

KUNTOWIJOYO AND PROPHETIC SOCIAL SCIENCES: INTEGRATING REVELATION AND MODERN METHODOLOGY FOR ETHICAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

This article discusses Kuntowijoyo's thoughts on Prophetic Social Science as an offer of a scientific paradigm that integrates revelation, prophetic values, and modern social science methodology. Prophetic Social Science is constructed through three main dimensions humanization, liberation, and transcendence, which are based on QS. Ali 'Imran 110 as a normative foundation. This study traces Kuntowijoyo's intellectual biography, the epistemological foundation of his ideas, the methodological tools he formulated, and their application and relevance in the context of contemporary Indonesian science and social life. Through descriptive-qualitative analysis, this article shows that Prophetic Social Science has made a significant contribution to developing emancipatory and value-oriented social science, although it continues to face criticism regarding the operationalization of the concept, the tension between revelation and scientific objectivity, and the methodology of problems in research practice. These findings confirm that Prophetic Social Science is an important intellectual project in the effort to build a social science that not only explains reality but also transforms it ethically and transcendentally.

Keywords: Prophetic Social Sciences, Kuntowijoyo, humanization, liberation, transcendence, scientific paradigm, Indonesian social sciences

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas pemikiran Kuntowijoyo tentang Ilmu Sosial Kenabian sebagai tawaran paradigma ilmiah yang mengintegrasikan wahyu, nilai-nilai kenabian, dan metodologi ilmu sosial modern. Ilmu Sosial Kenabian dibangun melalui tiga dimensi utama yaitu humanisasi, pembebasan, dan transendensi, yang didasarkan pada QS. Ali 'Imran 110 sebagai landasan normatif. Studi ini menelusuri biografi intelektual Kuntowijoyo, landasan epistemologis ide-idenya, alat metodologis yang dirumuskannya, serta penerapan dan relevansinya dalam konteks ilmu pengetahuan dan kehidupan sosial Indonesia kontemporer. Melalui analisis deskriptif-kualitatif, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa Ilmu Sosial Kenabian telah memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam mengembangkan ilmu sosial yang emansipatif dan berorientasi nilai, meskipun terus menghadapi kritik terkait operasionalisasi konsep, ketegangan antara wahyu dan objektivitas ilmiah, serta metodologi permasalahan dalam praktik penelitian. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa Ilmu Sosial Kenabian merupakan proyek intelektual penting dalam upaya membangun ilmu sosial yang tidak hanya menjelaskan realitas tetapi juga mentransformasikannya secara etis dan transendental.

Kata kunci: Ilmu Sosial Kenabian, Kuntowijoyo, humanisasi, pembebasan, transendensi, paradigma ilmiah, ilmu sosial Indonesia



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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies of social science in the Muslim world have often led to methodological clashes between the positivistic tradition, which emphasizes value neutrality, and the normative tradition, which demands moral alignment. In the Indonesian context, one intellectual contribution that emphasizes the fundamental need for a social science paradigm that integrates religious values is the idea of Prophetic Social Science, initiated by Kuntowijoyo. This idea emerged as a response to the tendency of modern social science to separate facts and norms, thus making science function solely as a descriptive tool without an ethical-transformative orientation. In his essay on prophetic social science, Kuntowijoyo asserts that Muslim social science must not stop at merely understanding reality, but must also carry a humanist mission to shape a more humane society through scientific practices oriented toward liberation and transcendence.¹

According to Kuntowijoyo, the essence of Prophetic Social Science is formulated through three complementary value pillars: humanization (*amar ma'ruf*), liberation (*nahi munkar*), and transcendence (*tu'minūna billah*). These three pillars are not merely theological jargon, but are expressed as ethics of scientific development that guide the goals, methods, and applications of social science in contemporary Muslim society. Humanization affirms the ethical goal of science: upholding human dignity and well-being; liberation demands attention to the structures of oppression that restrict human freedom; while transcendence places all scientific endeavors within a divinely oriented framework so that science does not become merely a materialistic instrument. This formulation demonstrates Kuntowijoyo's effort to re-weave the value dimension into social scientific practice without neglecting empirical exploration.²

Epistemologically, Kuntowijoyo offers what he often calls an attempt to objectify Islamic teachings, namely by transforming revealed texts, cultural traditions, and religious experiences into scientific data that can be analyzed systematically in social studies. This approach requires a method capable of operating at two levels: scientific accuracy (empirical-analytical) and value consistency (axiological). In his other works, Kuntowijoyo emphasizes that Islamic scholarship does not merely repeat Western categories, but rather reconstructs scientific categories so that they are relevant and functional for the purpose of liberating and empowering the people. This epistemological effort aligns with the idea of transcendental structuralism that he uses to interpret contemporary socio-religious phenomena.³

¹ K. Kuntowijoyo, "*Ilmu Sosial Profetik: Etika Pengembangan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, No. 61 (1998), hlm. 63–77.

