The Limits of Materialist Logic: A Kuhnian Reflecion on Isra Miraj and the '*Cocoklogi*' of Science and Religion

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Abstract. This article examines the tension between materialist logic, as popularized by Tan Malaka through Madilog and the theistic foundation of the Indonesian state reflected in Pancasila. Amidst this dialectic, the phenomenon of "*cocoklogi*" emerges—the practice of forcibly harmonizing modern scientific findings with sacred verses, which risks tying the truth of revelation to tentative scientific theories. Using the *Isra Miraj* event as a case study and framed by the theoretical lenses of Thomas Kuhn's scientific revolutions and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics, this research analyzes the limits of scientific logic and the methodological weaknesses of *cocoklogi*. The analysis demonstrates that the attempt to rationalize *Isra Miraj* through Einstein's theory of relativity reveals internal paradoxes and the limits of the scientific paradigm itself, rendering the event a "Kuhnian anomaly". The practice of *cocoklogi* is shown to reduce a sacred text intended for moral and spiritual guidance and ignores the relative nature of interpretation, as articulated by Abu Zayd. This article argues that a healthy relationship between science and religion lies not in validation, but in a dialogue that respects their respective epistemological domains, aiming for complementarity without conflation.

Keywords: *Isra Miraj*, Relativity, Thomas Kuhn

1 Introduction

The current of rational-materialist thought holds a significant place in Indonesia's intellectual history, notably popularized by Tan Malaka through his magnum opus, Madilog. The concept of Madilog—an acronym for Materialism, Dialectic, and Logic—was introduced as a framework to combat what he termed "mystical logic" (*logika mistika*) [1]. For Tan Malaka, mystical logic, a mode of thought based on unproven beliefs and superstition, was the primary factor hindering the progress of the Indonesian nation [2], [3]. Therefore, Madilog was presented as a method to encourage society to think scientifically, critically, and based on material reality (*benda)* that can

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be verified. This intellectual movement aimed to steer the nation toward progress by abandoning a worldview deemed dogmatic and unproductive.

However, this current of materialist thought exists within a unique national context. Indonesia, through its state ideology Pancasila, consciously establishes its foundation not on pure secularism or theocracy, but on the principle of "*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" (Belief in the One and Only God). This first principle is not merely a passive acknowledgment but a philosophical and moral foundation for the nation's life. This formulation was the result of a profound historical compromise, an "overlapping consensus" achieved through intense debate between secular-nationalist and religious groups [4], [5]. It gives rise to what Soekarno articulated as a "cultured divinity" (*ketuhanan yang berkebudayaan*); a way of believing that manifests in tolerance, solidarity, openness, and mutual respect [5]. This principle serves as a broad umbrella and the primary moral source that animates the other principles, functioning as an intercultural platform for Indonesia's diversity [4], [5].

Amidst the dialectic between materialist logic and the nation's theistic foundation, another popular intellectual phenomenon has emerged that attempts to bridge science and religion: "*cocoklogi*." This practice refers to the forced harmonization of modern scientific findings with verses from holy scriptures, often without a sound methodology[6]. This approach has been criticized by contemporary thinkers. Mehdi Golshani, for instance, warns that the "science of *cocoklogi*" risks undermining the sanctity of scripture by pegging its absolute truth to scientific theories that are inherently tentative and subject to change or refutation [7].

This paper aims to analyze the fundamental tension between materialist logic and the philosophy of a theistic state by using the event of *Isra Miraj* as a case study. This event is chosen because its transcendent nature represents a point where the scientific approach—as a proxy for materialist logic, particularly Einstein's theory of special relativity—reaches its explanatory limit. This failure not only questions the supreme claims of materialist logic but also highlights the methodological weaknesses of the "*cocoklogi*" approach that attempts to explain it scientifically. To frame this analysis, two primary theoretical lenses will be employed: (1) Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, to understand that science itself is not a linear path to absolute truth but a process limited by paradigms and open to anomalies[8]; and (2) Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's hermeneutic theory on the relativity of interpretation, to assert that a sacred text cannot be reduced to a single, "scientific" reading[9].

