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*Full Length Research Paper*

**The Limitations of Research Findings behind the Veil of Subjectivities: Subjective Values and Extra-Subjective Challenges**

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**Abstract**

*This essay addresses the challenges of Subjectivity in research. Firstly, it illustrates that most researchers fail to transcend subjectivities and are trapped into particular values that they favor to the utmost. Others avert findings that they dislike by systematically sticking to what they desire. Secondly, it addresses the extra impact of imposed externalities (standards, methods and methodologies) as what compels the researchers to follow specific paths as an insurmountable fixation at the expense of people in quandaries. The researcher discusses this impact as a threat to academic freedom and an existential concern, in which the right methods are often used to solve the wrong problems and vice versa. The essay focuses on a few considerable cases from the African relation to the Euro-American systems, which often deflect intellectuals from conducting a soul-searching endeavor. Furthermore, the essay discusses how such factors limit the findings of the research via limited tutelage and unethically prioritized subjective quests for instrumental gains. The essay's method is philosophical. It employs hermeneutic analysis of key concepts of subjectivity in research. The essay proposes alternative rethinking to devalue subjective values and extra-subjective challenges.*

**Keywords:** Extra subjectivity, findings, limitation, research, subjectivity

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## Hanqinna Argannoo Qorannoo, Golga Ofitummaa Duubaa: Dhibdee Ofittummaa Ufootiif Kalchoo Ofittummaa Alaa

### Axareeraa

*Qorannoon tun rakkoo ufoon Qorannoo keessatti qabdurratti xiyyeefatti. Tokkoffaa, qorattootni hedduun ofi-gula bahanii, eennummaaf fedhii ofii daheefatanii argannoof fedhii ufootti akka cichan agarsiisa. Lameessoo, qoranichii rakkoo ufoo kan dhiibbaa dhaabbilee mallaqaaf olaantummaa adeemsa saayinsiitti maxxanuun ufoo maxxantuu qorannoof bobbaasan ibsa. Haala Kanaan qorannichii hariiroo Afrikaaf Ameerikaa/Awurooppaarra taatewwan fakkeenna ta'an fudhachuun akka qorattootni hedduun takkaan sobamanii, ykn bitamanii qorannoo rakkisaa dhiheessuun aadaaf adeemsa qorannoo rakkisaa jiran hubachiisa. Qorannichii muuxannoo, xiinxalaaf falaasama yaaadatti fayyadama. Dhumarratti rakkoo ufoo dandamachuuf ufoo-waaltawaa akka falaatti dhaama.*

**Jechoota Ijoo:** *Ufoo-Dhibii, argannoowwan, hanqina, qorannoo, ufoo*

### 1. Introduction

Although research, by its very nature, is collaborative, a number of tasks remain the responsibility of the individual agent. The kind of lenses and spectacles through which this agent sees the reality under study and makes judgments are important. Balancing objectivity and subjectivity in research are not always easy or straightforward, as it may involve challenges such as dealing with uncertainty or ambiguity in your data or findings, managing conflicts between different perspectives, values, or interests, recognizing and avoiding cognitive biases, and handling. Since its inception, this challenge has had many causes. Firstly, Subjective challenges go to our natural personalities. An ancient fable narrating six blind men who went out to use their sense of touch to investigate the nature of an elephant, something they had never heard of, fairly explains challenges related to subjective findings in research. In this fable, each man touched a different part of the creature. One perceived the elephant to be a wall (side), another was sure to be touching a snake (trunk), and the third was convinced that he had just put his hands on a tree (leg). The other three touched the elephant's tusk, ear and tail and again came to a different conclusion regarding the nature of the elephant. Because human beings tend to believe what they subjectively perceive to be the absolute truth, the six men were not able to agree. If this fable is used as a metaphor for human beings' subjective experience of the world around them, then research needs methodologies that help us understand subjectivity and uncover consensus and points of disagreement across individuals' lived experiences.

Secondly, subjectivity may arise from embedded Values and self-desire, Self-serving material desire, Self-serving acts, the complexity of competitive status/promotion, Researcher's maturity, skill and ability to conduct research, external imposition (outsider interest and fund holding), method hegemony, the mentor-student dyad and its influence, etc. Kant once argued that the faculty of judgment is indispensable because, even where we have rules for its exercise, judgment is required to apply the right rules to particular cases (Abraham Kaplan, 1964, p. 312). Endowed with a prerogative natural gift, therefore, the individual—the researcher – will remain a subject and doer of the project throughout his/her research. What he/she may undergo in the research involves considerable steps such as defining and redefining problems, formulating hypotheses or suggesting solutions, making deductions and reaching conclusions, and at last, carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the

formulating hypothesis. In this serious process, however, there exists a fundamental constraint that may threaten the very goal of this research.

Research in the intellectual culture is believed to pursue objective and self-surpassing inquiries to bring a balanced and unbiased outcome. Despite this truth, however, individual interest, i.e., the researcher's subjective choice, may challenge the very objective inquiry. Researchers may be entangled and face conflict between subjective demands and the necessity of objective truth. This may arise primarily from our very human nature, which tends to be egoistic in general. This reminds me of what Thomas Hobbes once said in his psychology of human nature: "Human beings are machines oscillating between two great forces, i.e., since we are by nature a bundle of desire, we always struggle to attain what we desire and avert what we dislike" (in Michael Oakeshott, 1946, p. 80). Michael Oakeshott elaborated on this as follows:

Most men believe that they are as intelligent as those around them...for such is the nature of men, that howsoever, they may acknowledge many others to be more wit or more eloquent, or more learned and yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves; for they see their own wit at hand, and others at a distance. (in Michael Oakeshott, 1946, p. 80)

The message in the above quote implies that we always tend to be subjective and revolve around our subjective interests. This subjectivity has a tremendous impact on what we do in social life. Let alone other common and daily activities, such subjectivity hunts the vast majority of us in academic and professional life. I prefer to call this subjectivity "first-class subjectivity" since it is directly connected to our very human nature.

## **2. Methods and Procedure**

To explore scholars' perspectives on the concept of subjectivity, the researcher followed a series of steps and conceptual analyses that are typical of the research process. The essay reviewed available documents, research-related materials, and materials relevant to the area of research subjectivity.