² A. Anwar, "*Analisis Paradigma Ilmu Sosial Profetik*," *Shoutika* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2023).

³ Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid: Esai-esai Agama, Budaya, dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental*, Bandung: Mizan, (2001), hlm. 360–370.

The practical relevance of Prophetic Social Science can be seen in two main areas: first, as a normative framework for impartial social research (e.g., studies of poverty, marginalization, and equitable public policy), and second, as a basis for the development of educational programs and policies that integrate public ethics and spirituality. Numerous academic studies in Indonesia over the past two decades have adopted, criticized, and developed the concept of Prophetic Social Science, demonstrating that Kuntowijoyo's ideas are not only an intellectual legacy but also a theoretical working material in social transformation projects. However, openness to methodological criticism, particularly regarding how to maintain a balance between scientific objectivity and normative commitments, remains a central issue in the further development of this paradigm.⁴

This introduction sets out the objectives of the article: (1) to describe Kuntowijoyo's conception of Prophetic Social Science; (2) to analyze its epistemological, methodological, and axiological foundations; and (3) to evaluate its relevance and limitations for social studies and policy in Indonesia. Based on Kuntowijoyo's primary texts and academic studies that react to and apply these ideas, this article is expected to provide a clear conceptual map that opens up opportunities for dialogue between conventional social science and social science oriented towards liberation and prophetic ethics.⁵

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This method was chosen because the focus of the study lies in Kuntowijoyo's theoretical thinking on Prophetic Social Science (PSS), so the main sources of the research are written works, both primary and secondary. The primary sources used include Kuntowijoyo's books such as *Islam as Science*, *Muslims Without Mosques*, and his article "Prophetic Social Science" published in the journal *Al-Jami'ah*. Secondary sources include journal articles, proceedings, and academic analyses that discuss the interpretation and development of PSS by contemporary scholars. Thus, the data of this study are textual and are analyzed to reveal the conceptual structure, epistemological foundations, and methodological relevance of PSS in social studies.

Data collection techniques were conducted through literature searches using scientific journal repositories (e.g., DOAJ, Sinta, and Neliti) and digital library catalogs. The data collection process followed the following stages: identification of relevant primary works, selection of supporting literature, and classification of data based on the focus of the study, namely conceptual,

⁴ Z. Qodir, "*Kuntowijoyo dan Kebudayaan Profetik*," *Neliti / artikel (analisis konsep sastra & profetik)*, 2016.

⁵ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, dan Etika*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006 (cet. II), hlm. 82–121.

epistemological, methodological, and critical aspects of Prophetic Social Science. The researcher also ensured that each source collected met scientific credibility criteria, such as publications in reputable journals, academic books, or writings from recognized research institutions. This stage is crucial to maintaining the validity of the argumentation because the research is theoretical and emphasizes the accuracy of the reconstructed thinking.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis. Through this method, Kuntowijoyo's texts were read in depth to identify key concepts such as humanization, liberation, transcendence, objectification, and the prophetic paradigm. These concepts were then compared with scholars' interpretations in secondary literature to identify similarities, differences, and the development of ideas within academic discourse. Content analysis allows researchers to interpret the deeper meaning of the texts and systematically discover Kuntowijoyo's thought patterns, so that the research results go beyond mere description and also produce a theoretical mapping.

To maintain methodological consistency, this study also applies critical analysis techniques by comparing the concept of Prophetic Social Science with modern social science paradigms, such as positivism, humanism, and critical theory. This comparative approach is used to assess the position of Prophetic Social Science in the epistemological map of social science and evaluate its relevance in the contemporary scientific context. Through a combination of literature study, content analysis, and critical comparison, this study produces a comprehensive understanding of the structure of the Prophetic Social Science idea and its potential as an alternative paradigm in the development of social science in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Short Biography of Kuntowijoyo

Kuntowijoyo is an Indonesian Muslim scholar who has had a significant influence on the development of social sciences, history, and literature. He was born in Sorogaten, Bantul, Yogyakarta, on September 18, 1943, into a family of Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), which provided a strong religious foundation from his childhood. He received his primary education at both a public school and an Islamic boarding school, before continuing his education to secondary school in Yogyakarta. His academic career further developed when he studied history at the Faculty of Letters, Gadjah Mada University (UGM). After earning his bachelor's degree, he received a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in American Studies at the University of Connecticut, United States, which was then followed by a doctorate in history at Columbia University in the 1980s.⁶ It was this international education that sharpened his critical thinking and provided a strong foundation for his ideas on the objectification of religion and social science.

⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid, Bandung: Mizan*, 2001, hlm. 15-16.