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative library research methodology, focusing on conceptual analysis and interpretative reflection. The primary sources include classical Islamic texts and contemporary interpretations of the *Isra Miraj* narrative, as well as selected scientific literature, particularly works related to Einstein's theory of relativity. The research also draws upon philosophical and epistemological frameworks—specifically Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutical approach to religious texts.

The method consists of three main stages. First, the study conducts a textual analysis of how the *Isra Miraj* event is narrated and interpreted within Islamic discourse. Second, it reviews scientific sources that are commonly invoked in *cocoklogi* attempts, identifying the logic and assumptions behind the effort to harmonize these sources with sacred texts. Third, it applies Kuhn's and Abu Zayd's theoretical frameworks to critically assess the epistemological implications of *cocoklogi* practices, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Rather than seeking empirical validation, this study prioritizes theoretical synthesis and critical discourse analysis, aiming to expose the internal inconsistencies and broader philosophical tensions that arise when scientific paradigms are used to rationalize metaphysical events.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Pitfall of '*Cocoklogi*': A Flawed Reconciliation

In recent decades, particularly in Muslim-majority societies like Indonesia, there has been a growing trend to affirm the truth of divine revelation by aligning Qur'anic verses with modern scientific theories. This interpretive tendency, colloquially known as *cocoklogi*, refers to the forced harmonization of sacred texts with contemporary scientific discoveries, often through speculative linguistic or conceptual connections. Though such efforts are often presented as examples of intellectual openness or apologetic creativity, they tend to rest on superficial parallels rather than robust theological or scientific reasoning. At its core, *cocoklogi* reflects an epistemological crisis: an attempt to elevate faith by surrendering its autonomy to the prestige of science.

Proponents of this method often begin not with observation or critical reasoning, but with a firm theological presumption that the Qur'an must already contain all scientific truths. This leads to a reversal of proper scientific methodology, replacing hypothesis testing with selective confirmation. Such interpretations "do not meet the criteria of either scientific completeness or theological clarity," and frequently rely on vague conceptual associations[10]. In other words, rather than starting with data and deriving meaning, *cocoklogi* begins with doctrine and searches retrospectively for data that fits. The result is neither genuine *tafsir* nor rigorous science, but a hybrid discourse that satisfies neither discipline.

This interpretive maneuver is frequently presented as "evidence" of the Qur'an's timelessness. For example, Sayska and Arni document several claims that embryology, plate tectonics, and even particle physics are predicted in the Qur'an. However, they also acknowledge that these claims are primarily intended as "*dakwah adaptif*"—a rhetorical strategy to make religious texts appear modern [11]. This performative adaptation is echoed in online *tafsir* culture, where many interpretations are disseminated without adequate scholarly grounding[6]. These shallow engagements often reduce the text to scientific slogans rather than expand its moral and spiritual significance.

An illustrative case can be seen in the attempt to align cosmological models with Qur'anic verses, such as Adh-Dhariyat: 47, which is frequently cited in support of the expanding universe theory. Mardiyah et al. draw a direct parallel between the balloon model of the universe and the Qur'an's mention of divine expansion of the heavens. While they advocate for "synergy between religious wisdom and scientific thinking," their reading exemplifies the *cocoklogi* model: scripture is interpreted retroactively through the lens of cosmological theory, without regard for hermeneutical depth or scientific contingency. As they write, "This concept can be related to the Qur'anic verses regarding the creation of the universe"—but this connection is asserted, not argued, and lacks any interrogation of epistemological limits [12].