## **3. Categories and Interposition of Subjectivity**

Conducting research requires many considerable issues, starting with moral intention, conceptual clarity, and a realistic and hermeneutic approach. Through all these processes and steps, subjectivity may arise from issues ranging from participants' embedded Values, self-desire, Self-serving material desire, Self-serving acts, complexity of competitive status/promotion, maturity, skill and ability to conduct research, external imposition (outsider interest and fund holding), method hegemony, mentor-student dyad and its influence, etc. Accordingly, by devising new categorical terms, the researcher divides these challenges into "first-class subjectivity, Second subjectivity," and Extra-Subjective Challenges.

### **3.1 First Class Subjectivity**

Personal subjectivity arises out of individual self-serving interests and thereby becomes a cause for so many distortions and conflicts in human life. In the academic research, for instance, we make choices, outline plans and face as many waves of demands as they usually occur to us in other life milieus. Thus, first-class subjectivity is directly manifested in the conflict of interest that arises within subjective choice. Accordingly, researchers need to consider the importance of some core aspects of their research since "they, as academics, have some binding ethical rules and inner moral voices. That is, whether the choice is made upon a careful evaluation of the matter at hand or based only on personal inclination (desire), learned habits, traditions or foregone compulsions. It is clear that our subjective conceptions

determine not only our choices but also our predictions and judgments in our findings. In the researcher's view, however, the subjective interest that usually distorts academic responsibility arises out of partakers' very subjective nature. It must be due to such a subjective intervention in an objective quest that we usually face the problem of unbalanced and biased findings in academic research. Given my concept of the veil of subjectivity, therefore, such biased and predigested findings are caused by our ineptness in failing to surpass our subjective priority. In fact, this would unduly threaten and intellectually undermine the meaning and objective of our research. Research is, at least in its genuine sense, conducted not to satisfy subjective preferences but rather to find solutions for social problems. Unfortunately, researchers usually hide such a subjective tendency behind the veil of our subjective priorities.

As a result of the above-mentioned 'first-class subjectivity', therefore, the researcher may fail to transcend his/her instrumental choice. The Instrumental choice we face in the academy may be inclined toward the search for mere status improvement or title promotion to gain sheer academic reputation, no matter what one's deeds may be. In this case, I think what a researcher sees or wants to have in front of his/her professional space is that somebody with a better academic name (reputation) sits beyond his/her lower one. Thus, the professional struggle or research that this person undertakes relapses into no more social or human-appropriate needs than laddering and leveraging up the lower academic title. In an apt metaphor, I consider this subjective struggle as the "Mountain-range effect," in which the researcher climbs a peak only to find other peaks beyond him/herself; no matter when he/she leaves off climbing, other peaks remain beyond. Since An activity aiming at success at all costs is doomed, subjectivity of this kind ends up misleading.

In addition, I encounter such struggles when a person needs to achieve material gains. In the academy, such subjective demand occurs when researchers exclusively pursue competitive material gains like access to resources or funding. Researchers and research findings in this case lack their chief quality, inherent quest, in favor of instrumental needs. The research, which is devoid of intrinsic priority, essence and objectiveness at the expense of material pursuit, would inevitably end up biased and corrupted. In this case, subjectivity behind a veil entails that the researcher's primary focus is on how to produce and raise funds rather than searching for a genuine remedy. Accordingly, I construed such research as an academic business running after sheer improvement of subjective perennial pecuniary and subjective fund-raising attempts devoid of intrinsic moral and epistemic utility. Abraham Kaplan explained the recurrent problematic nature and situations of current research as follows:

That so much of the research carried on today is subsidized by government and industry does not in itself create new dangers to scientific objectivity: research has always had to be paid for by someone or other. The real dangers, it seems to me, lie in the pressures for too quick a return on investments, and perhaps even more in the scarcity of risk capital, the reluctance to depart too far from what the Academy judges to be sound and promising (Kaplan, 1964, p. 382).

In his discussion of the "antiscientific aspect of policy," Kaplan considered this issue as an act of engaging in inquiry to achieve a utilitarian end and finally construed it as nothing other than a prostitute of scientific intelligence (1964, p. 398). Besides, as far as objective inquiry and the qualities of our research are concerned, it is palatable to consider researchers' potential and academic skill to conduct appropriate and standardized research on complex problems. I think that is why we usually consider considerable recommendations, like that it is a good idea to find out how much you know about the research process even before your problem identification and dealing with. Furthermore, what if the problem in one study is more complex and the researcher is not well-sophisticated? Or how morally and

professionally concerned the researcher is?. Hence, unless we consider issues from these angles, it would be unreasonable to be surprised at why we often face redundancy and similar recommendations in academic research. I think intellectual ability, moral or professional quality, and researcher's skill in general enable one not only to avoid the unbalanced findings or erroneous ways of handling the difficulties but also to detect the very errors of proposing and observation. Thus, when I say researcher's skill in the context of subjectivity, I'm referring not only to the possible utterance made by a particular researcher in a particular situation but also to the very observational skill, the complexity of what is at hand, and the circumstances. That is, what is to be studied, how it is to be perceived, how one feels about it, how it is to be engaged, etc.

### 3.2 Second class subjectivity

In addition, personal subjectivity hides itself in the social values, which I think is social subjectivity. Unlike the previous one, this subjectivity conceals itself in things such as identity, social belongingness or attachment, common values based on what may hold people together, etc. Therefore, in this case, the researcher may transcend his/her first-class subjectivity yet fail in the collective-value-based subjectivity. I prefer to call the second subjectivity "*Second class subjectivity*," which is deeply rooted in the social values that highly influence our research findings.

In the history of social sciences in general and research in particular, this subjectivity has caused severe criticism of the place and role of these sciences. It has been due to this that social science and research in their respective milieus have failed in the nascent scientific movement. With the emergence of positivism, social science in general and research in particular are believed to be trapped in a state of decay and, perhaps, putrefaction. In the history of metaphysics, for instance, one may consider K. Popper's determination to free science from any imputation of subjective relativism, which may well be involved in certain conceptions of the sociology of knowledge of, and of class science. The critic here developed the idea that social science research is value-free from the positivists' point of view. Subjective priority and self-interest behind the veil, therefore, are when a researcher fails to transcend his/her subjective value-based choice on the inquiries. Such a researcher may be trapped in the respective social trait and unable to surpass such values, which inevitably corrupt the findings.