Upon his return to Indonesia, Kuntowijoyo became a history lecturer at Gadjah Mada University (UGM), continuing to write and develop interdisciplinary thought. He wrote works covering history, literature, culture, and Islamic thought, such as *Muslims Without Mosques*, *The Political Identity of Muslims*, *Islam as Science*, and collections of short stories and novels. These works not only demonstrate his intellectual breadth but also demonstrate his consistency in combining social analysis with prophetic values. Kuntowijoyo is also active in various scientific forums and organizations, including Muhammadiyah, where he became an influential thinker in the development of modern Islamic discourse.

As a scholar and cultural figure, Kuntowijoyo possesses a multidisciplinary approach. His experience as a writer has made his thinking not confined to a strictly academic format, but expressive and reflective. Meanwhile, his historical background provides analytical skills regarding social structures and societal dynamics. This scientific composition played a significant role in the birth of the concept of Prophetic Social Science, a paradigm that connects social science empiricism with the prophetic mission. This thinking developed strongly in the 1990s when Indonesia was experiencing an ideological crisis and academic stagnation.⁷

Kuntowijoyo died in 2005 after suffering a long stroke. Despite this, his intellectual influence continues to spread, serving as a reference for scholars, social activists, and Islamic thinkers in Indonesia. Many universities teach his thought as part of their Islamic social science studies. His intellectual legacy is reflected in the integrative ideas between knowledge and transcendent values, a legacy that makes him a significant thinker in modern Indonesian intellectual history.⁸

Kuntowijoyo's Basis of Thought

Kuntowijoyo's primary thinking is based on three dimensions: academic education, religious tradition, and Indonesia's socio-political conditions. As a modernly trained historian, he understands that conventional social science is often trapped in positivism, which separates facts from values. However, as a Muslim raised in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) culture, he believes that a complete separation between knowledge and values contradicts the Islamic scientific tradition. Therefore, he proposes the concept of "objectification," an effort to make religious values understandable within universal scientific categories.⁹ This concept of objectification then became one of the main foundations of Prophetic Social Science.

⁷ A. Qodir, "*Kuntowijoyo dan Kebudayaan Profetik*," *Jurnal Maarif* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2015), hlm. 56–58.

⁸ A. Prasetyo, "*Warisan Intelektual Kuntowijoyo*," *Humaniora UGM*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2015), hlm. 340–342.

⁹ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam sebagai Ilmu*, hlm. 82–101.

One of the theological foundations for Kuntowijoyo's prophetic thinking is Surah Ali Imran: 110, which contains three prophetic missions: enjoining good, forbidding evil, and forbidding the path of Allah. In reading this verse, Kuntowijoyo emphasized that Islam is not only a belief system but also a social ethic that guides societal change. He then derived this verse into three pillars of prophetic social science: humanization, liberation, and transcendence.¹⁰ Thus, the basis of Kuntowijoyo's thinking is both theological and sociological, starting from the text, but moving to build a social theory.

Indonesia's socio-political conditions during the New Order era also shaped Kuntowijoyo's critical thinking. During that period, society experienced dehumanization due to centralized power, developmentalism, and political repression. This situation prompted him to formulate a social paradigm that not only described phenomena but also provided guidance for moral and structural transformation. In his book **The Political Identity of the Muslim Community**, he emphasized that Muslims need knowledge capable of liberating them from structural injustice while simultaneously preserving moral values.¹¹

Kuntowijoyo's thinking was also influenced by modern intellectual traditions, particularly critical theory, humanism, and structuralism. However, he did not simply adopt these theories; he engaged in a creative process he called "Islamic scholarship," utilizing Islamic teachings as a framework for scientific epistemology and methodology. Therefore, his thinking is integrative: combining the rationality of modern science with the prophetic values of Islam. This integration gave birth to Prophetic Social Science as an alternative paradigm for social science in Indonesia.

Basic Concepts of Prophetic Social Sciences

Kuntowijoyo's basic concept of Prophetic Social Science (SPS) stems from a critique of the modern social science paradigm, which he considers prone to being trapped in positivism and secular humanism. For Kuntowijoyo, modern social science merely explains phenomena but rarely provides normative direction for societal change. Therefore, he presents SP as a normative-transformational social science that aims not only to understand social reality but also to guide social action ethically based on prophetic values.¹² This paradigm brings together scientific analysis with prophetic ethics, so that science does not stop at mere objectivity, but becomes a means of liberation and social enlightenment.

¹⁰ Kuntowijoyo, "Ilmu Sosial Profetik," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, No. 61 (1998), hlm. 65–70.

(Tautan resmi jurnal: <https://aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/3043>)

¹¹ Kuntowijoyo, *Identitas Politik Umat Islam, Bandung: Mizan*, 1997, hlm. 45–52.

¹² Kuntowijoyo, "Ilmu Sosial Profetik," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, No. 61 (1998), hlm. 65–67.