From a theological standpoint, the problem with *cocoklogi* is not merely methodological—it is ontological. The Qur'an is not a scientific manual, nor does it claim to be. Its purpose is moral, spiritual, and existential, not predictive. When sacred texts are reduced to a source of cosmological trivia, their ethical depth is eroded. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd emphasizes that the Qur'an is a "discursive text," one whose meaning unfolds in response to historical and cultural realities [13]. By forcing a single, scientific interpretation, *cocoklogi* ignores this discursive richness and replaces it with dogmatic scientification.

This problem is compounded by the instability of scientific knowledge itself. As Thomas Kuhn famously argues, scientific progress occurs not through linear accumulation but through paradigm shifts. What is accepted as scientific truth today may be discarded tomorrow [8]. This mutability is one of the strongest arguments against scientism—that is, the belief that science is the sole and final source of truth [14]. When Qur'anic verses are interpreted to "match" current theories, they are effectively tied to those theories' fate. A discredited theory would then drag the sacred text into disrepute—not because of the verse itself, but because of the interpreter's overreach.

What emerges from this practice is not a healthy dialogue between science and religion, but an epistemological asymmetry. Scientism is not just the belief in science—it is the belief that no other way of knowing is valid [15]. *Cocoklogi,* in its apologetic zeal, paradoxically reinforces this dogma by making religion's credibility contingent on its alignment with laboratory findings. Instead of challenging scientism, it affirms its central premise: that only science grants legitimacy. This amounts to a theological surrender dressed as intellectual sophistication.

The issue, therefore, is not whether religion and science can converse—they should. The issue is whether religion must imitate science in order to be relevant. Qur'anic rationality is oriented not toward empirical proof but toward ethical reflection and divine awareness. They write: "The Qur'an's rationality does not aim to reduce the unseen to empirical formulas, but to elevate empirical awareness toward ethical clarity and divine consciousness" [16]. Their perspective invites us to engage science not as the judge of revelation, but as a human endeavor that can benefit from religious wisdom without replacing it.

In light of these concerns, *cocoklogi* should be understood not as a bridge between science and faith, but as a distortion of both. It misrepresents the Qur'an by flattening its message into scientific codes, and it misrepresents science by treating it as static, absolute, and ideologically compliant. Rather than enhancing religious understanding, it risks eroding critical thought and cultivating an intellectually insecure religiosity.

To move beyond this impasse, we must reframe the relationship between science and revelation—not as a hierarchical validation, but as a dialogue between different ways of knowing. Yet before attempting such a theoretical reframing, it is necessary to examine how the dynamics of *cocoklogi* and the limitations of scientific rationality play out in a concrete and widely discussed example: the *Isra Miraj*. This sacred narrative of the Prophet Muhammad's night journey has increasingly been interpreted through the lens of Einsteinian relativity, in an effort to render it scientifically plausible. As we shall see, this case offers a compelling window into how materialist logic, when imposed upon religious experience, may end up diminishing both the scientific and the spiritual.

3.2 The Limits of Materialist Logic: A Case Study of *Isra Miraj*

The endeavor to rationalize historical and religious phenomena through the lens of modern science is a direct application of materialist logic. Tan Malaka championed this mode of thought, arguing that all understanding must be grounded in matter (*benda*)—a reality that can be empirically observed and verified [3]. This perspective posits that even the most complex events are, in principle, explainable through the laws of nature. In recent discourse, this framework is often applied to religious narratives, attempting to bridge faith with scientific reason. Several studies have explicitly used a "scientific approach" (*pendekatan sains*) to analyze the event of *Isra Miraj*, primarily through the framework of modern physics, in an effort to make it comprehensible to the rational mind [17], [18]. This effort uses Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity as its primary analytical tool, representing a modern attempt to apply materialist logic to a fundamentally transcendent event [19].

3.2.1 Isra Miraj in the Lens of Special Relativity: A Calculation

The scientific attempt to explain *Isra Miraj* hinges on interpreting the Buraq as a vehicle capable of near-light speed, a concept derived from its lexical meaning of "lightning" or "light" [20]. Based on this premise, the core principles of special relativity—time dilation and length contraction—are applied.