If one critically considers such possibilities, many of the researchers' groundless terminological judgments, such as backward culture, harmful traditions, bad faith, "wrong method, etc., need in-depth revisions. The vast majority of such negative connotations arise from the researcher's subjective conceptions of certain social realities. We can find these kinds of subjective fabrications in the work of various historians; whose conclusions often relapse into social dichotomies. Abraham Kaplan argued that the typical instances of bias are provided by historians of wars, where the standpoints of the victor and the vanquished yield very different accounts, beginning even with the name of the conflict ("the war Between the states" (Kaplan, 1964, p. 373)). Concerning such a value claims and judgments, Abraham Kaplan put:

We have still some sense of what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, or gracious, and we think of these things, but we don't any really know what we are saying about things when we ascribe to them these excellences. (Kaplan, 1964, p. 371)

Value-laden subjectivity allows a room for bias, not when they dictate the situations/problems, but when they prejudge the solutions. It must be from such an observational gap that Abraham Kaplan argued that "the great historians do not merely explain events but also allow us to see them (1964, p. 369). Here, let

me pose some basic questions in order to move on to another related issue: Is it possible to study social phenomena without making value judgments? Is the conflict between different value systems necessarily insoluble for human reason? And how can we claim that our finding represents the whole social milieu and norms in the academy? As to these questions, I have two main ideas. Firstly, it would hardly be convincing to believe that social sciences are value-free. Myrdal once argued that there is no other device for excluding biases in social sciences (or any other) than to face the valuations and to introduce them as explicitly as stated, with specific and sufficiently concretized value premises. Thus, it is not that convincing to assume that one can conduct value-free social research in any scientific way, since such assumptions contradict the concept of social, cultural, or cultural knowledge.

The very concepts of value-free social science are themselves contradictions. If there is such a thing as 'knowledge' in social science, then it must be, in one way or another, knowledge of/about value claims. Therefore, the values may be introduced more or less subtly; Aristotle does not sketch an ideal republic, as Plato does, yet values are basic to his analysis of natural and perverted or degenerated forms of polity (Kaplan, 1964, p. 372). Secondly, I'm in a position to say that these inescapable values can be dealt with reasonably. It is true, as Kaplan said, that there have been many earnest and hard-headed inquiries into the phenomena of parapsychology, there is at least a possibility that some of them are receptive to positive findings, in spite of themselves, as it were, because of the bearing of such findings on unconscious anxieties about death or on guilt about our less "spiritual" impulses (Kaplan, 1964, p. 372). In my view, although unquestioned and untested values threaten our objective inquiries, we should be able to look for a reasonable sense of objectivity to overcome misleading subjectivity. To do this, therefore, one needs to consider social realities and study them in their own right. In this case, I think values are not to be eliminated from our research, but rather approached accordingly. I venture to say that research done in this way would have fallen short of nothing more than exhibiting the obituaries behind the prevailing scientific encroachment, which resulted from its own hubris.

Generally, both subjectivities, i.e., 'first class,' which arises out of personal conflict of interest and self-prioritization, and "second class," which is related to the idea of values and belongingness, are veiled in subjectivity. When one critically assesses many research findings from a moral point of view, then the limitations of various research may appear behind the veil of subjectivities. Accordingly, critically investigating the nature of the two subjectivities may help as a mirror to see where personal conflict of interest and social conflict of interest distort our moral and academic accountability.

### 3.3 Extra-Subjective challenges

In the academic milieu, it has been obvious that pedagogy and accepted (imposed?) curricula determine style, form and methods of research. Despite its scientific claim, every inquiry and method it applies starts somewhere. Thus, by its very nature, such research appears subjective in its origin, grounded in a particular authority at a particular time and a specific situation at a specific place. Perhaps it is due to this that external subjectivity, which we often encounter in research methods and methodologies, remains pervasive. I often encounter that research methods and methodologies are given under specific and acknowledged standards designed along particular schools of thought. However, one clear thing to be considered is that, despite their academic nature and scientific legitimacy, most of these schools of thought emerged in rejecting some dominant subjective claims over human quest for scientific and philosophical inquiries. Hence, science and philosophy frequently face similar challenges when it comes to concerns about how they originated. Before and after them exist subjective and restrictive claims on how to acquire knowledge and the nature of the assumed knowledge itself. Epistemologically, Kaplan considered this prior subjective claim as follows:

The love of wisdom or truth is virtue, yet the first sin was eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and the myth of Faust—that those who seek knowledge sell their souls to the Devil—is thought by many, especially today, to convey a dismal reality. (Kaplan, 1964, 379).

Many of the academic restrictions forced to cling to certain institutional hegemony would not fall into accepting a scientific or philosophical version of such classical epistemological restrictions. Currently, most of the research subjects appeal to scientific methods and explanations to defend their positions. Although it seems groundless to interpret such contextuality as if scientific method and explanations depend on the audiences, it is still reasonable to consider the audiences along with their respective social realities. In my view, this truth does not negate the fact that there are certain acceptable ways/professional standards of interpreting a projective test, carrying out a dig, or surveying public opinions, and yet the benchmark should be particularities in the predicaments or segments of humanity in the quandaries. Methods are means, and hence they are not intrinsically ends in themselves. Case studies, experiments, hypotheses, theories, etc., must meet not only certain methodological requirements but also recognize the particular circumstances under investigation. Thus, studying issues of humanity and the complexities of social realities is not strictly the same as studying baseball, which has uniform rules such as ways of pitching, hitting, running base, fielding, constant managerial strategy, pinch hitters and relief pitchers. In the vast majority of current academic research, however, these methods are uncritically accepted despite the fact that they have no guarantee to claim that social problems are similar or unique across humanity.

Thus, since human problems in general and social quests in particular may differ from one another, it would be bold and unreasonable to assume that the research we do in science necessarily conforms to superimposed methods. What must be true for the scientific method of inquiry is that Kaplan considered science a calling and not only an occupation. Since they follow an occupational approach, their subjective methods would rather result in linguistic or conceptual constraints and pedagogical restrictions in favor of a specific institutional hegemony. Specifically, through linguistic constraints and pedagogical imposition, we would further understand that this extra subjectivity disables genuine intellectual culture and undermines the philosophy of a particular society. Research done under such circumstances may hardly be considered helpful from a social point of view. As Descartes once said, the development of one society should be measured by the level of its philosophy, which, however, is unthinkable when societies are mentally and pedagogically dislocated or less aware of it. Unfortunately, the rise of European science, which coincided with the dislocation and suppression of others, deflected us from seeing the truth and examining ourselves along such a truth. Paul Feyerabendian described the situation as follows:

Within the rise of modern science, the non-western tribes are not only physically suppressed; they also lose their intellectual independence and forced to adopt the blood thirsty religion of brotherly-love Christianity. The most intelligent members get an extra bonus; they are introduced into the mysteries of western science (Feyerabend, 1993, 349).