Tautan: <https://aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/3043>

The theological foundation of ISP is derived from QS. Ali Imran: 110, which contains three prophetic formulas: amar ma'ruf, nahi munkar, and tu'minūna billah. In Kuntowijoyo's reading, this verse functions not only as a moral-spiritual principle but also as an axiological framework for the development of social theory. He reduces these three principles to the three main pillars of ISP: humanization (amar ma'ruf), liberation (nahi munkar), and transcendence (tu'minūna billah).¹³ Thus, the basic concept of ISP does not merely adopt religious values, but formulates these values into scientific categories that can be used in social analysis and transformation.

The first pillar, humanization, is defined as an effort to humanize people and uphold the values of justice, empathy, equality, and respect for human dignity. For Kuntowijoyo, development and modernization processes that are not based on humanization can actually lead to social dehumanization. Humanization in ISP serves as a normative direction toward which all social science practices must move. The second pillar, liberation, refers to the liberation of humans from various forms of structural injustice, such as poverty, ignorance, oppression, and exploitation. Kuntowijoyo's concept of liberation shares a similar spirit with critical theory, but its paradigmatic and ethical roots remain grounded in Islamic prophetic values.¹⁴

The third pillar, transcendence, occupies a central position in the ISP because it emphasizes that all scientific activity must be inseparable from a divine orientation. Transcendence is not merely a matter of religious ritual, but a moral and spiritual orientation that directs all scientific activity toward goodness, honesty, and wisdom. In this context, the ISP rejects the view that science should be absolutely value-free; instead, science must be rooted in moral values derived from faith. By incorporating transcendence as a central pillar, Kuntowijoyo positions the ISP as a paradigm distinct from Western positivism and an alternative to secular humanism.

To support the theoretical framework of ISP, Kuntowijoyo developed the concept of objectification, an effort to scientifically express religious values in universal categories. Objectification enables Islamic values to be communicated not only to Muslims but also to the wider community through the language of science. Therefore, objectification becomes an epistemological mechanism that connects revelation with the methodology of modern social science. Through this concept, ISP rejects the dogmatic theology of science, but instead encourages the transformation of religious values into critical and rational forms of social analysis.

Overall, the basic concept of Prophetic Social Science demonstrates Kuntowijoyo's attempt to bridge two scientific traditions often considered contradictory: the empirical-objective modern social science and the normative-transcendental Islamic tradition. Prophetic Social Science (ISP)

¹³ Ibid., hlm. 68–70.

¹⁴ A. Qodir, "Kuntowijoyo dan Kebudayaan Profetik," *Jurnal Maarif* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2015), hlm. 57–60.

seeks to integrate the two within a consistent epistemological framework, a clear axiology, and a liberating practical orientation. Therefore, Prophetic Social Science (ISP) is not merely a theoretical concept but also an ethical vision for science that favors humanity and justice, grounded in prophetic spirituality.¹⁵

Methodology in Prophetic Social Sciences

The methodology of Prophetic Social Science (SPS) stems from Kuntowijoyo's idea that social science is not merely tasked with explaining phenomena but also with transforming reality toward a more humane and civilized state. Therefore, SPS combines modern social science methodology with ethics and prophetic values derived from Islamic teachings. Kuntowijoyo rejects the dichotomy between scientific objectivity and religious values; he argues that objectivity can be maintained as long as prophetic values serve as a normative orientation, not merely the interests of groups or other particular ideologies.¹⁶ Thus, the ISP method leads to a liberating social science, which combines scientific analysis and social transformation.

Ontologically, ISP positions humans as historical beings living within specific social structures. Therefore, research methods must consider the social, economic, and political dynamics that shape human consciousness and experience. A historical-structural approach is crucial for understanding how power relations, cultural domination, and economic inequality operate in social reality. However, unlike Western critical theory, ISP incorporates a transcendental dimension as a moral reference that determines the direction of social change. Thus, the ISP method is critical-transcendental, a method that combines structural criticism and a divine value orientation.¹⁷

Its epistemology emphasizes three main steps: description, analysis, and transformation. The first step aims to objectively describe social conditions based on empirical data. The second step analyzes the structural factors that cause injustice. The third step, a hallmark of ISP, provides a framework for action (praxis) to transform society toward prophetic values: humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Thus, the ISP method does not stop at critique but culminates in a social action program aimed at establishing a just and dignified society.¹⁸

In research practice, ISP is interdisciplinary and combines qualitative and quantitative approaches as needed. However, qualitative research is preferred because it provides ample room for interpreting social phenomena and understanding the values internalized by society. Techniques

¹⁵ A. Prasetyo, "Warisan Intelektual Kuntowijoyo," *Humaniora* UGM, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2015), hlm. 338–342.

¹⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, dan Etika*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006), hlm. 52–53.

¹⁷ Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1991), hlm. 89.