Time Dilation Calculation (Time Experienced by the Prophet)

According to Einstein, time passes slower for an observer in motion relative to a stationary observer. This phenomenon, known as time dilation, is calculated using the following formula [19], [21]:

$$t_0 = t\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}$$

Where:

- t_0: Time experienced by the moving observer (the Prophet).
- t: Time experienced by the stationary observer (people in Mecca) = 8 hours.

- v : The velocity of the moving observer. Let's assume a speed of 99.999% of the speed of light, or v = 0.99999c.
- c : The speed of light.

Step-by-step Calculation:

1. Velocity Ratio Squared $(\frac{v^2}{c^2})$:

$$(\frac{0.99999c^2}{c^2}) = (0.99999^2) = 0.9999800001$$

2. Calculate 1 - $(\frac{v^2}{c^2})$:

$$1 - 0.9999800001 = 0.0000199999$$

3. Calculate the Lorentz Factor (the square root):

$$\sqrt{0.0000199999} \approx\ 0.00447213$$

4. Calculate the Traveler's Time (t_0):

$$t_0 =\ 8\,hours\ \times\ 0.00447213\ \approx\ 0.035777\,hours$$

This is equivalent to approximately 2.15 minutes, or 128.8 seconds.

This calculation demonstrates how a journey perceived as lasting 8 hours on Earth could be experienced in just over two minutes by the traveler. The 8-hour timeframe is used as a logical benchmark for the duration of 'one night,' representing the approximate period between the Isha (night) and Fajr (dawn) prayers in which the event is understood to have taken place [21], [22]. In this case, the moment that occurred at *Sidratul Muntaha* is considered to be outside of space and time; therefore, the time elapsed during that moment is regarded as zero. To address the physical challenge of this travel, some analyses also propose the Annihilation Theory, suggesting the Prophet's material body was converted into energy to facilitate such speeds [17], [18]. However, a fatal flaw remains in the explanation based on special relativity, pertaining to the actual distance that can be covered at near-light speed over an 8-hour journey.

3.2.2 Distance Traveled Calculation (from Mecca's Frame of Reference)

Using the same variables, we can calculate the distance covered during these 8 hours.

Formula: Distance = Speed × Time

Convert Time to Seconds:
Time (t) = 8 hours × 3600 seconds/hour = 28,800 seconds
Calculate Actual Speed (v) in km/s:
Speed (v) = 0.99999 × 300,000 km/s = 299,997 km/s
Calculate Distance:
Distance = 299,997 km/s×28,800 s ≈ 8.64 Billion km

These calculations provide a scientific framework that attempts to rationalize the event. However, this very rationalization reveals the theory's own limits. Despite the sophisticated attempts at explanation, the application of materialist logic to *Isra Miraj* ultimately reveals its own limitations. As pointed out in some analyses, a journey of 8.64 billion kilometers would extend far beyond the orbit of Neptune but would still be infinitesimally small compared to interstellar distances, let alone reaching a metaphysical realm like the heavens [21], [22]. More fundamentally, the premise of a body with mass reaching the speed of light contradicts the theory itself, which posits that this would require infinite energy [18].

3.2.3 The General Relativity Framework: A Conceptual Alternative

Faced with the limitations of Special Relativity (SR), some analyses suggest that a more appropriate framework can be found in Einstein's later work, the General Theory of Relativity [18]. Einstein presented this theory as "the most extensive generalization conceivable" (”*die denkbar weitgehendste Verallgemeinerung*”) of his earlier theory. Its fundamental departure is the treatment of gravity not as a force, but as a curvature of the four-dimensional spacetime continuum caused by the presence of mass and energy [23].