I understand how it would hardly be possible for such a society to even define and decide what is humanly or socially possible, since mental and pedagogical restrictions are equivalent to epistemic limits. The truth here is that what is scientifically or even logically possible is true and grows with the very growth of human knowledge. The truth, reliability and validity of such subjectivities (academic preferences) can be questioned so long as they are the results of specific institutional subjective processes behind the veil of academic acknowledgment and, above all, self-mapping projects. Alan

Sokal has already exposed what he considers institutional subjectivity behind the veil of academic supremacy. Condemning what he called ‘western intellectuals’ outlook,’ he argued that Western scientific practice revealed the ideology of domination concealed behind the facade of ‘objectivity’. Accordingly, what lies behind the facade of objectivity revolves around Sokal’s expression of Western mainstream:

That is they cling to the dogma posed by the long post-Enlightenment hegemony over the western intellectual outlook; that there exist an external world, whose properties are independent of any individual human being and indeed of humanity as whole; that these properties are encoded in “eternal” physical laws; and that human beings can obtain reliable, albeit imperfect and tentative, knowledge of these laws by hewing to the “objective” procedures and epistemological structures prescribed by the (so- called) scientific method (Alan Sokal, 1995, p. 2).

Paul Feyerabend used to challenge this Western conceptual claim for supremacy in his “against method,” in which he rejected the scientific method, its prototype and self-mapping. According to Feyerabend, the problem with science is not that it has mythological elements in it, but that it refuses to openly admit to them and stubbornly insists on enforcing upon society a narrow and limited method of pursuing truth (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 347). Although I accept that science might have its own valid ways of pursuing the truth in its own right, the truth in the scientific context may not necessarily be compatible with dealing with all human problems and social paradoxes.

The very concept of ‘truth’ in a scientific context may not be true from a human point of view. Human or social reality is not something fixed and static to be measured by fixed ways of dealing and measuring it. Scientific truth or method is not normative in the same way that human verities are. According to Nietzsche, truth is an error without which a particular way of life is impossible. Accordingly, subjective errors emerging from certain institutional priorities compel others to produce and reproduce faulty findings. Intellectuals in general, and academic researchers in particular, should not be forced to fulfill an irrefutable and irreversible obligation arising from certain subjective monopolies. Because this subjective monopoly and institutional priority behind the veil of academic subjectivity distort research findings as far as our social research focus and entirely rely on complex societies, Social demands and the nature of social problems demand research in their own right. P. Feyerabend might consider the issues from such an angle when he argued as follows:

But democratic, pluralistic societies need not accept the attempt at dominance by science; i.e., society should reject science’s effort to prescribe its method as the only proper way of discovering the truth of justifying claims to knowledge. Rather, all method of pursuing truth should be considered legitimate. The ideology of science should be treated like any other ideology, such as religious and political ideology-taught only in private, parochial institutions to persons wishing to be indoctrinated into the superiority of the scientific method. (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 347)

Accordingly, subjective priorities behind the veil of institutional subjectivity forces individuals to formulate their research questions, set their objectives, and structure their research structures in accordance with an imposed and exclusive model at the expense of all viable ways towards human realities. There might be some considerable cases when what some people call “the click of relations” and what I have been considering as imposition might work, but it is rare, given the very complexity of social veracities. Without such rare exceptions, therefore, the role of restricted researchers



and their research findings simply serve others' choices rather than social problems. Even these rare cases may occur when the two standpoints, as Lass well calls them, the manipulative standpoint and the contemplative standpoint, appear to be non-antithesis. But when the manipulative dominates the academic research findings at the expense of the contemplative one, then what I have been referring to as institutional subjectivity would appear and distort the very goal of social research. When this happens, the humanities will remain in a risky gap with their problems intact, while many researchers and institutions still claim that they are doing research on them and for them. In fact, such researchers may appeal to their scientific authority when they undertake research on particular social problems. Still, it seems that they prefer dying with their scientific or institutional commitment to choosing problems people in quandaries are facing. They remain faithful to the claimed scientific authority or institutions they serve, and yet they try to define and determine our practical social problems. Kaplan explained that inconsistency occurs in such confrontations;

The practical problem may bias an investigation, if this is carried out only to provide justification for a policy prejudged to be the best. But the determination to exclude from an investigation the data and hypotheses pertaining to practical conditions and consequences may be just as much an expression of bias. Science becomes no better protected against biases by the entirely negative device of refusing to arrange its results for practical and political utilization (1964, p. 399).

Analyzing issues from the African viewpoint, I consider individuals conducting externally imposed research and inquiries as the European moving libraries or speaking books in Africa who either fail to understand or refuse to care about the truth of a particular situation but continue serving the others. In "New Society" (1973, p. 15), Frank Field once warned, "The best service of all that academics could do is to refuse to undertake any more major research about which answers could be gained by asking the poor what they want." Similarly, Ken Lawrence questioned the very purpose of external institutions in Africa, such as the Ford Foundation, the Hoover Institution and various institutions with the name of institutes of African studies. Lawrence included critical questions such as, "What is the purpose of study? Where do its funds come from? To whom will the research be directed? And what is the intended time? In Lawrence's critic of Euro-American based institutions, I came to the view that at least one white man or white-dominant institution exists behind every African researcher and institute of studies. We keep on relying on not only their financial support but also their conceptual donation, which turned many of us into faithful receivers of the European myth and swam in their hegemonic dogma of immaculate perception of how realities are out there.