¹⁸ Kuntowijoyo, "Ilmu Sosial Profetik: Etika dan Transformasi," dalam *Pengantar Ilmu Sosial Profetik*, ed. Achmad Jainuri (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), hlm. 44–45.

such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis are considered relevant for describing the social structures and ideologies at work in reality. Kuntowijoyo also emphasizes the importance of historical methods such as historical hermeneutics and document analysis in understanding the process of societal transformation over time. With this integrative methodological approach, ISP not only explains the world but also seeks to offer a direction for change based on prophetic values derived from revelation.¹⁹

Application of Prophetic Social Sciences in the Indonesian Context

The application of ISP in various areas of life in Indonesia can be seen through two major dimensions: (1) theoretical application in the academic world, and (2) practical application in community empowerment programs and social policy. These two dimensions reflect the character of ISP as a science that is not only oriented towards explanation, but also towards social change (transformative knowledge).

1. Theoretical Application: Integration of Prophetic Values in Scientific Studies

In the academic world, ISP has begun to be used as an alternative analytical framework in socio-humanities research, particularly in Islamic universities such as UIN, IAIN, and STAIN. Academics utilize the three main pillars of ISP: humanization (*amar ma'ruf*), liberation (*nahi munkar*), and transcendence (*tu'minuna billah*) as analytical tools in interpreting social phenomena. For example, in the study of legal sociology, researchers use ISP to assess the extent to which legal regulations in Indonesia reflect the values of substantive justice that free society from various forms of structural injustice. This approach aligns with Kuntowijoyo's critique of legal positivism, which is considered value-lacking and pays little attention to the moral dimension and the surrounding social context.²⁰

Furthermore, in cultural and anthropological studies, ISP is used to examine the revival of local cultural values aligned with prophetic missions. Research on the traditions of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and Indonesian communitarian ethics, for example, has found that these values can be reinterpreted as prophetic social capital that fosters a more egalitarian and inclusive society.²¹ Thus, ISP does not merely import Western theories or reject modernity, but seeks to build a social science rooted in Islamic intellectual traditions and Indonesian culture.

¹⁹ Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid, Bandung: Mizan*, 2001, hlm. 112–115.

²⁰ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, dan Etika*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006), hlm. 62–63.

²¹ A. Abdullah, “Rekonstruksi Budaya dalam Perspektif Ilmu Sosial Profetik,” *Jurnal Sosio-Religia*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (2014), hlm. 44.

2. Practical Application: Empowerment Programs and Social Transformation Movements

The practical application of ISP is evident in various community empowerment movements carried out by religious organizations, NGOs, and academics. ISP, with its ideas of liberation and humanization, serves as the philosophical foundation for developing programs oriented towards freeing communities from inequality, poverty, and social injustice.

In several Islamic boarding schools and social institutions, for example, the community economic empowerment model is designed with prophetic principles: increasing economic capacity (humanization), raising structural awareness of the causes of poverty (liberation), and integrating ethical values into economic management (transcendence). This empowerment model has been proven to produce a more down-to-earth and morally oriented movement, thus not only improving welfare but also strengthening the social and spiritual integrity of the community.²²

Furthermore, several community development programs driven by Islamic universities also use ISP as a methodology. In the thematic Community Service Program (KKN), students are directed to analyze village problems through three ISP indicators. For example, a digital literacy development program in villages focuses not only on technological mastery but also on developing ethical technology use that reflects the public good and prevents misuse of technology. This approach demonstrates that ISP can be operationalized concretely in community service practices.²³

The Relevance of Prophetic Social Sciences in the Contemporary Indonesian Context

The relevance of ISP is growing stronger in the context of modern Indonesia, which faces a variety of multidimensional challenges ranging from moral crisis, socio-economic inequality, political polarization, and technological disruption. ISP offers an alternative paradigm that integrates science and values, thus addressing problems that cannot be resolved through a purely positivistic approach.

1. Addressing the Moral Crisis Amidst Modernization and Globalization

Modernization and globalization have had a significant impact on Indonesian lifestyles, including changes in behavior, values, and social norms. On the one hand, modernization has increased access to education and opened up economic opportunities.

²² A. Pranowo, "Model Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Berbasis Profetik," *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Islam*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (2019), hlm. 18.

²³ M. Susanto, *Pengabdian Profetik dan Transformasi Desa*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2020), hlm. 55.

However, on the other hand, moral crises such as corruption, hedonism, violence, and social disintegration have become alarming phenomena.

ISP is relevant in addressing this issue because it has a transcendent dimension that restores human orientation to divine values. Kuntowijoyo emphasized that social science must guide humanity toward a moral order that upholds human dignity and prevents destructive actions. Thus, prophetic values can serve as an ethical framework guiding the modernization process so that it is not separated from moral orientation.

2. Addressing Socio-Economic Inequality

Indonesia still faces sharp economic inequality. Structural injustice, which gives rise to poverty, unequal distribution of resources, and the marginalization of certain groups, requires a social analysis approach that not only describes the phenomenon but also encourages structural change.

