question, then judging the credibility of the values that a person believes in is meaningless. Faith is closely linked to the individual beliefs of a person who is under the influence of existing values. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy", p. 93). Max Weber also mentions the connection that an individual establishes with his classes and class interests as one of the determining factors of value judgments, which can play a sensitive and decisive role in the scientist's research. This role is very influential in shaping value judgments. Hence he

tends to place special emphasis on the category of culture. This emphasis can be heuristic in the scientist's methodology. The more a social scientist encounters broader cultural meanings in his scientific investigations of social phenomena, the fewer ambiguous answers he receives from his research. It is therefore clear that the role of value ideas and ultimate personal postulations becomes more prominent in the eyes of the scientist. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in the Social Sciences and Social Policy, p. 95).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The role of the principle of selection in Weber's methodology becomes prominent according to the premises that emerge from Weber's methodology, in the conscious stage where the social scientist tries not to involve values and to ultimately choose one among the existing values and deal with it scientifically. The principle of selection for Weber means that a social scientist who intends to explain a social phenomenon, among the factors that caused the occurrence of that phenomenon, chooses one that he thinks has more scientific priority than the others or is more accurate in some way; then he tries to test and study it scientifically to achieve objectivity. Even it is still possible at this stage for the scientist to be influenced by the values that have been institutionalized in him and to have a significant share in his decision-making. All of Weber's efforts to explain logically a social science phenomenon are focused on the moment after the selection and the path that the scientist is supposed to take after this selection. It seems that the principle of selection from Weber's perspective leads to strengthening the scientist's correct assumptions and plays a key role in paving the way for the objectivity of social science phenomena. (Weber 104, 2022) Indeed, as Weber argues, when a social scientist, considering the selections he has in front of him (multiple different causes for the emergence of a social or cultural phenomenon), chooses a particular cause to explain that phenomenon (following his mental assumptions), he leads to a clearer and further explanation of that event. Principally, here the social scientist does not present a report simply as a collection of information and its presentation. Rather, he engages himself in a scientific activity concerning the interpretation he presents for the phenomenon in question. The researcher's position here can be considered an interpretive and simultaneously active position. When the scientist makes a selection, he embarks upon two important tasks, according to Weber. The first: he makes the phenomenon in question meaningful and tries to interpret it. Hence, he uses all his efforts to be able to present a discussible correct, and acceptable explanation. The second: his selection will create a significant causal chain that is very useful in clarifying the research. The more and stronger the causal chain of a scientist is, the more objective his explanation of that social phenomenon will be. As Weber emphasizes the importance of selection by the scientist, he also attempts to point out the role of values that influence the selections scientists make. Thus, Weber accepts the existence of those values that guide the work of researchers and give rise to different explanations on their part.

Values fall under several categories for him. The first category is those values that belong to an individual. If we want to give an example, it might be better to point to a series of religious values that always exist in the institution of some actors personally. The second category is those values that belong to a group or groups. For example, this category of values, according to Weber, should refer to political values and various parties. Finally, the third category: some values are among the most important for Weber and these are objective values. For example, this category of values belongs to scientists who use them to advance their research. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in Social Sciences and Social Politics, p. 124) More precisely, these values are the factors of the principle of selection; here the principle of selection shapes the scientific orientation of the researcher. For example: it provides the possibility of searching for certain matters for a social scientist in the study of a historical, social phenomenon. They can be very illuminating for the scientist in the interpretation of a social phenomenon. Weber points out that the element of historical individualism also stands out for explanation in the scientist's eyes in the relevant studies of the interpretation of such social phenomena, in addition to opening

up history for a better explanation in the study. Historical individualism means the meaningfulness of a phenomenon in its *Eigenart*. Here the determining elements are only the assumptions that make a limited part of the unlimited variety of phenomena appear meaningful to the social scientist and ultimately the recognition of a single phenomenon becomes meaningful for him. (Weber, 2010, "Objectivity" in *Social Sciences and Social Policy*", p. 124). Weber has tried to create a suitable way out of the problems and challenges that values create for a sociologist through elements such as value relations to solve the problems that he pursues in his project of achieving objectivity in the social sciences (which he considers separate from value judgments). Weber has tried in his methodology to prevent the destructive role of values in the social sciences as much as he can (through the functioning of the elements of his methodology as mentioned). Thus, Weber's intellectual efforts as a sociologist over the past century have led to the emergence of approaches that allow us to have a sociology that has criteria of objectivity like other natural sciences. However, this has led to different interpretations and criticisms by commentators on Weber's methodology over the decades. This has led to the dynamism of this discipline so far.

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