### 3.4 Case: Extra subjectivity

Boundaries that seemed perennial and unquestionable throughout the twentieth century and that were also used as a blueprint for the rise of modern academia founded themselves upon subjective grounds. Many cases which remain today a defining contraposition, part of a discourse that for the last two hundred years has framed world history as a North vs. South, East vs. West, West vs. rest, and colonizer vs. colonized contest have both research, funding and projects grounds. Cases have origins and grounds that have yet to be questioned. In our research formats, we usually put what we call "Research background" somewhere in the framework. However, we simply continue without going deep into the roots of the background toward the uncertain foreground. The root and origins of the above-mentioned case have many things to do with the root of subjectivity. The root traceback to the setting which ranges from 'The Hegelian logic which described Africa a dark continent, Emmanuel Kant's concluding remarks which labeled Africans as un - educated but trained people, Tomas Jefferson's denial of Africans of any significant contribution, Senghor's reducing Africans to emotional animals, Joseph Mbit's denial of futurity in the Africans' mind in putting that 'Africans' cannot think or comprehend things far beyond

two years,' Garrett Hardin's project of belittling pastoralist communities in the 'Tragedy of the common, President Trump's describing Africa as a 'Shithole' during his presidential race to recent argument of Josep Borrell, the European Union's outspoken foreign policy chief, who recently described Europe as an idyllic "garden" of prosperity and the rest of the world as mostly a "jungle," and the Israel's defence minister, Yoav Gallant's clear phobia, for his describing the Palestinians as "human animals," in the recent incident.

**Research Case:** Research proposal once submitted to the University of Zambia's Institute of African Studies by a person named Pothon was critically evaluated and found out that "the study seeks to focus on the internal transfer of aid (to refugees), particularly as its effect on Africa is designed to develop strategies to increase the generation of aid, ensure that African nations achieve a greater percentage of total aid, and coordinate and maximize the flow of international refugee relief to Africa (Lawrence). 109). Let alone such an explicit ineffectiveness, a value judgment from such an ambiguous research proposal is more personal or institutional than contextual. If carefully considered, such a researcher's being constitutive of a standard context, sole judge and imposing extra recommendations on the particular situations appears clear. To be more specific, such a research project highly increases the researcher's or institution's instrumental value, which otherwise should have been specified, at least tacitly, for whom and under what conditions there would be intrinsic value.

Thus, it would be hardly convincing to assume that such a mere instrumental or institutional conception of the problem would enable one to even clearly identify the very existential aspects of the problem itself unless one critically considers the roots of particular life dialogue from within and in its own right. One cannot identify or disprove the existence of social problems merely by his/her pure mental perception without placing oneself in the ongoing situations. Underlining the assertion that 'every practical problem is really a problem of research,' Campbell pointed out that "almost all problems whose solutions science has actually advanced have been suggested, more or less directly, by the familiar experience of everyday life" (13:182). Accordingly, given such a considerable academic responsibility, hegemonic institutional subjectivity compels African researchers to do research using pre-defined external methods that deflect them from seeing and examining problems in their own backyard. Unfortunately, the rise of European science in the name of modernity forced us to do otherwise. This subjectivity, which hides itself behind the veil of pedagogical monopoly, compels us to look at ourselves through their spectacles and evaluate our problems through their subjective gauge. Pedagogical restriction, in this sense, is therefore beyond sheer academic style, form or instructions. Mudimbe clearly explained the impact of pedagogical restrictions as follows:

...The various discourse themselves establish the world of thought in which people conceive their identity. Western Anthropologists and missionaries have introduced distorted not only for outsiders but also for Africans trying to understand themselves. (Mudimbe, 1988, on the back-side cover)

I consider this an act of letting one ignore his/her realities or forcefully bending oneself towards what doesn't fit his/her existential and social demands. However, it seems that, although many focus on the rise of European science for their critique, it was personalities like Kant who laid such an exclusive model of restrictions that the Europeans exclusively guided the others. To use Kant's view, which is appropriate to my argument, "the Negro can be educated, but as servants". i.e., they allow themselves to be trained (Eze, 1997, p. 117). However, let alone proponents of current European pedagogic supremacy, Kant, whom I consider the basis for such a singular model, had no reason except sheer prejudice. Friedrich Gentz, who studied with Kant at the same institution (i.e., Konigsberg), pointed out that if Kant's assumption were realized, it would compact the whole species into one and the same form, a dangerous situation that would destroy diversity and treat those who refused the system as rebels against fundamental principles of human nature (Tsenay, 1997, p. 7).

In the academy, the basic faulty of such historical and academic impositions lies chiefly in their methodological, conceptual, and, above all, ideological failure to recognize/identify that other ways of putting things might prove equally effective in carrying inquiry forward.

Accordingly, the kind of science and scientific methods advocated by proponents of this hegemonic and singular conception of European ways of inquiry can be clearly understood in the context of Fayeraband's critique of method. In his 'against method,' he clearly underlined that science is too often a mere ideology, that is, the partisan conviction of zealots blinded to points of view outside their own. It must have been out of such a fear that Thoingo'o extremely blamed the European morning chalks for the entire colonial operation. Likewise, in condemning such subjectivity, one Japanese scholar writes 'the methods of constructing a modernized curriculum were modeled after European and American schools, and necessary materials and tools for teaching were introduced from those countries' (Tokiomu 1968; 53). Hence, it needs no further and extensive research to understand that the European subjectivity behind their academic imposition would deflect our minds and research findings from our real problem and required solution as well. I think Paul Hountondji must have considered such a hidden subjectivity when he argued (using Samir Amin) that 'African research is extroverted and extroverted, and hence we faced problems in the whole edifice'. Herein lies the reason why I say there is at least one white person behind each African researcher, whether it is to sponsor or serve as an advisor. It is therefore under the other's auspices that we direct our minds and get material assistance, whose primary purpose is to keep us in continuous dependence. Thus, those external methods, which we usually claim to be objective, are themselves subjective and bear certain values in the name of science and modernity. If this is the case, therefore, our mere adjustment to it would not make us objective but rather destroy our subjective existential concern at the expense of others' infected objectivity.