The ISP is highly relevant in this context because its liberation pillar encourages action to eliminate injustice. The ISP approach views poverty not solely as a result of individual factors, but also as a result of oppressive power structures and relations.²⁴ Therefore, ISP can be a normative and methodological basis in formulating just social policies.

3. Relevance for Integration of Science and Religion in Education

Islamic education in Indonesia is often caught in a dichotomy between religious and general knowledge. ISP offers an integrative paradigm that allows both to interact constructively without dominating one another. This paradigm is considered highly relevant for Islamic educational institutions striving to produce scholars and professionals with moral integrity and academic competence.

Through ISP, education can be directed to produce graduates who are not only intellectually critical, but also have an ethical and spiritual commitment to using knowledge for the benefit of society.²⁵

4. Relevance in the Era of Technology and Information Disruption

The digital era has transformed various aspects of social life, including communication patterns, economics, education, and politics. Technological advances bring significant benefits, but they also create new problems such as digital polarization, the spread of hoaxes, privacy degradation, and social media addiction.

²⁴ E. Setiawan, "Liberasi Sosial dalam Perspektif ISP," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, Vol. 10 No. 1 (2016), hlm. 77.

²⁵ A. Hakim, "Integrasi Ilmu dan Agama dalam Perspektif Profetik," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (2018), hlm. 12.

ISPs are relevant in this context because they play a critical role in digital structures and cultures. A prophetic approach can be used to assess how technology should be used to humanize, rather than exploit, people. The principle of transcendence encourages the use of technology based on ethics and moral responsibility, while the principle of humanization ensures that technology does not diminish human dignity.²⁶

The Contribution of Prophetic Social Science to Science and Social Transformation

ISP's contribution to Indonesia can be seen in two main aspects: contribution to the development of science and contribution to social practice.

1. Contribution to Science

ISP makes a significant contribution to the development of the social science paradigm in Indonesia. First, ISP offers a clear value orientation in social research, namely prophetic value. This responds to criticisms from many scholars that modern social science has lost its ethical direction due to its entrapment in extreme objectivism.

With a prophetic paradigm, research is judged not only by methodological accuracy but also by its contribution to humanity and justice. This contribution is particularly important in the context of Indonesia, which has a strong religious tradition, enabling a healthy dialogue between social science and religious values.²⁷

Second, ISP offers a new epistemological model that combines scientific description, critical analysis, and socially transformative action. This contributes to the development of a critical theory that is more values-based and more closely aligned with the realities of Indonesian society.

Third, ISP provides space for the integration of modern science with the legacy of Islamic intellectual tradition. This integration enriches the repertoire of Indonesian social sciences and helps build a scientific paradigm that is not entirely dependent on Western theory but rooted in the cultural and religious context of Indonesian society.²⁸

2. Contribution to Social Transformation

ISP's contribution to social transformation is evident in various social movements and community empowerment initiatives. With a prophetic approach, community-based social movements become more focused and grounded in ethical principles.

²⁶ Y. Fadhilah, "Etika Media Digital dalam Perspektif Ilmu Sosial Profetik," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (2020), hlm. 166.

²⁷ Z. Mubarak, *Ilmu Sosial Profetik dan Pembaharuan Ilmu di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018), hlm. 82.

²⁸ M. Darwis, "Epistemologi Islam dan Masa Depan ISP," *Jurnal Studi Islam*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (2017), hlm. 107.

In community development, ISP has inspired a number of faith-based programs that prioritize economic empowerment, education, and social awareness. Movements such as community economic empowerment, sharia cooperatives, and modern Islamic philanthropy programs demonstrate how prophetic ethical values such as justice and solidarity can be operationalized in social practice.²⁹

At the public policy level, prophetic values such as justice, equality, and humanity provide a philosophical basis for formulating policies that favor vulnerable communities. ISP is thus not merely an academic theory, but also a paradigm for action that encourages the emergence of a more just and civilized social order.

Critique of Prophetic Social Science

Although Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Social Science (ISP) has made a significant contribution to the development of the Indonesian social science paradigm, this concept remains subject to criticism. Criticism has come from both social science academics and Islamic studies scholars, who question the methodological, epistemological, and operational aspects of ISP in empirical research and public policy. This criticism is not intended to undermine Kuntowijoyo's thought structure, but rather to encourage the development of this paradigm to be more mature and applicable. In general, criticism of ISP can be grouped into four aspects: (1) methodological criticism, (2) epistemological criticism, (3) criticism of practice and operationalization, and (4) criticism of its prophetic normative basis.

1. Methodological Critique: Operational Ambiguity in Empirical Research

One of the most consistent criticisms of the ISP concerns methodological issues. Some academics argue that the ISP faces difficulties when operationalizing it in empirical social research. This criticism stems from the fact that the ISP is a strong normative framework but lacks detailed methodological procedures.