General Relativity (GR) does not offer a formula to calculate this journey based on velocity. Instead, it provides a different conceptual possibility. By allowing for spacetime to be bent or folded, GR theoretically permits the existence of "shortcuts"—academically known as Einstein-Rosen bridges, or popularly as wormholes. From this perspective, the journey is not about linear travel at extreme speed, but about traversing a "folded" spacetime, making the transit near-instantaneous.

While the GR framework offers a more fitting conceptual model, it remains purely theoretical and incalculable for this event. Thus, whether analyzed through SR or GR, the event of *Isra Miraj* functions as what Thomas Kuhn would classify as a profound anomaly. An anomaly is a phenomenon that "nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science" [8]. Special Relativity fails due to internal paradoxes (e.g., infinite mass). General Relativity offers a speculative escape, but the mechanism itself is an anomaly to our current understanding of physics.

Ultimately, the effort to explain *Isra Miraj* using materialist logic demonstrates the inherent boundaries of the scientific paradigm. It can provide analogies and conceptual frameworks, but it cannot fully contain or prove an event that is, by its very nature, a miracle that transcends the known laws of the material world. This aligns with the understanding that while science helps in understanding the universe, religion, such as

Islam, enriches this understanding by addressing the purpose of creation and life beyond the observable world [12].

3.3 Reframing Science and Faith: A Kuhnian and Hermeneutic Perspective

3.3. 1 The Incompatibility of Paradigms: A Kuhnian Interpretation of Scientific Limits

Scientific knowledge is often mistaken for a steadily progressive accumulation of facts. However, as Thomas Kuhn argues in his seminal work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, science develops not linearly, but through periodic paradigm shifts. A paradigm—defined as a dominant model of explanation—guides how scientists interpret data and formulate theories. When anomalies—phenomena that the existing paradigm cannot explain— accumulate, a crisis may occur, eventually leading to a scientific revolution. The former paradigm is replaced, not merely revised [8].

Kuhn’s insight reveals that scientific truth is historically contingent and structurally unstable. Rather than being a universal arbiter of truth, science is a human endeavor shaped by social conventions and intellectual revolutions. This challenges the view that science can make definitive metaphysical claims. Instead, what is valid in science is bound by its own temporality and consensus [14].

In this light, the attempt to scientifically justify religious narratives such as *Isra Miraj* becomes philosophically problematic. A miracle, by definition, lies outside the bounds of empirical regularity. To reduce such an event to scientific plausibility is to misunderstand both science and revelation. As Washburn and Mizrahi argue, scientism—the overextension of science into all domains of knowledge—collapses under its own claims [15], [24]. Kuhn's paradigm model suggests that today's theories may be tomorrow's dogmas.

This view is echoed by St-Onge et al., who observe that even within science, “validity” is a plural term, defined differently depending on epistemological assumptions [25]. Transposing this to theology, the effort to validate religious claims through one scientific framework—such as relativity—is not only precarious but conceptually incoherent. Science and religion operate in different paradigms with different rules for what counts as evidence and meaning.

3.3.2 Between Revelation and Interpretation: Abu Zayd’s Hermeneutics

Just as scientific paradigms are historically situated, so too are religious interpretations. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd makes a crucial distinction between the Qur'an as divine revelation and tafsir as a human act of interpretation. This distinction affirms that while the Qur’an is absolute, interpretations are necessarily provisional, shaped by historical, linguistic, and ideological contexts [26].

Abu Zayd argues for a hermeneutic model grounded in the reality that no reading of the Qur'an is value-neutral. Meaning is always co-produced by the reader and the text in a dynamic interaction mediated by time, language, and culture. Mufid et al. reinforce this by showing how Abu Zayd's method, which combines textual analysis and contextual responsiveness, avoids interpretive absolutism and opens space for dialogue across epistemic frameworks [27].

The Qur'an, therefore, must not be treated as a frozen set of scientific facts awaiting verification, but as a living discourse that addresses the human condition. Interpreting the Qur'an requires a sensitivity to its rhetorical strategies, moral vision, and historical audience—elements that are lost in overly scientific readings. Abu Zayd's approach enables us to see interpretation not as the discovery of a singular truth, but as a process of ethical engagement and meaning-making [28].