...all of Africa and its numerous inhabitants, as remarkable in character as they are in color, still remain to be studied; the whole earth is covered with Nations of which we know only the names, and yet we pretend to judge mankind!" Rousseau, First Discourse "Don't Think. Look."  
Wittgenstein, Blue Book

**Project Case:** Gäbre-Heywät Proposal to Japanize Ethiopia was an earlier attempt in which Gäbre-Heywät explicitly recognize the superiority of western civilization. Many respected scholars, notably the late Richard Caulk, Bahru Zewde, Messay Kebede, Shiferaw Bekele, Jacques Bureau and Tenkir Bongor reviewed this attempt. Gäbre-Heywät call for change targeted specific aspects of Ethiopian society and proposed pragmatic solutions for social and economic problems in the European ways. In his Colonial Subjects, Phillip S. Zachernuk offered a clear explanation of this intellectual process arguing that "we have been offered a misleadingly simple story of the "West" confronting a distinct and distinctive "Africa" and obliging it to absorb — or repel — the forces and ideas of the modern world(Philip Serge ZACHERNUK, 2000, p.3). In his critic of Gebrehiwot Baykedagn, Messay clearly stated that Ethiopian issues should be considered not from the European point of view but rather from the Ethiopian perspective. Particularly expounding the case of Japan (which is believed to have succeeded via European modernity), Messay rejected Baykedagn's choice of Japanizing Ethiopia by indicating that even Japan accepted only science and technology as part of European modernity and rejected its traditions and values. Claiming that science is responsible for the value crisis, Kaplan argued:

The technology which it has made possible has produced the great changes that threaten our valuables, and the ways of thinking which it has endangered undermine the very values themselves. There is, therefore, a widespread attitude towards science(or against it, rather)that with regard to values, the policy must be strictly "hand off!" science has done enough harm already, and the scientist should be grateful that he is allowed to go on about his business. (Kaplan, 1964, p. 371)

Retaining the coverages scientific camouflages and funding benevolences, Confirmation biases continued unquavilingly. Accordingly, the so-called scientific methods are themselves objectified subjectivity, which undermines and devalues the existence of others and damages others' ways of dealing with and understanding their whereabouts. I have no quarrel with the role of science or its methods. But still, I don't think that it would be harmful to the intellectual tradition if I called for critically questioning the pernicious exaggeration of both the current European status and function of science, as long as our values and existential concerns are concerned. In our social complexities and particular predicaments, science should consult the particularities and recognize that there is a wide

range not only of styles but also of interests, problems and approaches. I think that is why, for instance, R. Horton examined the African mythology and was able to discover that the quest for theory is a quest for unity underlying apparent complexity. Furthermore, all this being said, throughout the process of research, there are still post-finding problems, while the issue of findings itself is problematic. It is usual that the findings of our research remain at the level of documentation and library decorations, at the expense of awaiting application or social demands. This post-finding stage frequently makes the research remain at the theoretical (document) level, as in fact it has begun with the same thing. In this case, the practical utility of our research findings would remain uncertain.

#### **4 The Call for Value to Devalue Subjectivities**

In the previous discussions, I have indicated how subjectivity and extra-subjectivity influence research findings. As I have explained, some of the subjective causes illustrated in the first class (subjective values) are inherent to us, so long as they are strongly connected with our natural existential concern. Although I have no convincing reason to say that these values can be intellectually justified, I still find it equally terrible to dare say that they can be rejected and completely surpassed in our attempt to conduct social research. The exclusion of subjectivity from the pursuit of knowledge is not possible since subjectivity and objectivity are intertwined (Stenner 2008), and explicitly studying subjectivity is crucial to gathering reliable evidence (Lundberg et al. 2020). A concerned body may see such puzzles when he/she critically thinks of this from the 'humanity' point of view, which is by itself value. Moreover, the other subjective intervention comes from instrumental and institutional supremacy. Unlike the former one, this subjectivity has no legitimate moral authority, no matter how it may identify or de-identify other optional ways of looking at our realities.

Despite the two interventions of subjectivities, however, it is still possible to develop another value to minimize the subjectivities of those values. Nonetheless, if we fail to understand and transcend these subjectivities, then we would unconsciously be compelled to undertake not only misguided research or produce futile findings but also adopt the habit of adjusting ourselves to wrong conceptual frameworks with a harmful understanding of the very 'research.' If this happens to us, for sure, our usual conceptions of 'research' as cyclical in nature and collaborative would mean nothing more than a vicious circle with wrongly armed academicians. It is possible to doubt, even in such situations, whether our intellectual unity in the academy is the professional and intellectual unity under the human mind or just a unity under the sectors of budget or mere institutional hegemony. It would be here that my conception of value to devalue subjective values calls for a conceptual disarmament. In the process of developing intellectual value to devalue subjective values, we first need to free ourselves by disarming all imposed conceptual armaments and, secondly, overcome our own natural skepticism to critically develop tutelage-free subjective value, which would preclude all other subjectivities and their narrow interventions.

For one thing, in the academic environment, intellectuals are supposed to have one value in common over which no one has an authoritative claim or a prerogative right to disown the other academicians. This is our intellectual value, which we usually claim to use in science without making room for bias. Here, the professional poison we are armed with to disable all other nonacademic value claims and recognize the epistemic utility of our struggle is our professional code of conduct, constituting the moral guides and ethics of professionals in general. Accordingly, one of the premises in my concept of value to escape the value crisis is that our academic research, intellectual inquiries, and certain professional pursuits have moral prerequisites that transcend all other subjective interventions, be they from personal subjective value or instrumental and material hegemonic preferences. In this case, it would be reasonable to consider what Aristotle called the "intellectual virtues," which the researcher must not only have but also regard as virtues, i.e., seek and cherish them, and hence they must be values. This should not be considered an optional social issue or academic convention to listen to such an intellectual and moral

voice, but rather an imperative professional path to be trodden accordingly. In the Feyerabend's expression, one can be a 'mature citizen' once he/she acquires such subjectively free professional and moral qualities. His expression goes as follows:

A mature citizen is not a man who has been instructed in special ideolog such as Puritanism, or critical rationalism, and who now carries this ideology with him like a mental tumor, a mature citizen is a person who has learned how to make up his mind and who has then decided in favor of what he thinks suits him best. He is a person who has a certain mental toughness (he does not fall for ideological street singer to meet) (Feyerabend, 1993, pp. 353).

Moreover, as far as I'm calling for another value to reduce the intervention of subjective personal and social values, I am in a position to argue that we can develop such virtues and transcend ourselves, our traditions, social choices and particularities through them. Weber is right when he reminds us that "the belief in the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and not a product of man's original nature". It would, in fact, hardly be possible to think of such a truth unless we intellectually and morally surpass ourselves. But once we are cognizant of the academic importance of intellectually transcending our subjective value claims, it will be possible to conceive an objective road to balanced inquiry.