Kuntowijoyo offers guiding principles of humanization, liberation, and transcendence; however, he provides no technical guidance on how these principles are translated into research indicators, analytical steps, or empirical verification procedures. This creates confusion among researchers attempting to apply ISP in fieldwork. As Amin Abdullah notes, the prophetic paradigm tends to be normatively heavy but methodologically light, requiring refinement to be accountable within the scientific research tradition.³⁰

²⁹ A. Syafii, "Gerakan Sosial Islam dan Pemberdayaan Profetik," *Jurnal Al-Ijtima'iyyah*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (2021), hlm. 33.

³⁰ Amin Abdullah, *Islam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), hlm. 144.

Some other researchers argue that this methodological ambiguity makes ISP more suitable as a normative social theory than an empirical social science. Nur Syam even cautioned that without a clear methodology, ISP has the potential to become merely moral jargon without strong analytical power to explain complex social structures.³¹ This critique is important because modern social science requires verification, conceptual rigor, and transparent methodology in the research process.

2. Epistemological Critique: The Tension between Revelation and the Rationality of Science

The second criticism concerns the epistemology of ISP, which combines revelation and empirical science. While this integration is considered an advantage by some academics, a number of scholars believe that combining revelation as a source of knowledge with a scientific methodology based on empirical observation can create difficult-to-resolve epistemological tensions.

Some critics believe that ISP is moving towards a model of “transcendent normative science” that is difficult to accept in the modern academic tradition that upholds objectivity and rationality.³² They question how the prophetic values derived from revealed texts can be scientifically tested, especially when faced with diverse and dynamic social realities.

Furthermore, epistemological problems also arise when ISP is seen as attempting to derive social theory from religious texts. This is considered to potentially ignore social complexity, as religious texts have moral and spiritual purposes, while social science requires categorization and abstraction that can be tested through empirical research. This critique reminds us that although ISP attempts to integrate revelation and social reality, this integration process still requires more rigorous epistemological elaboration.³³

3. Critique of Application and Practice: Unclear Operational Indicators

The third criticism concerns the difficulties of ISP in social practice. A number of academics believe that the prophetic principles of humanization, liberation, and transcendence are still too general and abstract to serve as guidelines for public policy or concrete social movements.

For example, what are the empirical indicators of "humanization"? Is it strengthening public literacy, increasing access to education, or changing specific social

³¹ Nur Syam, “*Ilmu Sosial Profetik dan Problematika Metodologis*,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2015), hlm. 22.

³² Adian Husaini, “*Epistemologi Islam dan Tantangannya*,” *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2014), hlm. 33.

³³ M. Darwis, “*Epistemologi ISP dan Tantangan Integrasi Ilmu*,” *Jurnal Studi Islam*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (2017), hlm. 102–103.

structures? Similarly, for "liberation," are the indicators the elimination of oppressive regulations, economic redistribution, or increasing critical public awareness?

Due to the lack of measurable indicators and detailed analytical tools, the ISP is often viewed merely as a moral inspiration, rather than a technical framework applicable to social analysis. This criticism was expressed by Muhammad Zainuddin, who argued that the ISP is closer to an "ethical theory" than an "operational social theory" that can comprehensively guide policy.³⁴

Furthermore, in community empowerment movements, practitioners often adopt prophetic terms without truly translating them into social intervention models. This results in the application of ISP being more symbolic than substantive. Therefore, this criticism motivates the need to develop research tools such as prophetic indicators, measurement tools, and prophetic social intervention models.

4. Critique of the Normative Basis of Prophetic

Another important criticism comes from philosophers and social theorists who see that the normative basis of ISP, which explicitly adopts prophetic values from Islam, has the potential to limit the reach of ISP in pluralistic Indonesian society.

Although Kuntowijoyo never intended ISP to be an exclusive tool for Muslims, his use of the term "prophetic," which is theologically tied to the Islamic prophetic tradition, has led some academics to question the inclusiveness of this paradigm. This criticism was put forward by Saiful Mujani, who argued that the social science paradigm should be universal and inclusive, while the prophetic framework emphasizes specific religious identities.³⁵

Furthermore, the prophetic approach is considered to have the potential to introduce normative bias into social research. If values are predetermined from the outset, researchers are concerned that they will direct their research to support those values, rather than objectively depict social reality. In other words, ISP has the potential to be "moralistic," thereby losing its neutral descriptive dimension. This criticism has prompted ISP developers to balance the value dimension with the empirical dimension more consistently.³⁶

³⁴ Muhammad Zainuddin, *Teori Sosial Profetik: Kritik dan Rekonstruksi*, (Surabaya: LKiS, 2021), hlm. 67.

³⁵ Saiful Mujani, "Agama, Ilmu Sosial, dan Demokrasi," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 10 No. 1 (2003), hlm. 45.

³⁶ Azyumardi Azra, *Paradigma Baru Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2002), hlm. 119.