This insight becomes even more vital when addressing attempts to prove Qur'anic verses scientifically. Al-Aadili and Shardaghly critique this kind of monologic interpretation, arguing that it shuts down the dialogic nature of the text. Scientific tafsir, while appealing to modern audiences, often marginalizes other equally valid readings—mystical, philosophical, or ethical—by treating the scientific lens as final rather than one among many [29].

3.3.3. Complementarity Without Conflation: Differentiated Epistemologies

Rather than forcing science and religion to validate each other, a more productive approach recognizes their distinct goals and methods. Science seeks to explain phenomena through causal mechanisms and empirical testing, while religion seeks to provide existential, moral, and metaphysical orientation. When these two logics are conflated—as in *cocoklogi*—both domains are distorted.

As Kuhn and Abu Zayd demonstrate in their respective fields, epistemic humility is crucial. Scientific paradigms change. Religious interpretation evolves. What remains constant is the need for reflexivity—an awareness that both science and religion are human engagements with reality, structured by their own methodologies. As Bhat and Bisati write, "The Qur'an's rationality does not aim to reduce the unseen to empirical formulas, but to elevate empirical awareness toward ethical clarity and divine consciousness" [16].

St-Onge et al. add that even in scientific discourse, competing notions of validity coexist. Applying this to theology, interpretive pluralism should be seen not as a sign of weakness, but as a recognition of the complexity of both text and reader[25]. By respecting the specificity of each epistemology, science and religion can coexist in tension—sometimes illuminating each other, sometimes diverging—without collapsing into false harmony.

4 Conclusion

The dialectic between materialist logic, popularized in Indonesia through Tan Malaka's Madilog, and the nation's theistic foundation enshrined in Pancasila creates a complex discursive space regarding the relationship between science and religion. The phenomenon of "*cocoklogi*"—the attempt to forcibly harmonize modern scientific findings with sacred verses—emerges as a problematic bridge in this discourse. As thinkers like Mehdi Golshani have warned, this practice risks undermining the sanctity of scripture by pegging its truth to scientific theories that are inherently tentative and subject to change.

The analysis of the *Isra Miraj* event through the framework of Einstein's relativity serves as a case study that reveals the limits of materialist logic and, simultaneously, the methodological weaknesses of *cocoklogi*. Although calculations based on special relativity seemingly offer a rational justification, they become entangled in their own paradoxes, such as the requirement of infinite energy for a massive object to reach the speed of light. The framework of general relativity, with its concept of spacetime folding (wormholes), offers a more elegant conceptual alternative but remains speculative and unprovable. Ultimately, *Isra Miraj* functions as an "anomaly" in Thomas Kuhn's terminology—a phenomenon that the dominant scientific paradigm cannot explain, thereby exposing its own limits.

Thus, forcing scientific validation onto religious narratives is an epistemological error. Thomas Kuhn's perspective shows that science is not a linear path to absolute truth but a process limited by paradigms that can shift. Tying the truth of revelation to the current scientific paradigm is a philosophically fragile act. On the other hand, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics reminds us to distinguish between the absolute revelation (the Qur'an) and its interpretation (tafsir), which is human and contextual. "*Cocoklogi*" mistakenly reduces the Qur'an—a text rich in moral and spiritual meaning—to a mere science manual, while also ignoring the dynamic nature of interpretation itself.

Ultimately, a more honest and productive relationship between science and religion lies not in a forced concordance but in the recognition of their distinct yet potentially complementary epistemologies. Science aims to explain the causal mechanisms of the material world, while religion provides existential, ethical, and metaphysical orientation. Accepting the divergence between them is not a failure but a form of intellectual integrity that allows for a sincere dialogue—a conversation based not on validation, but on mutual respect and epistemic humility.

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