It is at this point that we may ask about the place and impact of the facts to be studied and the methods to be used as well. In this case, it would be easy to understand why, for instance, Nagel argued that "There is no factual evidence to show that the content and form of statements, or the standards of validity employed, are logically determined by the social perspective of an inquirer." By this assertion, however, I am not trying to say that acquiring and pursuing such an intellectual and objective values undermines the actual existence of certain values or value claims so long as the context of human needs and interests is inescapably involved, but rather that it lets us understand and transcend our natural skeptics about them. The vast majority of exponents of Emotivism have already identified such subjectivities and the grounds behind their values. Thus, being cognizant of such a basic subjective ground would help us to meticulously consider the fundamental assertions we make in our social research and conclusions as well.

Moreover, by being cognizant, I mean that our intellectual and moral awareness leverages the value judgments we make in accordance with the professional and academic habits of our minds. We can distinguish the very nature and ground of value involved in our research, i.e., whether it's more instrumental or inherent, or according to whether they are prized in themselves or we do them because they are believed to lead to something else, which we morally and professionally prize. Carefully considering all these, I suggest the need to develop five crucial methods/things for devaluing subjective values.

#### **4.1 Conceptual Disarmament**

I use this concept from my own mental space, by which I mean we need to engage in a soul-searching radical deconstruction in the sense that we need to look for an appropriate gauge to disarm our mental space and clearly cleanse our mental horizon from all those exclusive and singular lessons, methods and ways of approaching reality. For one thing, I feel that this concept is different from 'deconstruction' and 'decolonization,' which I used to know since these two usually involve the utilization of determined, imposed, or given gauges to deconstruct or decolonize the situation at hand. For instance, as an anti-colonial practice, contemporary African philosophers prefer to engage in the practice of "decolonization," which must be armed with the right and proper gauge. It would be a far-reaching dream to decolonize such a legacy with tools inherited from the colonizers and methods proposed by

them (in my case, languages and pedagogy). Ramose must have considered this when he said decolonization has neither abolished nor diminished the will to dominate on the part of the condescender (Ramose 2002, 2-3). Thus, when we use the same colonial gauges to decolonize the situations, the colonial legacy/remnants may remain, at least in the teeth of the colonial gauge we claim to use.

#### **4.2 Decentralizing Human Capacity to think**

We must be able to believe and adamantly admit that Humans are gifted with the ability to externalize their mapping functions through the use of symbols wherever they are, regardless of race, sex, life standard or economic status. As humans, we are capable of creating symbols to express our own survival capacities by triggering emotional responses that move us to replicate them—the memetic process. Recognizing this is tantamount to recognizing the humanities, which equal human acts of decentralizing human capacity to imagine, think, feel, ponder and analyze their own felt situations and lived actualities without anyone's tutelage. Charles Varharren explained the depth of such crucial things as follows:

Symbols have emotional as well as semantic and syntactic meanings. We select symbol sets, theories, in part by reason of their capacity accurately to reflect our experience. Symbols capture our “con-cepts,” literally our “grabbings together” of the patterns extracted from the environment through sensory “per-ceptions,” literally “grabbings through.” The connectedness of symbols to one another and to our experience is a condition for rationality as the complete expression of the human ability to draw connections. The use of symbols to connect abstract concepts with lived experience accurately is another condition for rationality. (Verharen, 2013, p. 86)

Verharen concluded his argument by saying that “The optimum guarantee of survival is the pursuit of the conditions for flourishing—rationality through continuing education, heightened community bonding, intelligent use of pleasure as a mechanism for guiding behavior, freedom defined as the potential for creativity, and introspection defined as the rational control of attention (Verhare, 2008). All these come after the conceptual disarmament mentioned, which led to the possibility of having a disproportionate level of thinking compared to the former state of thinking, i.e., unwanted armament and have been poisoned before. Our mental recovery period should exceed the previous situation. It is here that I accept Albert Einstein's maxim that you cannot solve problems with the same level of intelligence that created them. Therefore, conceptual disarmament involves them all.

#### **4.3 Treasuring Responsibility**

The veil of ideology and instructions distort intellectual value in their subjectivity. The call for value is a call for value-oriented intellectuals who make the truth actionable. It a call for fundamental rethinking. Reconsidering earlier reason behind Noam Chomsky's attack on experts, technocrats and intellectuals of all kinds who serve the interests of the powerful by lying, by producing propaganda or by providing ‘pseudo-scientific justifications for the crimes of the state’ is important. To value and strengthen sense of responsibility, its crucial to understand three pillars of responsibility developed by Chomsky; i.e. to speak the truth and expose lies; to provide historical context; and to lift the veil of ideology, the underlying framework of ideas that limits the boundaries of debate. Being an intellectual must devalue subjectivity. Universalizing intellectual value should not be taken an optional task. It must be considered an imperative. To speak the truth is about ‘speaking truth to power’ not to the powerless. As Noam Chomsky said; “Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies embedded in hegemonic or subjective institutions, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions.” Intellectual value and responsibility are beyond the comprehension of the layman since they are not the free-floating groups. The responsibilities of intellectuals, then, are much deeper than what Macdonald

calls the “responsibility of people,” given the unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy (Chomsky 1967). Intellectuals/academics is not some expert certified only to offer tools or to become instruments of certain institutions. “The intellectual is endowed with a faculty for ... articulating a ... philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, [involving] someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy. Someone whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely swept under the rug” (Anders Norén, 2023 Law and Literature). Chomsky argues that intellectuals have responsibilities that go beyond the responsibilities of others because they have a particularly privileged position (Chomsky, 1969, p. 323). Daniel Bethlehem put his worries that “More than ever is truth telling at odds with career prospects, and most ‘intellectuals’ care a great deal more about their careers than about the truth” (2012).