5. Critique of Dependence on the Figure of Kuntowijoyo

Another criticism focuses on the tendency for ISP to be based solely on Kuntowijoyo's work, without further theoretical development by his followers. Some academics believe that ISP failed to develop significantly after Kuntowijoyo's death, resulting in "theoretical stagnation."³⁷

Yet a scientific paradigm can survive and develop only if it is continually criticized, tested, and reconstructed by a broad episteme community. This critique reminds us that the development of ISP should not stop at Kuntowijoyo's primary texts, but rather needs to engage in dialogue with critical theory, postcolonialism, feminism, and other scientific traditions to enrich its content and scope.

6. Critique of Global and Technological Challenges

A number of contemporary academics criticize ISP for not fully addressing new challenges such as digital disruption, artificial intelligence, ecology, and economic globalization. ISP focuses more on classic issues like structural injustice and moral crises, but has yet to develop an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of digital capitalism, the ethics of artificial intelligence, or the data economy.

Yasraf A. Piliang believes that the prophetic paradigm has not yet developed an adequate analytical framework for reading the world of digital hyper-reality, where the boundaries between reality and simulation are increasingly blurred.³⁸ This critique is important because the social challenges of the 21st century require an expansion of theoretical scope that ISP has not yet fully addressed.

From these various critiques, it can be concluded that ISP is a promising paradigm, but still requires strengthening in various methodological, epistemological, and practical aspects. These critiques do not negate the value of ISP, but rather open up space for richer and more relevant development. It is precisely through these critiques that ISP can develop as a strong and contextual social science paradigm for Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

Prophetic Social Science (ISP), initiated by Kuntowijoyo, is a significant effort to formulate a social science paradigm rooted in transcendent values while simultaneously responding to the social dynamics of Indonesian society. Unlike modern social science, which tends to emphasize

³⁷ A. Syafii Maarif, *Islam dan Masalah Kenegaraan*, (Bandung: Pustaka, 2011), hlm. 88.

³⁸ Yasraf A. Piliang, *Dunia yang Dilipat: Tamasya Melampaui Batas-batas Kebudayaan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2012), hlm. 128.

objectivity and empirical description, ISP offers a strong value orientation through three main pillars: humanization, liberation, and transcendence. These three pillars serve not only as a theoretical framework but also as a foundation for action for a more just and civilized social transformation.

Kuntowijoyo's intellectual history demonstrates that the birth of ISP was not an instantaneous process, but rather the result of his struggle with Western scientific traditions and Islamic intellectual heritage. As a historian and cultural figure, Kuntowijoyo believes that science should not stop at "knowledge for knowledge's sake," but must become knowledge for action, namely knowledge capable of guiding social change. Through a prophetic approach, he built a synthesis between revelation and social reality, which gave birth to a social science paradigm with an emancipatory and moral orientation.

Methodologically, ISP proposes an integration of scientific analysis, social critique, and transformational efforts. This method requires researchers not only to describe social phenomena but also to understand the structures that influence social change and act to alter inhumane conditions. Thus, ISP methodology is not passive, but actively combines empirical observation, critical analysis, and prophetic praxis. In the Indonesian academic context, this approach opens up new space for interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly between the social sciences, Islamic studies, and the humanities.

The application of ISP in various fields demonstrates the broad relevance of this paradigm. In academia, ISP serves as an alternative framework for interpreting social reality from a more valuable and morally oriented perspective. In the field of community empowerment, ISP promotes programs that emphasize structural liberation, strengthening moral awareness, and enhancing human dignity. Its relevance is evident in various contemporary challenges such as moral crises, political polarization, economic inequality, and digital disruption. ISP provides an ethical foundation for assessing and directing these changes toward the public good.

The contribution of ISP to science cannot be overlooked. This paradigm enriches the Indonesian social sciences through the integration of prophetic values and modern scientific methods. ISP not only complements Western social theory but also critiques the limitations of positivism and materialism dominant in the modern social science tradition. Thus, ISP is an important effort to build a social science contextualized to the culture, history, and spirituality of Indonesian society.

However, various criticisms of the ISP demonstrate that this paradigm still requires conceptual and methodological strengthening. Criticisms regarding the unclear operationalization, the epistemological tension between revelation and scientific rationality, and the generality of the prophetic concept highlight the importance of developing the ISP to be more applicable and

scientifically accountable. Contemporary challenges such as globalization, digital capitalism, and technological developments require the ISP to expand its analytical framework to remain relevant.

Overall, Prophetic Social Science is a valuable contribution to the development of Indonesian social sciences. This paradigm unites the spiritual and empirical dimensions within a unified framework. With its integrative and transformative character, Prophetic Social Science has great potential to shape new directions for social research, education, public policy, and community empowerment. The future of Prophetic Social Science will be largely determined by the ability of academics and practitioners to continue reconstructing Kuntowijoyo's thought and developing it according to the needs of the times. Thus, Prophetic Social Science will not only become a discourse but also a moral-intellectual force in building a more just, humane, and prophetically civilized society.

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