#### 4.4 Enhancing Academic Freedom

The institutional subjectivity that I have been discussing has had a huge impact on the research findings. It also infringes on intellectual basic rights, without which researchers could hardly conduct professional research in accordance with a reasonable human goal. By this right, I’m referring to academic freedom, which is the freedom of scholars to pursue the truth in a manner consistent with professional standards of inquiry. However, institutional hegemony distorts and undermines this intellectual value when it fails to recognize professional existential concerns at the expense of its exclusive instrumental goal. I think it would be reasonable to consider the following assertion of Donald A. Dawn regarding the Academic rights of researchers:

The pursuit of knowledge should be even freer than teaching. Research is intended to push the frontiers of knowledge, so obligations to the sensibilities of students and colleagues are minimal or nonexistent. Research should be governed by professional standards of competence, subject to the collective judgment of peers and society but not to punishment or discipline unless it contravenes the law or ethical academic norms, as in the case of plagiarism. There should be no formal sanctions for ideas, however offensive. (D.A. Downs, 2009, p. 14)

Accordingly, researchers should be free from external institutional subjectivities to freely conduct ethical and intellectual research. Academic freedom to explore significant and controversial questions is an essential precondition to fulfilling the academy’s mission of undertaking social research and advancing knowledge. Thus, in my concept of subjectivity, the very institutions become obstacles and academic impositions unless they recognize this dimension of researchers’ rights within the institutions. The subjectivity of hegemonic institutions that fail to recognize this basic idea damages both professional intellectual concern and social demand at large. It does not foster intellectual and personal moral capacity by using them as means. On the other hand, such a mistreated individual may fail to carry out their moral, professional and social obligations so long as they feel unfree and unreasonably controlled. Therefore, such hegemonic academic institutions could be a major factor in researchers undertaking corrupted research. Furthermore, the subjects within such institutions may force researchers to follow imposed methods of inquiry. It is not compatible, for instance, with the central purposes of majoring in a particular discipline or academic field, which may help intellectuals come to the understanding that different fields of endeavor provide well-grounded intellectual criteria for making decisions about alternative claims.

#### 4.5 Developing Clear Conception and Moral outline

This is what one must consider at the pre-research stage. Firstly, we need to understand our personal and professional skills and the milieu of our focus with a clear moral incentive. The research process proceeds from the researcher’s pre-proposal mental states, i.e., from clear conception and perception of

the situations to the tacit objective outlining on paper. Therefore, our focus should be on both proper conception and perception of the forthcoming assumptions and methodological projections to undertake fruitful research and evaluate the effectiveness, appropriateness and validity of post-plan reported outcomes. This would help us come up with well-thought-out and colored objectives that are friendly with our conceptual and moral spaces and the milieu of our focus. In my view, we need to consider all the possible scope, the required equipment, and the nature of our inquiries at this stage. Moreover, crucial concepts and statements we use to indicate our objectives should be restricted to affirming only how things under our focus seems/perceived seems under certain conditions chosen as standard and all conceptual schemes we use for assumption should indicate how they are, what they are, and how they would be seen under ideal conceptions. What one may encounter is just like what Kaplan once Kaplan called “locus problems” and explained as follows:

The locus problem may have attributes such as space for its description and the conceptual structure within which hypotheses about it are to be formulated. Quite a number of alternatives present themselves, and have been selected in various inquiries: states of consciousness, acts, actions, roles, persons, personalities, interpersonal relations, groups, classes, institutions, social traits or patterns, societies, and culture. (Kaplan, 1964, p. 78)

These all indicate the means and ends of our research project, which should be clearly indicated in the conceptual frameworks.

#### **4.6 Decentralizing tools and Democratizing Decision**

I strongly believe that research must be conducted in a linguistically (conceptually) free, methodologically decentralized and democratically free approach to produce results. Firstly, as far as our right understanding of the situation matters, our proposal must be formulated in a language we understand with a determinate vocabulary, conceptual frameworks and linguistic structures without external impositions, for which, otherwise, we are conceptually and methodologically damned unconsciously. Here, I prefer a hermeneutic approach to our social research. For one thing, our professional inquiry would remain of no practical social utility if we less considered people in the quandaries, their ways of dealing with their conditions, and their basic issues of life-dialogue, which in context may range from the prevailing marital relations to external affairs.

Secondly, Choice must be humanized rather than materialized first. As the foundational principles of a society, Choices of social ideals are “neither scientific nor unscientific, rational nor irrational” (Wiredu 1997: 143). Paul Feyerabend once said that if we want to understand nature, if we want to master our physical surroundings, then we must use all ideas and all methods, not just a small section of them (1993:353). Thirdly, humanity must be empowered to make its own free decisions. Underlining the importance of what he called ‘entitled decisions,’ Kaplan said that “Decisions become more realistic as the values they involve are confronted with facts and ideas are translated into concrete objectives. They become more rational as values are confronted with other values” (Kaplan, 1964:404). Thus, once we make the most conscious, deliberate, clear and explicit planning from the angle of the segment of humanity in the particular predicament, we need to be more realistic and rational to get control over the whole project we undertake. Therefore, with this particular hermeneutic approach, our research plan and the whole project may be met and directed towards the intended ends.

## **5 Conclusion**

In sum, Subjectivity can be seen "as the process of making sense of the world as one engages in communicable thought with oneself and the world through discourse" and as “the lens through which we



see and interpret the world.” We face challenges related to subjectivity in many considerable areas, starting with moral intention, conceptual clarity, and a realistic and hermeneutic approach. The moral and epistemic utility of our findings depends on how meticulously we examine the impact of our subjective values and devalue them according to a reasonable standard. However, it is not enough to stick ourselves only to this personal, professional and moral struggle unless we consider the impact of other externalities, i.e., institutional subjectivity, behind the veil of institutional hegemony. Moreover, the intervention of subjectivities, whether from the first two classes of subjectivity or extra personality, has been deflecting so many researchers from identifying and solving social problems. The problems of biased and morally unqualified findings arise from these two subjectivities. The two subjectivities often hide themselves behind the veil of personally prioritized interests, the illusion of the concept of social values, and questionable but legitimized academic authorities. One may see this secret when critically considering the researcher's moral skills, intellectual virtue and academic freedom. In addition, the limitations that occurred due to these moral, professional and institutional gaps left the area of social research, i.e., the segment of humanity in the quandaries, outside the findings. As a result, we often encounter professionals serving the mere institutions at the expense of social demands, for which many research findings remain without considerable ethical, conceptual and epistemic utility. The essay suggests that, by devaluing the subjective values and overcoming the extra-subjective influences, researchers can overcome their own natural skeptic and destitute academic freedom to produce reasonable findings. Finally, considering all these, the essay calls for the need to devalue the subjective values and extra-subjective pressures from an intellectual and ethical point of view.

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